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Henri de Lubac: Reading *Corpus Mysticum*[1]

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Abstract

Henri de Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum*, published during and immediately after the conditions of wartime France, had a profound influence on the theology and actual practice of not only Catholic, but also much Protestant liturgy in the course of the unfolding liturgical movement. The interpretative keys of the text were established primarily by Michel de Certeau and Hans Urs von Balthasar, and have emphasised a historical shift from understanding in the connections between a threefold hermeneutic of Christ's 'mystical body'. The 'mystical body' is variously understood as the Eucharist itself, the extant body of the Church, and the actual body of Christ. The conventional reading of this text is to claim that de Lubac traces a shift, occurring in the High Middle Ages that points away from the body of the Church to an objectification of the eucharistic species, resulting in the highly individualistic piety that manifested itself in the Catholicism of the nineteenth century. This paper challenges that hermeneutic key as an oversimplification of a much more subtle reading suggested by de Lubac himself and intrinsic to the text of *Corpus Mysticum*, and suggests that de Lubac understood the real shift to be the triumph of a certain kind of rationalism, exemplified by Berengar's thought, emerging to assert itself as the basis and ground of theological thinking, eclipsing the grounding character of the liturgy as the source of meaning in theology. It examines de Lubac's late claim that *Corpus Mysticum* was 'a naïve text' and asks what kinds of naïvety are indicated in this statement.

[1] This paper was first given at a colloquium organised by the Society of St. Catherine of Siena at Heythrop College, University of London in January 2007, held to celebrate the publication in English translation of *Corpus Mysticum*, (trans. Simmonds CJ, G. and Price, R., eds. Hemming, L. P. and Parsons, S. F., SCM Press and Notre Dame University Press, London and Notre Dame, 2006). The paper is a substantially modified and revised version of the *Editors' Preface* to the text H. Card. de Lubac. I have taken the opportunity to say here many things that I did not believe it appropriate to say or draw out in what was essentially a broad introduction to the fact of the publication of the translation.

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Corpus Mysticum is a complex, rough, text – a book of whose conclusions much has been made (and much that is contradictory). It has been astonishingly influential for defining liturgical and sacramental theology in the second half of the twentieth century, right up to the present day. That period has been one of the greatest in visible upheaval in terms of liturgical and sacramental practice in the Catholic Church: for if it is one thing for de Lubac to write of the meaning of the Catholic rite of Mass whose essential structure and texts had not changed at least since the eight century (and whose ritual gestures, even if subject to modification and embellishment, would have been recognisable across the same period), it is quite another for us to read this text now. We live after a liturgical transformation that utterly modified, often transformed, the texts, ritual, appearance, and practice of Catholic liturgy. Of course the book points to, and draws on, not the continuities of the period between the Gelasian Sacramentary in the eighth century and 1970, but the transformations effected in the meaning (that is to say, the intellectual appropriation) of the rite. But now, sixty odd years on, *both* the appearance and the meaning have changed, so that at least some would argue, controversially in my view, the rite and its proper meaning have once again been coordinated. If that was until recently the stabilised view of many liturgists, it is very much open to question once again.

As one of the editors of the recent translation of *Corpus Mysticum*, a translation that was six years in the making, I make these preliminary remarks to explain the book cover that we chose for the text – a choice that I was challenged on by Fr. Paul McPartlan who also played a key role in the translation. The cover depicts a high moment of the solemn form of the so-called 'tridentine' rite, the moment at which the priest lifts the host to be seen by the worshippers behind him (he's facing the same way as them), just after he has said (inaudibly) the words of consecration. 'Isn't what you've put there precisely what we were trying to get away from?' said McPartlan – which exposes precisely the complexity of what I have just said by way of introduction, and the necessity for understanding how the very context from out of which the book was written has so radically changed. The cover is a provocative reminder of how much the context in which this book has now appeared has changed, compared to its appearance in the France of the 1940s. McPartlan was worried that the cover would lead people to misinterpret the book, exposing the view of many contemporary liturgical and sacramental theologians that the only way in which to interpret *Corpus Mysticum* correctly is through the prism of a revision of rite and practices that did not exist, and were therefore unknown, to the author when he wrote it. This exposes the paradoxical character of the text: what does it mean for a text to be construed out of a situation it did itself

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not know? And even it were correct that the text pointed toward and facilitated the context from out of which we *should* now interpret it, does that not make this book a very strange hermeneutical event – not even that it should be interpreted *from the future to the past*, i.e. *in reverse*, but also *that it made the future that alone allows it to be truly understood*, like a child giving birth to her own father – a problem usually reserved for the time-travelling conundrums of science-fiction. Of course these are not new hermeneutical problems, but they are exposed in the case of this text in very dramatic form.

The version of *Corpus Mysticum* that we translated is the second (much revised) edition, of 1949. The book was originally completed between 1938 and 1939, and prepared for publication in 1941 in the difficult wartime conditions of Vichy France. A critical edition in a series of de Lubac's entire French corpus is in preparation which will include a re-edition of the 1949 text, but we were unable to coordinate this translation to that edition, which at the time of publication had not yet appeared.

