

GETTING READY FOR "GOD EVERYDAY AND EVERYWHERE" (37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ATLANTIC THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE)

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LARGE VERSION FOR LENT

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS ARE FOUND AT

<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/classics/wisdom-belongs-to-god.html>

The Conference is based in a single theological idea "God: Every day and Everywhere" which will be explored in the works of four great theologians: Aristotle who can be regarded as the founder of scientific theology (his great theology treatise was later entitled *Metaphysics*), the definitive Latin Christian Church Father, Augustine, the most philosophically profound of the Late Medieval Mystical Guides, Meister Eckhart, and an Anglican theologian, poet, and novelist of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Charles Williams. "God: Every day and Everywhere" is not, as it must first appear, a blasphemous pantheism making the God who dwells in Inaccessible Light banal. The conception ruling the conference is that if you rise to the fundamental metaphysical idea, or anti-idea, of a theological system you will find there the structure of all reality and thus through it discern God every day and everywhere.

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**Eli Diamond, "The trinitarian structure of Aristotle's living God and its mortal imitations"**

In this paper I want to explore an idea about the Aristotelian philosophy articulated by Dalhousie University classicist and philosopher James Doull, who writes this in his article on the "Christian Origins of Contemporary Institutions":

"The concept of God to which Aristotle comes is an incipient knowledge of what will afterwards be called the Trinity in Christian theology."

What could it mean to say that Aristotle understands God to have a Trinitarian structure, being both completely one and also three distinct principles or persons? I shall explore what the relation is between God and the world is in Aristotle's thinking to see what Doull's claim means and whether it is true.

After getting some sense of what the relation is between God and world in Aristotelian thought, I then want to think about the way this theology is the ground for Aristotle's affirmation of the everyday: family life and practical or political life, but also the study of the nitty gritty detail of the natural world, all of which have a more dignified place than they seem to on the Platonic account. I want to explore how this affirmation of the everyday is connected to the concept of God and the relation between God and the world in Aristotelian thought.

This Aristotelian idea leads very directly to Augustine's Trinitarian cosmos as Dr Hankey will present it in his address.

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**Wayne Hankey, Augustine's Trinitarian Cosmos**

**For Augustine the divine Trinity is the universal being, life, and power of all reality.** As measure, number and weight God is the fundamental structure of every physical thing and so the Holy Spirit is weight: "[You] have disposed everything by 'measure, number, and weight'" [V.iv.9, Chadwick, p. 76], "My weight is my love" [XIII.ix.10, Chadwick, p. 278].

A body by its weight tends to move towards its proper place. The weight's movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards. They are acted on by their respective weights; they seek their own place. Oil poured under water is drawn up to the surface on top of the water. Water poured on top of oil sinks below the oil. They are acted on by their

respective densities, they seek their own place. Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest. My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend.

*Confessions* XIII. viii. 10, Chadwick, 278.

“I existed, I lived and thought and took care for my self-preservation” [I.xx.31, Chadwick, p. 22]: The Holy Spirit is the instinct in every living thing to preserve its own life. “I longed to love; . . . I sought an object for my love; I was in love with love [III.i.1, Chadwick, p. 35] The Holy Spirit is that by which we love to our good and to our destruction. “I am, I know and I will” “I wish that human disputants would reflect upon the triad within their own selves. The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. Knowing and willing I am. I know that I am and I will. I will to be and to know.” *Confessions* XIII.xi.12, Chadwick, p. 279.

**Augustine’s account of his infancy** is remarkable because he tells us that he remembers nothing about it himself. Moreover, he says that what he knows about it from others shows that his infancy was the same as all other infancies! It is part of his *Confessions*, and stands at their beginning, because his infancy, and all other infancies, contain both the moment of cosmic harmony—which is the recollected peace and joy toward which subconscious desire draws us—, and also the moment of fall or disharmony, the wilful *exitus* from which we can return only because God in Christ becomes the connecting middle between us and God. This remaining in God, Going forth from God and Return to God in and as the good of each creature is the first and most fundamental pattern which for Augustine structures every human story. Augustine is witnessing to, or confessing, that this trinity structures everything and moves everywhere. Another trinitarian paradigm, which derives from this one, is also crucial to Book One.