De Lubac's text in many ways reflects the confusions of the wartime conditions in which it was written. His preparation and the editing of the book are often erratic and inconsistent: authors are given differing titles or descriptions across various points, the use of parentheses does not always reflect a clear purpose, and at times the referencing is confusing. We did not try to edit by 'correcting' or 'improving' the text, but rather have endeavoured to give the reader a feel for the rough-hewnness of the original. De Lubac himself said of *Corpus Mysticum* 'this book is a naïve book'[2] – it was only his second major work (after *Catholicism* of 1938)[3] – and he had fallen in to its concerns almost by a series of accidents. He remarks how little formal training or background he had for the research he undertook, not least because the discipline was defined by scholarship that was almost entirely in German, a language de Lubac did not read or speak.

De Lubac notes 'I was not encumbered by any of the categories and classical dichotomies into which I would necessarily have fallen if I had read the historians, who were nearly all German'[4] and so he had to work out for himself how to read and interpret the sources.

[2] See H. Card. de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits* (Namur, Belgium: Culture et Vérité, 1989), p. 28. 'Ce livre est un livre naïf.' (E. T. *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, Communio Books, 1993].)

[3] H. Card. De Lubac, *Catholicisme; les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris, Éditions du Cerf 1947 [1938]) (E. T. By L. C. Sheppard, E. Englund, *Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco, Ignatius, 1988 [1950]).

[4] H. Card. de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, p. 28. 'Je n'étais encombré d'aucune des catégories et des dichotomies classiques dans lesquelles il m'aurait bien fallu tomber, si j'avais lu les historiens, à peu près tous allemands.'

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There is in this attitude something astonishing and at the same time utterly modern – that sources that arose from a disciplined (at times even febrile) tradition of self-interpretation in an age long past could simply fall open and announce their inner meaning to a reader unversed in, and unfamiliar with, the world in which they arose. Attending this is the unspoken suggestion by de Lubac that even had he been schooled in the leading (German) tradition of interpretation, he might not have gained better access to the sources: the tradition of interpretation to which he lacked access (but of which he was aware) had *also* moved far beyond the world of the sources, with the suspicion that, far from unravelling them, it left them locked up in their meaning even when in close examination of their opened pages. De Lubac was not the first to experience this perplexity of *distance* to what is needed to be known, and darkness in how to come near, but the question remains whether his answer – to read the texts for himself and unaided – sufficed to resolve the difficulty posed.

This acknowledged naïvety explains the actual character of the book, which at times even in the body of the text is no more than preparatory notes and an actual recollection of the research that gave rise to the conclusions attained in the final chapters. If this naïvety explains the book, it helps us as well to understand its reception. What de Lubac describes as his method of reading, the results of which are presented in this text, is exactly what Hans-Georg Gadamer has called a *Horizontverschmelzung* – or 'fusion of horizons'. Gadamer reminds us that the character of this fusion of horizons – we might better say 'worlds' (our own and of that in which the text arose) – is 'the central problem of hermeneutics'. He adds 'it is the problem of *Anwendung* which is underlying in all understanding'.[5] This word *Anwendung* is usually translated as 'application' or 'use', but literally it means the directedness of a turning-in toward a matter at hand. A text presupposes a world from out of which it emerges, and it addresses the world in which the reader now stands: but this fusion can take place in one of two ways – either, as Gadamer says, in a dead end, a 'detour, on which we remain stuck',[6] or as a fusion in which the text present itself, not as an answer, but as the posing of a *question*, which, we may add, throws not only the world in which it arose open for us as a place to be interrogated, but also throws our own world, our actual situation, open, as a place in which we ourselves are opened to be questioned by the sources into which we enquire. Gadamer concludes that 'this is the basis for why all

[5] H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990 [1960]), p. 312. 'Das zentrale Problem der Hermeneutik überhaupt. Es ist das Problem der *Anwendung*, die in allem Verstehen gelegen ist' (author's emphasis).

[6] H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 380. 'Ein Umweg, auf den man steckenbleibt.'

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understanding is always more than mere comprehension of a distant viewpoint'.[7] The voices and texts of a world other than our own have the power to put *us* into question, and indeed, says Gadamer, they *must* do this if genuine understanding – intelligence – is to be possible: a *single* world arises hermeneutically from this questioning, but one in which we ones who understand will stand out differently from how we did before.

De Lubac is himself well aware of the problem that Gadamer names – of the danger of a dead-end over against attaining to genuine understanding, and shows his sensitivity to what is at issue in how his own researches are to be read when he announced in his *Preface* to the second edition of *Corpus Mysticum* that 'no portion of our inheritance should be systematically despised', revealing his reservations at how in the space of a few short years this book had become the touchstone for assertions about what was right, and what was to be rejected, in the history of sacramental theology. For from the outset this text, with all its naïvety, has been used to justify an understanding of the past which is at best a caricature, very far from the understanding invited by de Lubac's actual words. The central thesis, that the singular *corpus mysticum* is at one and the same time a threefold: not just the *sacramentum* or signification of the sacred species of the Eucharist, but also the body of the Church, and at the same time the very Body of Christ itself, has over and again been interpreted within the framework of the resistance to the fetishisation of objects that marks the modern mind. This mind has – for entirely noble philosophical motives – sought to resist the production of the sacred species of the Eucharist as *mere* things, whilst it simultaneously wanted to challenge the radical individualism that found expression so vigorously in the Catholic piety of the nineteenth century (although projecting its suspicion of this individualism back onto a much earlier age). Hans Urs von Balthasar sums up this challenge when, in describing *Corpus Mysticum*, he suggests that its 'point of departure' was that the accent of Eucharistic theology had been 'displaced from the social aspect to that of the real presence' so that 'individualistic eucharistic piety (won) a handhold'.[8] Even here, we must beware of von Balthasar's tendency to suggest a one-sided presentation of de Lubac's conclusions, which are in themselves far more subtle and in their very delicacy demand greater attentiveness than really he allows. For de Lubac reminds us that only 'at one level'