Measure, number, and weight also hold together the *Confessions*, because this trinity has forms in the human self, the physical cosmos, and in God. Its most well-known appearance is in Book Thirteen where it’s context is a question about the quest for rest and peace. This both Plotinus and Augustine locate in a good will (13.9.10). Will is weight in physical things. In Augustine, “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me.” This triad works in Book One, where, just after Augustine’s exposure of the viciousness of the jealous infant, he speaks of the co-ordinating unity which sustains the child despite its wickedness. So we find of the infant: “You, Lord my God, are the giver of life and body to a baby. . . endowed it with senses. . .co-ordinated the limbs. You have adorned it with a beautiful form, and, for the coherence and preservation of the whole, you have implanted all the instincts of a living being (1.9.12).” The conclusion of Book One picks up again the instincts of a child, this time in the form of love of itself, as the working of God’s unity, his love of himself, in us: “I existed, I lived and thought and took care for my self-preservation (a mark of your profound latent unity whence I derived my being). An inward instinct told me to take care of the integrity of my senses . . . (1.20.33).

**At the beginning of the Second Book of the *Confessions*** Augustine the rhetorician is at work; the effect is to show that even in his evil deeds Augustine is sustained and moved by the trinitarian life of God. The first two paragraphs look like a grammatical exercise in declining and conjugating *amor* (love) and *amare* (to love). Augustine testifies: “I remind myself of my past foulnesses. . .not because I love them, but so that I may love you, my God. It is from love of your love that I make my act of recollection.”(2.1.1) He goes on in the next paragraph: “The single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and to be loved.” We encounter here perhaps the most paradoxical, and the most fundamental, doctrine of the *Confessions*: what sustains us, even in our opposition to God, and what brings us back to him, is the divine trinitarian love as constituting our own loving. The trinity of love is found in Plotinus. Plotinus declares of the One/Good that “he, that same self, is loveable and love and love of himself.” (*Ennead* 6.8.15) High up among the most exalted images of God in his treatise *One the Trinity*, this doctrine reappears when Augustine

understands God as “the Trinity of the one that loves, and that which is loved, and love.” (Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.5.) In the *Confessions*, it occurs most strikingly, and with structural power, here at the start of Book Two. For Plotinus, we are drawn back to the One, because our being is the One in us; all being depends on unity. This unity may equally be called goodness or the love of love. By love of God’s love, Augustine tells us, he is collecting himself out of his dispersion. He is able to do so because “You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided. I turned from you the One to be lost in the many.” (2.1.1)

**A philosophical love of God:** Book Three begins like Book Two by conjugating *amare* (to love). In Carthage, “a cauldron of illicit loves,” he had not yet been in love and he longed to love. “I sought an object for love, I was in love with love.” (3.1.1) He does indeed fall in love, and with God, but by astonishing means. He read Cicero’s *Hortensius*, an exhortation to philosophy, taking it up because, for a rhetorician, Cicero was *the* pre-eminent model, but he stayed for the content. He writes that this book literally “changed my feelings.” It changed his experience, religious practice, values, and desires in respect to God himself: “It altered my prayers, and created in me different purposes and desires.” Inflamed by philosophy, Augustine repented his vain hopes; in their place, he writes: “I lusted for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour of the heart.” Now his conversion begins, and he represents it, in language Neoplatonists use, as the return to the divine source: “I began to rise up to return to you.”

Augustine describes his new love, the love which is philosophy, the love of wisdom, the wisdom which itself is God. He employs the language of passionate feeling: “How I burned, my God, how I burned.” Augustine does not repent later this representation of himself as an erotically inflamed lover of wisdom. In Book Eight, when he is about to describe the *Take Up and Read* conversion, he recollects the conversion to philosophy which enabled, and is completed, by this decisive new movement of his will in the Milan garden. He writes that he had been “excited” to the study of wisdom by reading the *Hortensius*. (8.7.17) What lies between the conversion of Book Three and that of Book Eight is a long philosophical journey which reached its positive result in the Neoplatonism described in Book Seven.

**Book Seven is the heart of the *Confessions*.** Here we find Augustine finally arriving at a true knowledge about the substance of God. There is for him a tight interconnection between: (1) his coming to this knowledge of the divine substance as incorporeal spirit and essential goodness, and (2) his coming to a knowledge (a) of his own metaphysical nature, (b) of the nature of good and evil, and (c) of his responsibility for his own deeds. Here again we find the trinity: “The person who knows the truth knows the immutable light, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. **Eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity: you are my God.**” I have prepared a selection of important trinitarian texts from the *Confessions* to help you find Augustine’s teaching on this in this complex book.

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### Evan King, Eckhart’s *Grund*

Time, Eternity and the Friends of God in Eckhart and Tauler

“Heaven-Haven”

*A nun takes the veil*

I have desired to go

Where springs not fail,

To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail

And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be

Where no storms come,

Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,

And out of the swing of the sea.

(Gerard Manley Hopkins)

A distinctive, but elusively defined, proliferation of vernacular spiritual prose appears in medieval Germany. Historians influenced by the appreciation of this literature, and Meister Eckhart above all, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Hegel and others have tended to speak of a 'speculative mysticism' (a specific form of *knowledge* attained in the union of self and essence) which was carried on by Nicholas Cusanus, Jacob Boehme, Angelus Silesius, etc. While there is much to commend this reading (I pursued it in my master's thesis), it should be combined with attention to the larger patterns in Eckhart's work where the nearness of God's Triune life is revealed.

Bernard McGinn's presentation of Eckhart in the context of an emerging 'mysticism of the ground' is useful here. Eckhart does not invent the idea of the 'ground' (*grunt/grund*) of the soul or the ground of God; one finds the term already in 13<sup>th</sup> century writings. The German word, nevertheless, connotes more than its closest Latin equivalents (*fundus, principium*), and these dimensions are undoubtedly those developed most by Eckhart. Its metaphorical power is most striking, as McGinn notes (following Haas, Köbele, Largier), in the many instances where Eckhart is (deliberately) ambiguous about whether he means the soul's ground or God's ground. I will focus on how this metaphor is used in Eckhart's vernacular treatises and sermons. As a current hypothesis, I ask whether this striking development in Eckhart and his followers could in fact be a reflection of a more central concern with the interrelation of time and eternity, and what must follow if one takes seriously the idea of 'eternal life'. The 'ground' becomes a way of relating the eternal and the temporal, rhetorically, philosophically and practically. In this way I intend to place Eckhart, and other writers of his time, in continuity with the theologies of Aristotle and Augustine.

Within the approximately 110 authentic vernacular sermons of Eckhart, the word 'ground' appears about 140 times. With his disciple, John Tauler, through whom the mysticism of the ground had its widest influence, a corpus of less than 100 sermons contains over 400 uses. Tauler clearly grasps the motivations of Eckhart's preaching, as well as the many potential pitfalls arising from the contemporary, heretical interpretation of some of Eckhart's ambiguous expressions. In a rare mention of his master, Tauler hints that the cause of the misunderstanding (both that of his inquisitors and of his heretical followers) is a question of temporality: 'he spoke from eternity, but you heard him in time' (Sermon 15). Tauler's response is to embark again on the surer footing of seeking God in ways and modes, rather than in the modelessness of eternity.