[7] H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 381. 'Das ist der Grund, warum alles Verstehen immer mehr ist als bloßes Nachvollziehen einer fremden Meinung.'

[8] H. U. Card. von Balthasar, *Henri de Lubac: Sein organisches Lebenswerk* (Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1976), p. 32. 'Hier zweigt die Fragestellung' . . . 'Der Akzent vom sozialen Aspekt auf den Realpräsenz verlagert wurde, gewann die individualistische Eucharistiefrömmigkeit eine Handhabe'. (E.T. by J. Fessio SJ, M. W. Waldstein, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac* [San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1991].)

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was there a question of 'an overly individualistic devotion'.[9] What other levels (*parts*) are at work? What degree of personal devotion is implied by the de Lubac's understanding, that it be not 'overly' (*trop*) individual? Much more than individualism alone seems to be at issue in the complexity of *Corpus Mysticum* as a whole.

The other centrally important interpreter of this text, perhaps far more decisive than von Balthasar, has been the French Jesuit Michel de Certeau, and Catherine Pickstock sums up well his interpretation in two sentences from her work *After Writing*. Pickstock attributes the interpretation to be followed by the reader as much to de Lubac as to de Certeau and formalises the transition de Lubac traces as the shift of a 'cæsura between the first and second (the historic body of Jesus and the sacramental body) . . . [to a] *cæsura* placed between the second and the third (the sacramental body and the ecclesial body)'.[10]

Here the strength and compelling character of de Certeau's hermeneutic is revealed. Having lived with this text for a long time I struggle to see in de Lubac's words what de Certeau finds so easily, and here is the danger of all decisive and compulsive interpretations of complex texts – precisely because they provide accessibility to what is often obscure and difficult, their authority is derived, not from the actual care and accuracy of the reading, but from its clarity. As a clear reading, it requires no further struggle for clarification. In this sense clear and decisive interpretations disbar rather than facilitate access to the texts they interpret. Pickstock adds by way of clarification of her own: 'The shift therefore pertains to a change in the distribution of the binary organisation of ternary foci, as Michel de Certeau describes it', thereby confirming the real author of the interpretative key.[11] The force of the key she describes as having lost the sense of the 'liturgy as the "site" where the visible community (*laos*) and the mysterious work (*ergon*) combined'.[12] Here Pickstock, whatever else she is resisting in current liturgical theology, falls in entirely with the contemporary interpretations of this text. For this clever etymology of the word *leitourgia* in fact precisely reverses its real meaning. If liturgy is the 'work' of the 'people' (to give it

[9] H. Card. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: l'eucharistie et l'église au moyen age – étude historique*, Paris, Aubier, 1949, p. 259. Page references throughout are to the French edition, since the English translation indicates the French pagination. 'D'une part, en effet, les développements toujours accrus de la piété eucharistique s'orientèrent plus aisément dans le sens d'une dévotion trop individualiste.'

[10] Pickstock, C., *After Writing: The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, p. 158.

[11] Pickstock, C., *After Writing*, citing de Certeau SJ, M., trans. Smith, M. B., *The Mystic Fable*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, p. 158.

[12] Pickstock, C., *After Writing*, citing de Certeau SJ, M., trans. Smith, M. B., *The Mystic Fable*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, p. 158.