The notion of the 'ground' in Eckhart is intimately connected with his views about eternity and time. The polyvalence in his statements about what is 'most intimate' or 'highest' in the soul (viz. his oscillations between calling intellect the ground, and placing the ground beyond intellect, and speaking about intellect and not the ground at all) can be stabilised through his reflections on time, eternity, and the 'fullness of time' (Gal. 4.4); though the language of the 'ground' best signifies the eternal nearness of God, intellect also (in Eckhart's synthesis of Aristotle, Augustine and Avicenna) is never touched by time. It has been persuasively argued by Loris Sturlese that Eckhart himself intended his vernacular sermons to be gathered into one corpus, structured according to the two cycles (*temporale, sanctorale*) of the liturgical calendar. One of the aims of this paper will be to read Eckhart in light of this revised ordering, to understand how this structure, far from being an end in itself for Eckhart, is always a springboard for becoming aware of God's nearness.

Eternity and time are, for instance, at the heart of Eckhart's Advent sermons, from the first Sermon in the corpus ('Behold, the days are coming', Jer. 23:5) which begins by juxtaposing the human's condition of exile in the *regio dissimilitudinis* with the goal ('I take it on my soul: whoever offers one good thought

in eternal love, there God becomes within the man, who is saved'), to the famous quartet of Nativity and Epiphany sermons (Sermons 101-104) on the patristic theme of the birth of God in the soul which, in its Eckhartian version, is simultaneously the birth of the soul in God. 'Here, in time, we celebrate the eternal birth, which God the Father bore in eternity and bears without ceasing, because the same eternal birth now, in time, is born in human nature' – this same eternal birth, continues Eckhart takes place 'in me', 'in the ground of the soul' (Sermons 101-102). The eternal birth occurs in that highest part of the soul where time has never entered (Sermon 38).

In his sermon on the feast of a martyr – 'the just lives in eternity' (Sermon 39) – Eckhart says, 'go into your own ground and work there, and the works you work there will all be living'. The second part of this paper will take up from Eckhart's famous Sermon 86 (possibly on the feast of the Assumption!) which is often presented as a playful inversion of the more straightforward subordination of the active to the contemplative life in the figures of Martha and Mary. I will argue instead that Eckhart's reading can be seen as an attempt to imagine the lives of these women beyond the glimpse we are given Luke's Gospel. Read from this perspective, Eckhart's interpretation seems less deliberately counter-intuitive. In Martha we are invited to consider the meaning of 'redeeming the time': 'ascending continually to God with intellectuality, not according to representational differentiation, rather by intellectual, living truth'.

The metaphors of the 'ground' and the theology of the 'birth' and 'eternal life' culminate in this figure of Martha. It has been suggested that Eckhart's interpretation of the Martha-Mary typology enables his 'vernacular mysticism'. Eckhart identifies Martha with 'the friends of God':

dear Martha and, together with her, all of God's friends are near care but not in care. Here a work done in time is as valuable as any joining of self to God. (Sermon 86)

Georg Steer has pointed to a fruitful direction for further research when he connects the figure of Martha in Sermon 86 with the preaching of Tauler and the fascinating set of writings attributed to Rulman Merswin and to a mysterious the Friend of God from Oberland emanating from the Strassburg community of 'the Green Isle' in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. As Steer puts it, these texts strive for 'the realisation of Martha'.<sup>1</sup> They are not aimed at promoting an anti-hierarchical or anti-clerical view about the superiority of the laity, but rather at living out in practice the teaching that, for Tauler as well as for Eckhart, is directed simply to 'people'.

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### **Patrick Graham. Contemporary Islamic Theology**

Since the attacks on 9/11, western media has discovered Islam and its theology. Or so it likes to believe. A decade ago, few editors at major newspapers or magazines could have spelled Salafi let alone allowed Arabic terms such as takfiri (apostate) to appear in print. Today, articles in magazines like *The Atlantic* on rarefied theological topics such as the influence of medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyyah on the 'Islamic State' break readership records. In this paper, I will examine Islamic theology as a recent publishing industry. And discuss the question of what this means in a western culture where theology itself is a dirty word. For instance, why are so many readers made familiar with the 'Caliphate' while few could explain Augustine in the simplest terms? Can theology of a little understood religion really be explained to a secular audience that views all religion as fundamentally irrational, indeed all religion as fundamentalism? And is our interest

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<sup>1</sup> 'Die Stellung des *Laien* im Schrifttum des Strassburger Gottesfreundes Rulman Merswin und der deutschen Dominikanermystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts', hrsgg. L. Grenzmann, K. Stackmann, *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit: Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1981* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 643-658.



in Islam just another expression of western scientific culture's contempt for religion repackaged as 'insight,' either sympathetic or dismissive?