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its most naked and basic reading), the *laos* is not ever the *visible* people or 'community', but rather the invisible *stem* and root, the tribe or nation, implied and made manifest by *this one here*, this man or women who is variously, perhaps, a Briton, a Catholic, and so forth. The *laos* are the ones who represent and bring to visibility the *laos* as such and in itself, but they are not, even in their entirety, the entirety of the *laos*. The *laos* has a past and a future – a mission and a destiny: it is never *reducible* to any exemplar, any merely visible form. The word *laos*, properly understood, is precisely the *opposite* of the definition given by Pickstock. What of the *ergon*, which she interprets as 'mystical work'? Here again confusion reigns. In every case in Greek, the *ergon* relates to that which is *done* and so is a present, visible, or recordable *deed* – it has this meaning even in its dependent sense of 'the work of thinking' (where the work done is done in a specific place and time). The *ergon* is in each case, whilst potentially significatory, signifying from out of what is done *here* and *now*, at a specified point. If we take the most common rendering of *leitourgia* as 'public service' (either in its pagan or Christian use) then we see it is *that* visible and required work or works which signifies, and arises on the basis of, membership of the *laos*, *invisible in its essence*: the city, tribe, and nation. To undertake *leitourgia* is to make a public manifestation, through visible works, of the invisible (and so mystical) meaning and destiny of the *laos*. Liturgy means the opposite of what Pickstock makes it mean, and I have shown this (to quote her again) through a change in the distribution of the binary organisation of terneray foci. The term of greatest importance and which undergoes the greatest transformations, but the one which she overlooks and does not even examine in this etymology, is 'mystical'. Pickstock presumes that the term 'mystical' is entirely stable, so that she focuses only on the transformations that are worked on the three various meanings of the 'body'. Whereas the term 'corpus' or body is distributed across three 'focuses' (to use Pickstock's word), and so remains stable, even if in three stable 'poles', the term 'mystical' is not at all stabilised by any specificity: its meaning is fluid and subject to alteration. It is precisely the means by which each 'focus' or pole is bound or split from the other two. It is for this reason that de Lubac notes (and following his identification of Berengar as the chief villain in the transformations he traces) 'a somewhat new concept of mystery was developing . . . that is what we must investigate in greater detail'.[13]

In the specific question of the referent of the word 'mystical' in the meaning of *leitourgia*, the mystical pertains to the body as people, nation, and city – and not to the work to be done. The

[13] H. Card. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 258. 'Une conception quelque peu nouvelle du mystère s'élabore . . . C'est ce qu'il nous faut voir plus en détail.'

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visible and so not-mystical deed brings to visibility the significatory, the sacramentum, the real meaning and being of the *laos*. There is a final indication from the word *laos* that we must not overlook. For the *laos* are those inscribed into a head – formerly a prince, or leader of the people, or even of a god (although here there is confusion since the prince, hero, or leader can often make a claim to divine lineage); more latterly, perhaps, a city, or a land, but these are also more often than not divinely apportioned in the pagan texts.[14] Membership of a *laos*" therefore has a divine reference and suggests the making manifest of the unseenness of the god in the visible work done. Not for nothing had the word *leitourgia* religious significance for the pagans: not for nothing was it selected as word describing the Christian rites and mysteries. This is also its meaning in the Greek of the Septuagint, the letter to the Hebrews, and the letters of St. Paul, not overlooking its specifically sacral indication of the activity of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies. The actual origin of Christian use of the term *leitourgia* is above all biblical. What is signified in every Christian case is the invisible meaning and subject of the visible deed: the person of the Christ in his relation to the Father.

Yet Pickstock can be forgiven for the confusion her etymology and exegesis exhibits, for de Certeau exactly, one might say, *accidentally*, follows the contours of the preoccupations of the debates surrounding the sacred liturgy in the post-war period. But the slippage in the use of this term 'mystical' is critical, for it demonstrates that what is being read back into de Lubac is precisely the visibility of the assembled community, the *ecclesia*, whilst at the same time an enforcement of the visibility of the work done as mystical. In fact the *ecclesia* appears from out of the work done, and *mystically* signifies the body in question. The *ecclesia* does not assemble to do the work, the work only shows the *ecclesia* to have been already assembled, and as assembled, to belong to something mystically and invisibly wider than itself. The true scope and meaning of the *ecclesia* is *precisely* what is *unseen* in what is *seen*. Moreover, inasmuch as de Certeau's interpretative key shifts the emphasis *from* the work *to* the assembly, so he loses the essential point that the work done is also the work of Christ and not a deed or set of practices undertaken by the assembly. De Certeau again reverses the phenomenological perspective that the assembly only arises on the basis of the work done. De Lubac, in distinction to de Certeau, seems well aware of the significance and the direction implied here by the work done: the result of the work

[14] Just for one example, the allotment of Rhodes to the god Helios (cf. Pindar, *Seventh Olympian Ode*), let alone Athena's possession of Athens herself.

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done is, he notes: 'He himself is the body whose food those who eat it become'.[15]

It seems therefore the attempt, by de Certeau and even to a certain extent von Balthasar, to interpret the text as the overcoming of an individualism is not being faithful to de Lubac's own motives. De Lubac, in reminding his readers only eight years after the text appeared of the need for a historical perspicacity and reserve in interpreting his book, again draws attention to what is at issue: for whom is this fetish and individualism apparent, and so to whom does it appear as a danger? Is it, as has been routinely supposed in the whole vigorous drive to devalue the Mediæval (just to name an epoch in this manner is at the same time to mark out the boundaries of its objectification), the inversion that arose after the twelfth century (and which *Corpus Mysticum* attempts to name) – or is it a danger all too present for *us*, the readers and constitutors of this periodisation? Who would deny that our own lives are driven and constituted by the appearance of things as fetish, and at the same time by the appearance of an extreme individualism constituted *out of* the very things that mark out, isolate, and individuate, the human self? On top of the inversions and shifts that de Lubac actually traces must also be traced the ones he did not: the inversions and shifts of modernity and postmodernity. De Lubac is himself sensitive to how the passage of time, and the passage of pedagogy itself, produces these shifts. Not arbitrarily does he name the distance between St. Thomas and Descartes as a period of the bastardisation of thought, and Descartes prepares the inception of modernity on the basis of the corruption, not the supersession, of the wisdom of antiquity and the Middle Ages.[16] This degeneration proceeds apace. *Objects* – and this means not just 'things', but also the matter of thinking, 'ideology' (ideas, slogans) – in these shifts and inversions have come to render selves as *subjects* and individuate them radically. The Marxist Louis Althusser refers to this as 'this very precise operation which we call *interpellation* or hailing . . . "Hey, you, down there" '.[17] A certain kind of hermeneutic in this tradition of interpretation takes for granted that the 'hoisting of the host',

[15] H. Card. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 201. 'Est lui-même le corps dont ceux qui le mangent deviennent l'aliment'.

[16] See H. Card. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 365. 'Philosophers compared Descartes with St. Thomas, without taking into account the interval of time that separates them, or all the undistinguished successors and all the bastard descendants who occupied that interval and defined Descartes's historical context.' ['Bref, des philosophes comparaient Descartes à saint Thomas, sans tenir compte de l'intervalle qui les sépare dans le temps, ni de tous les épigones et de tous les bâtards qui occupent cet intervalle et qui définissent la situation historique de Descartes.']

[17] L. Althusser, *Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état* in *La pensée: revue du rationalisme moderne* (Paris, Livres de Poche, 1970), p. 31. 'Cette opération très précise que nous appelons *l'interpellation* [. . .] "hé, vous, là bas".' Emphasis in original.

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the elevation of the Sacred Species by the priest in the consecration prayer of the Mass (the photographic representation on the cover of the translation) has the power of an interpellative act, but it need not always have been so (or be so now). It is precisely here that de Lubac calls us to greater care in reading the past, and of not despising what we think we find there. De Lubac's research can (and has been) too often accounted for in versions that are mere caricatures of his original.

The 'shift' that these caricatures propose to 'solve' – the inversion that de Lubac traces in *Corpus Mysticum* – by means of a correctional shift *away from* the appearance of the 'objectified' host *to* a concentration on the worshipping community, is one that the theology of the Schools could never have understood, and yet it has itself propelled much of the basis for liturgical reform from the point at which this was widely acclaimed. The difficulty is that the community that has assembled (as we now understand it, especially in an age when to be regularly at Mass is to make a choice *for* something and often *against* what everyone else is doing on a Sunday morning) is a community that often understand itself to have chosen to be there, not the community – the body proper – that we must assume has been chosen and assembled by God. The result – caricature indeed – has been the fetishisation, not of the sacred species, the eucharistic host, but of the community itself, the one that has assembled for the Eucharist, and so the *Anwendung* of the interpretation has been a turning-in on ourselves, to intensify the objectification of the subjects for whom the host has become mere object.[18] All of this arises, however, on the basis of the subject-object distinction, so much a category of the Enlightenment. This category is a necessary condition for the devaluation of the uppermost values, where objects becomes values whose valuations can be *changed* by those ones doing the valuing: subjects, who can therefore decide, or come to be convinced, that a *mere thing*, however sacred its former meaning, can be esteemed at nought. The paradox of Althusser's theory of interpellation is that when he wrote, he presumed that the invitation of the interpellative thing sufficed for subjection; but *now*, in postmodernity, what interpellates a subject is at the same time something to be overcome by that subject: it is

[18] It should be noted that – for just one example – St. Thomas Aquinas is acutely sensitive to the question of whether those assembled in a church for a particular Mass are synonymous with those constituted as the assembly – the *ecclesia Dei* – by the action of the Mass itself. Aquinas is clear that those who number the *ecclesia* are known only to God: there are those present unable or unfit to make their communion (and even if they do, who do not do so 'spiritually', i.e. perfectly, but only sacramentally; but there are also those *absent* or who do not actually communicate (or who cannot) but who by grace and desire nevertheless effectively (and so really) are joined to the body of Christ. cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, IIIa; Q. 73, a. 3, resp.; Q. 80, a. 2, resp.

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the pretext for asserting my drive for the *triumph* of myself *over* my subjection.

Is this what *Corpus Mysticum* makes possible – that one meaning is to be exchanged for another, supposedly older, but in fact entirely of the moment? De Lubac clearly thought not, and was aware by 1949 both of the uses (*Anwendungen*) to which his conclusions could be put, and of the violence inherent in their ill-use. The subject-object distinction is unknown to the sources into which de Lubac enquired. The production of the worshipping assembly as an end in itself was unthinkable in the Patristic age, and that of the theology of the Schools, precisely because the Church here present (the assembly in whose midst I find myself) is always a thing unfinished, and whose immediate future is as yet to be decided. Who is saved, and so actually incorporated into the *corpus mysticum*, is a thing hoped for but unproven in the present. Judgement as a coming time is nothing less than the attestation of this. Only at the *end* of time is the Church in its entirety to be understood as fully present, and so only then is the identity of the Church with the Body of Christ visible and complete. At this point, sacraments, and above all the sacrament of the altar, cease to be, no longer needed as the mediation of the incompleteness of the *Corpus mysticum* (the end of time and the glorification of Christ's mystical Body, and the point at which the Body ceases to be mysterious, or a matter of significations, and is completed). Von Balthasar himself emphasises the importance of this eschatological aspect in de Lubac's work, and notes: 'the Origenistic thought, which finds so strong an echo through history . . . that Christ and the blessed attain their ultimate beatitude only if the whole "Body of Christ", the redeemed creation, is gathered together in the transfiguration, is honoured in its lasting spiritual meaning'. This occurs, von Balthasar tells us, only in 'the heavenly Jerusalem'.[19]