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### **Dr Douglas Hedley, Charles Williams Theanthropos**

Dr Douglas Hedley, Fellow of Clare College and Reader in Metaphysics and Hermeneutics at Cambridge University, well known to participants in the Atlantic Theological Conferences will speak on Charles Williams and his Theanthropos, the God-Man, as fundamental principle. The most important of Williams' books for this paper are a novel, *The Place of the Lion*, and *The Descent of the Dove*, a genuinely theological history of the Christian Church. Happily both of them are available in libraries, online book stores including those of societies devoted Charles Williams or the Inklings, and best of all we shall provide copies you can download or read online.

I shall not say more now about *The Place of the Lion*, except that, as Williams says about Augustine, despite its title, it defines the place of Anthropos. I wish you joy in reading it. Here is a link to it online <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0601441h.html>

I cannot call *The Descent of the Dove* an easy book; like *The Place of the Lion*, I have been reading it repeatedly for four decades without by any means exhausting what it has to teach. Here you find Williams' fundamental idea of the theanthropos, the God-man. Not God and man, but God-man as in the Deus-homo of the great Augustinian, Anselm. In its "Postscript" you will find his doctrine of the Co-inherence. The greatness of Williams is that he knows the terrible danger both to the world and to itself as religion that this unity, the evangel of Christianity, is. His remarks on Augustine in *The Descent of the Dove*, his very positive treatment of atheistic socialism and the new proletarian democracy, and his suggestions about the liberation for telling the truth that the end of Christendom brings (both of the latter at the end of the book) are crucial. Many know the supernatural novels but not so many on this continent remember that Williams belonged to the same kind of socialism to which Dorothy Sayers and Robert Crouse adhered, indeed it was he who got me reading Charles Williams. The co-inherence is in corporeal matter.

Read the conclusion of Chapter II, "The Reconciliation with Time" from "It is difficult not to read into the situation..." until the end (from p. 34 in the pdf version we attach at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/classics/wisdom-belongs-to-god.html>).

Crucial is "To know God it was necessary to love the brethren-first, as it were, from predilection and choice, but afterwards from him and through him. "We love, because He loved us." "If a man say that he love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar and the truth is not in him." Felicitas had asserted the divine order— "Another for me and I for him." Clement had defined it among the faithful: "He demands of us our lives for the sake of each other." What the martyr and doctor declared another voice also proclaimed out of the desert. During the reign of Diocletian St. Antony, the first of the Christian hermits, whose life was to be written by Athanasius, took up his dwelling between the Nile and the Red Sea. Alone, ascetic, emaciated, he gave to the Church the same formula: "Your life and your death are with your neighbour." Yet perhaps the greatest epigram of all is in a more ambiguous phrase. Ignatius of Antioch in the early second century, had tossed it out on his way to martyrdom: "My Eros is crucified." Learned men have disputed on the exact meaning of the word: can it refer, with its intensity of allusion to physical passion, to Christ? or does it rather refer to his own physical nature? We, who have too much separated our own physical nature from Christ's, cannot easily read an identity into the two meanings. But they unite, and

others spring from them. “My love is crucified”, “My Love is crucified”: “My love for my Love is crucified”; “My Love in my love is crucified.” The physical and the spiritual are no longer divided: he who is Theos is Anthropos, and all the images of anthropos are in him. The Eros that is crucified lives again and the Eros lives after a crowned point of union between the supernatural and the natural.”