There is a hermeneutical key proposed in the text that most commentators have, as far as I can see, overlooked. This is separate from the key that McPartlan has so carefully explored, and which is so central to de Lubac's wider writings, 'literally speaking, therefore, the Eucharist makes the Church'.[20] De Lubac traces the way

[19] H. U. Card. von Balthasar, *Henri de Lubac: Sein organisches Lebenswerk* (Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1976), p. 32. 'Der origenistische Gedanke, der so starken Widerhall durch die Geschichte fand . . . daß Christus und die Seligen ihre letzte Seligkeit erst finden, wenn der ganze "Leib Christi", die erlöste Schöpfung in der Verklärung beisammen wird, wird in seiner bleibenden geistigen Bedeutung gewürdigt' . . . 'himmlisches Jerusalem'. De Lubac explains this eschatological perspective in *Exégèse médiévales quartes sens de l'écriture* (Paris, Aubier, 1959), part 1, vol. 2, pp. 621–643. E. T. by E. M. Macierowski as *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol. 2 (London, T&T Clark [Continuum] 2006), pp. 179–197.

[20] *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 104. 'A la lettre, donc, l'eucharistie fait l'Eglise. Elle en fait une réalité intérieure' English p. 88. Cf. McPartlan, P., *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993.

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in which, following Berengar, that 'against *mystically not truly*, was set, in no less exclusive a sense, *truly not mystically*'.[21] This is the transition to an objectivity of Eucharistic presence that I have myself attempted to oppose in my own writing on transubstantiation,[22] a tendency to over-objectification that characterises much contemporary Catholic eucharistic writing and piety. Objectivity is set as the *solution* for doctrines of transignification and their related heresies. An objectivity which results (in its most postmodern forms) in the laughable appeal to impanation or the absurdities of statements such as 'all bread is on the way to figuring the body of Christ'.[23] As de Lubac concludes, in this tendency to over-objectivity, 'perhaps orthodoxy was safeguarded, but on the other hand, doctrine was certainly impoverished'.[24]

What de Lubac identifies as the root of the transitions effected in liturgical and sacramental theology (such that these two have come apart having once been one, together rooted in a *practice*, the *ergon* of visible deeds – *lex orandi* roots [*statuit*, makes stand] any *lex et ratio credendi*)[25] is the emergence of 'a form of rationalism and dialectic'.[26] In Berengar, for de Lubac the author and source of this rationalism, 'all the symbolic inclusions were transformed, in his understanding, into dialectical antitheses. Thus he constantly separated what tradition unified.'[27] De Lubac even finds in Berengar, whose genius he implies was itself mediocre in quality, the phrase 'the eminent role of reason'.[28]

[21] *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 251. 'Au *mystice*, *non vere* répond, non moins exclusif, un *vere*, non *mystice*.'

[22] Cf. Hemming, L. P.: *After Heidegger – Transubstantiation in Heythrop Journal*, vol. 42, No. 2 (October 2000); *Transubstantiating Ourselves: A Phenomenological Basis for the Theology of Transubstantiation in Heythrop Journal*, vol. 45, No. 2, (October 2003).

[23] Pickstock, C., *After Writing*, p. 260.

[24] *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 251. 'L'orthodoxie est peut-être sauve, mais la doctrine, en revanche, est sûrement appauvrie.'

[25] The formula *lex orandi, lex credendi* is an abbreviation, a tag of the School-room. It originates from Prosper of Aquitaine, where its proper order is unambiguously stated: *ut lex supplicandi legem statuat credendi*: let the law of prayer determine the law of belief (Prosper of Aquitaine, *Capitula Cœlestini*, 8 in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 51, 209–210).

[26] *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 253. 'Comme un rationalisme et comme une dialectique.'

[27] *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 254. 'Toutes les inclusions symbolique se muent, dans son intelligence, en antithèses dialectiques. Constamment il sépare ainsi ce que la tradition unissait.'

[28] Ratzinger, "Ecclesiology," p.148, note 18. Karim Schelkens, "*Lumen Gentium*'s 'Subsistit In' Revisited: The Catholic Church and Christian Unity after Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 69(2008): 875–893, thinks to find yet another interpretive key in the October 2, 1963 intervention of Bishop Jan van Dodewaard. He wants it to be said that the Church, understood as the universal medium of salvation, "is found" (*inveniri*) in the Catholic Church. Schelkens says van Dodewaard establishes a distinction between the Church as the universal means of salvation from the Catholic Church as but the "concrete form" of this universal means. This distinction is continued, he claims, after *inveniri* has become *adest*, and *adest* has become *subsistit in*. The universal means, moreover, extends

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On what basis is the transition and inversion from the Patristic sources to the mid-twelfth century and the present day to be understood? Here we must part company with von Balthasar, and indeed with all the hermeneutical keys for de Lubac's work which provide quick or all-too-easy ways in to understanding his results. To understand the book we have translated we must no longer be concerned with what de Lubac *said*, but must, in listening to de Lubac, concentrate on what he was speaking *of*: the subordination of prayer to reason. Here again it is necessary to be more precise in the face of the tendency to understand prayer to be the work of the modern, acting person or subject: the prayer in question is the prayer of Christ, *into* which we insert ourselves and whose given words we make our own. Prayer does not reveal the God who is because it reveals what he *says* and so *means*, it discloses God because we are included into and make our own the utterance of his Word for his hearing. In this sense we do not, strictly speaking, ever pray: rather are we *prayed*, by means and extension from that same inversion that we understand (and as I have shown, de Lubac himself quite clearly understood) the food of the eucharist to assimilate us to what it itself is.

At the heart of this is the way in which philosophical perspicuity appears as the handmaiden to the discipline of theology, and so to the self-understanding to which Gadamer points. This understanding is required if we are to find our way back in to the place toward which de Lubac seeks to lead us. We must be willing to put to the sharpest possible questioning von Balthasar's claim that de Lubac's work is to be interpreted from a suspended place 'in which he could not practice any philosophy without its transcendence into theology, but also no theology without its essential inner substructure of philosophy', in the light of the actual hermeneutic de Lubac suggests for *Corpus Mysticum*, that the transformations it traces arise on the basis of a catastrophic apotheosis of reason and dialectic.[29] In fact what von Balthasar discloses is the finality of the very rationalism that is ushered in through the emergence of theology as a discipline independent of the liturgy, and ceasing to be a commentary on the meaning of the liturgy – perhaps with Berengar, perhaps with Abelard, perhaps even to be found in the gap between Anselm's prayer made in the *Proslogion* and converted by him into reason in

beyond the concrete form. However, the only thing van Dodewaard recognizes here as existing beyond the *universale medium* or *totalem compaginem* of the Church are elements of truth and sanctification. He rather implies the identity of the Catholic Church and the Church as the universal means of salvation. Van Dodewaard's text can be found in Hellín, 1048–1049.

[29] H. U. Card. von Balthasar, *Henri de Lubac: Sein organisches Lebenswerk* (Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1976), p. 12. 'In der er keine Philosophie ohne deren Übersteig in Theologie, aber auch keine Theologie ohne deren wesentliche, innere Substruktur von Philosophie treiben konnte.'

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his own commentary on his own text. Anselm having structured the *Proslogion* as a prayer, an address to God,[30] then describes this text as a *demonstration* of the existence of the very one whom he has *already* addressed (and so, surely, taken to exist) in commenting on the *Proslogion* in his subsequent correspondence with Gaunilo. This perpetual collapse of theology into philosophy, celebrated above all by John Milbank in his recent small book on de Lubac,[31] culminates in the persistence in contemporary theology of Hegel's description of the triumph of absolutely subjectivity in the discipline of theology, and, as I have shown with respect to what is really being announced as a way to interpret *Corpus Mysticum*, as a product of the highest rationalism, actually foreign to de Lubac's own conclusions. And yet Milbank only pushes to an extreme what can without doubt be found as a tendency in de Lubac's own work.[32]

This perpetual collapse, going by its other name of ontotheology, runs the risk of being the manufacture of an erasure – the subjective and objective genitive is intended here – both of enacting an erasure (*erasing something*), and of being produced by an erasure (*being erased*) at work from elsewhere, and in fact from far outside the place of faith. The enquiry into past sources precisely has the task of illuminating and making intelligible not the world of the past but above all the world in which we ourselves stand out – and which is stood on the past. The erasure we are always most in danger of is a self-erasure, the erasure of the very world we inhabit. The danger is that this place names the very naïvety de Lubac himself spoke of with respect to this text, taken at the highest degree.

De Lubac's is an interior account, an account drawn from *within* the texts he reads, and ignores the enormous pressure from without, from the wider context of the dramatic changes enacted in Europe by

[30] Anselm, *Proslogion*, II. 'Ergo, domine, qui das fidei intellectum, da mihi, ut quantum scis expedire intelligam, quia es sicut credimus, et hoc es quod credimus.' ('therefore, O Lord [– unmistakably vocative, addressed *to* God!], who give intellection to faith, give to me that I may know as much as you know to set free (in my knowing), that you are as we believe [you are], and are what we believe [you are].')

[31] Cf. Milbank, J., *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*, London, SCM Press, 2005. See esp. p. 39 f. Milbank cannot resist accusing de Lubac of being to a certain extent incoherent on this issue (which begs the question whether Milbank has really done justice to, or understood, him) and shows the extent to which his (Milbank's) view is an interpretative synthesis by his noting of the relationship between grace and nature: 'De Lubac never stated quite this extremity of paradox all at once; yet at various times he made diverse statements which justify this complex entanglement' (p. 40).