The whole of Chapter III “The Compensations of Success”. The treatment of Augustine is essential. Crucial are: “He has always been a danger to the devout, for without his genius they lose his scope. Move some of his sayings but a little from the centre of his passion and they point to damnation. The anthropos that is Christ becomes half-hidden by the anthropos that was Adam. In Augustine this did not happen, for his eyes were fixed on Christ. But he almost succeeded, in fact though not in intention, in dangerously directing the eyes of Christendom to Adam.” & “Fumus ille unus” he said; “we were in the one when we were the one.” Whatever ages of time lay between us and Adam, yet we were in him and we were he; more, we sinned in him and his guilt is in us. And if indeed all mankind is held together by its web of existence, then ages cannot separate one from another. Exchange, substitution, co-inherence are a natural fact as well as a supernatural truth. “Another is in me,” said Felicitas; “we were in another,” said Augustine. The co-inherence reaches back to the beginning as it stretches on to the end, and the anthropos is present everywhere. ‘As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive’; co-inherence did not begin with Christianity; all that happened then was that co-inherence itself was redeemed and revealed by that very redemption as a supernatural principle as well as a natural. We were made sin in Adam but Christ was made sin for us and we in him were taken out of sin. To refuse the ancient heritage of guilt is to cut ourselves off from mankind as certainly as to refuse the new principle. It is necessary to submit to the one as freely as to the other. The new principle had been introduced into the web, and only that principle could separate one soul from another or any soul from the multitude. The principle was not only in the spirit but in the flesh of man.” Chapter VIII “The Quality of Disbelief” “Everywhere society became more and more enlightened. By which was largely meant that whereas in the Middle Ages the questions that could not be answered theologically were held as negligible, in this century the answers that could not be given scientifically were more and more held to be worthless. Intellectual enlightenment is apt to leave morals – especially public morals – where they were. The heavy mass of the ruling classes might be, within, witty and cultured, but on those without it lay with a heavy weight of self-indulged cruelty, luxury, and tyranny. ‘Wit, good verse, sincere enthusiasm, a lucid exposition of whatever in the human mind perpetually rebels against transcendental affirmations, were allowed every latitude and provoked no effective reply. But overt acts of disrespect to ecclesiastical authority were punished with rigour.’ A dim horror begins to cover the ruling classes of Europe, a horror to which the later industrialists were heirs. The horror is of a body powerful, stupid, conservative, and cruel.” Read in Chapter IX “The Return of the Manhood” from “The Way of the Affirmation of Images had returned” (p. 148 in the pdf version we attach here): “the Affirmation maintained doctrine and charity. In 1854 Pius IX, as if in a most proper image of both, decreed of his own authority to all the world the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the anthropotokos, of the Virgin-Mother of the Deivirilis. Christendom was not agreed on it; neither the Eastern Churches nor the Protestant Churches approved, nor perhaps understood. But certainly the Manhood had returned; within and without Christendom the millions stirred, and Karl Marx wrote of a classless society on earth.” & “The consciousness of the primal physical needs of the oppressed multitudes spread and became militant. In the thirteenth century the presence of the Sacred Body and Blood had been formally defined to exist in the Eucharist. But now, both without and within Christendom, the natural body and blood of common men

asserted their rights. Within Christendom this certainly had been implicit from the beginning-implicit in the life and acts of Messiah, implicit in the belief that matter was capable of salvation, implicit in that insistence on justice which had been declared almost as much as it had been neglected. It had been often enough explicit, in the Apocalypse, in many medieval sermons, in the definitions of the schoolmen, in the orations of Latimer and Bossuet, in the sympathy of many priests with the Revolution, in the labours of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury. It could never be the chief concern of Christendom; that must always be the “ substance “ as against the “sensuality” – to use the Lady Julian’s words. But neither the Lady Julian nor the Church ever separated the two. “Both for the body and the soul,” said the Rituals; and the Lady Julian : ‘In the self point that our Soul is made sensual, in the self point is the City of God ordained to him from without beginning.’ The communicated Eucharist held the double co-inherence. Natural justice was a necessary preliminary to all charity.”& “the natural co-inherence of dogmatic Communism and the supernatural co-inherence of dogmatic Catholicism fought each other” to the end of the “Postscript” (p. 162)

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