[32] Which is consistent with a view de Lubac himself expressed. De Lubac, in attempting to describe the relationship between theology and philosophy, concluded (in an article from 1936) 'Every philosopher of today, provided he be perspicacious enough to pass beyond positivism and enter truly into philosophy, is, whether he wishes it or not, and perhaps in just proportion to his perspicacity, a Christian philosopher' (H. Card. de Lubac, *Sur la philosophie chrétienne* in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, vol 63 (1936), pp. 225–253 [251]).

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the ending of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of Modernity. Once again, the naïvety of the text discloses itself in understanding these movements to be unfolded simply on the basis of the texts themselves, and not the situations – the places from which they emerge and speak. In this he gives us in each case the words, but not the tones of voice. The dismantling of the liturgical tradition, and of the practice of theology as a disciplined practice above all of commentary on the sacred liturgy, is a piecemeal process of infinite, poly-faceted, complexity. We could take for just one example the destruction of the Mozarabic rite, to illustrate the dangers which theology of this kind faces, in exchanging its work of making the meaning of the liturgy available to thought, to what thinking *thinks to be right* subordinating the liturgy to the rectitude achieved by the mind. The ancient Mozarabic rite whose orthodoxy (in its use of the term *adoptio* to describe the relation of Christ to the Father) had been defended to Charlemagne's bishops by one no less than Alcuin himself was imperilled by meddling theologians who did not understand the ways and modes in which it spoke. The pretext of the charge of Arianism was brought to Alcuin by Elipando, archbishop of Toledo, and Felix, bishop of Urgel, with the intention that the indigenous Mozarabic be replaced by the alien Roman rite in the Iberian peninsula. Alcuin defended the orthodoxy of the Mozarabic rite on the basis of its antiquity (thereby disproving the claim so often made that the Carolingian reform was an imposition of liturgical uniformity across the whole of Europe).[33] The accusations and pressure for change persisted, however, until finally under Gregory VII and around 1079 following the Council of Burgos, the rite was reduced to six parishes and a chapel in the city of Toledo[34] The suppression of the Mozarabic rite and the systematic introduction of the Roman rite into the Iberian peninsula resulted in a large-scale detachment of the Iberian peoples from an organic connection to their liturgical practice (and severed the connection between lay piety and clerical) which has arguably persisted to this very day. Countless other historical examples could be adduced – from the systematic destruction of the contemplative tradition by the rationalising Joseph II and Marie Teresia, and above all by Napoleon, across Europe in the central centuries of modernity to the destruction of the structure of the Roman breviary, beginning with Cardinal Quignones initial revision in 1532 and ending with Pius X's revisions of 1911, authorising a contemporary collapse in its form that means the present *Liturgia Horarum* would be unrecognisable in form, content, or practice, to the eyes of even a century ago. The motors for these changes are rarely theological, and belong

[33] Cf. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 101, 119; 101, 231–300.

[34] Cf. Rivera, J. F., trans. Reyes OSB, J. M., *Mozarabic Liturgy* in Vellian, J. (ed.) *The Romanization Tendency* (The Syrian Churches Series), vol. 8, Kottayam, 1975.

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to a twofold enactment: first, of the failure adequately to transmit the meaning of the tradition itself down the generations; second, the energetic demands of secular life to flourish and triumph apart from the sources of its redemption. Rationalism has its roots *outside* the liturgy, and requires a broader education than the theologian's alone in order to be understood – which is the only point of this hasty sketch that itself teeters on the edge of caricature.[35] If my argument is correct, that the real key to *Corpus Mysticum* has so far been overlooked in favour of one that runs in precisely the opposite direction, then de Lubac is all too well aware that as a naïve text, he names in it only a *beginning*, from where we set out and seek maturity; not an *end*, a 'solution' to all our theological problems. Beginnings are filled with shortcomings and the lacunæ of understanding, which time slowly closes as understanding develops. The beginning, precisely because it is marked by gaps, teaches us a reserve towards what we do not know: to close these gaps too quickly is a temptation to be resisted. Taken as a beginning, de Lubac's work allows us to grow and to learn and retrace the contours of previous ages.

The naïvety that marked *Corpus Mysticum* and its reception is now being tested and questioned, and the need acknowledged for it to be overcome – when there is demand for a return, not just to the sources themselves, but to the careful, patient, demanding, uncovering of how they are to be understood. This discovery brings to the fore the question of understanding itself – exactly as Gadamer proposes – as self-understanding of the most genuine kind. Not introspection, but rather of the way in which our own world can stand out and be intelligible *with respect to* that world of the sources with which de Lubac engages, so that a *singular* understanding can emerge. A second reading is required beyond the first – and therefore a return to this text a second time – one that does justice to de Lubac's own understanding of the intrinsic unity present in the *three* kinds of body signified in the Holy Eucharist (and one that by implication rejects the hermeneutic keys of de Certeau and even von Balthasar). It is our earnest hope that the publication of this translation in a renewed context of liturgical debate is, in part, the needed invitation.

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[35] One of the most dramatic – if at times uneven – attempts to analyse this is Geoffrey Hull's *The Banished Heart: Origins of Heteropraxis in the Catholic Church*, Sydney, Spes Nova League, 1995.

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