The End of Motion: John Donne and the Final Cause in Natural and Moral Philosophy

by

Alan James Hogarth

PhD English Studies
School of Humanities
University of Strathclyde

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Abstract

This thesis examines the scientific and moral concept of final causality in the works of John Donne. In the Aristotelian tradition, final causality provided a comprehensive framework which explained how all things in the universe developed towards a natural end. This framework not only governed natural things, but also human behaviour and social/political organisation. With the beginnings of the scientific revolution, the validity of final causality, as the measure of change in the natural world, was called into question, and, by the seventeenth century, had been largely exploded by the mechanical philosophy. Donne's interest in questions of early modern science has been well documented; but an examination of his responses to the disruption of such a fundamental concept as final causality has not yet been attempted. This thesis, therefore, sets out to fill this critical space.

Contrary to previous discussions of Donne's engagement with new science, which imagine him as either grounded intellectually in medieval or new philosophy, I suggest that it is more likely that he preferred to adapt what he knew of the new system to fit in with the old. In this respect, Donne was no different from contemporaries, who graphed new knowledge onto the existing Aristotelian system. The final cause, I argue, is the enduring concept which Donne seeks to uphold.

The thesis also claims that Donne's attraction to the final cause had a personal/biographical, as well as intellectual basis. Because of his marriage and subsequent exile with Ann More, Donne frequently expressed the need for purpose or fulfilment in social life, and this too, I maintain, shaped his understanding of causal movement as being morally correct. The chapters of the thesis are divided equally between questions of natural and moral philosophy, and follow a rough chronology, beginning with the verse letters and ending with the sermons.

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Notes on Sources and Texts

Poems

Only one of Donne's poems, the verse epistle to Lady Carey, exists in the author's own hand. The earliest printed edition of Donne's poems is the 1633 folio *Poems by J. D*. My references to Donne's poetry, his Elegies, Epigrams, Anniversaries and Obsequies, are taken from *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne,* Volume 2, *The Elegies*, Volume 8, *The Epigrams, Epithalamions, Epitaphs, Inscriptions, and Miscellaneous Poems*, and Volume 6, *The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies*, ed. Gary Stringer (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995, 2000). The *Variorum* texts are based on a comprehensive examination and collation of all surviving manuscript and major printed editions of Donne's poetry. Where Variorum editions have yet to be published, I refer to the following editions. Quotations from the verse letters and satires are from *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. Wesley Milgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); quotations from the songs and sonnets are from *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert J. Grierson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912). References to Donne's religious poetry are taken from Helen Gardner, ed. *John Donne: The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). The editions of Milgate, Grierson and Gardner are based substantially on the 1633 edition of the poems and they record textual deviations from the manuscripts. I have chosen to use these editions instead of Robin Robbins's more recent edition, *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (London: Longman, 2008). Rather than working from an overall copy-text, Robbins draws from a selection of manuscript and printed sources to make decisions on individual poems. For this reason, there are specific moments – which I acknowledge throughout the thesis – in which textual variants lead to differing interpretations.

Letters and Prose

Most of Donne's prose letters survived because others preserved them. Thirty-eight exist in Donne's own hand and the rest were transcribed in manuscripts or printed in collections soon after his death. In the absence of a complete modern edition of Donne's letters, quotations are taken from the first printed collection, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (London, 1651), edited by his son, John Donne Jr. Information about the letters can only be gleaned from internal evidence. Moreover, some letters have not been assigned accurate dates and some addressees have yet to be positively identified. For this reason, when referring to the letters I provide the recipient, date and context, where possible, and the page number. In terms of prose works, references to *Biathanatos* are from Ernest W. Sullivan, II, ed.
Biathanatos (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984); quotations from the *Paradoxes and Problems*, are from Helen Peters, ed. *Paradoxes and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). For the *Devotions*, *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Essays in Divinity*, I cite the modern versions by Anthony Raspa, ed. *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasion*s (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975); *Pseudo-Martyr: Wherein Out of Certaine Propositions and Gradations, this Conclusion is Evicted. That Those which are of the Romane Religion in this Kingdome, May and Ought to Take the Oath of Allegiance* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); *Essays in Divinity: Being Several Disquisitions Interwoven with Meditations and Prayers* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). Finally, quotations from *Ignatius his Conclave* are taken from Timothy Stafford Healy, ed. *Ignatius his Conclave* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

Sermons

All references to Donne's Sermons are taken from the 1962 ten-volume series edited by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, *The Sermons of John Donne* (California:

University of California Press, 1962), which remains the most complete edition in print. Where I cite from the sermons, the volume and page number are given in brackets following the quotation.

Philosophical and Theological Editions

Where possible my references to classical philosophy, Aristotle, Seneca, Lucian and Quintilian, are taken from the Loeb Classical Library series. Unless stated otherwise, references to Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* are from the 1947 edition, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). The most complete and accessible translation of Gregory the Great's *Morals* remains the nineteenth-century version of John Henry Parker, trans. *Moralia in Job* (London: J.G.F & J. Rivington, 1844).

Scholarly Conventions

In quoting from early modern texts I retain original spelling and punctuation in an attempt to adhere as closely as possible to original practices of writing and printing. I have, however, followed the standard practice of silently altering the long s. When citing printed texts published in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, the place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. All dates from English sources conform to the Julian calendar, or English Old Style. However, the beginning of the New Year is taken to be 1 January.

All references to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) are from the online edition, http://www.oed.com/.

This thesis follows the conventions of the Chicago Manual of Style. In each chapter the first reference is given in full in a footnote, with subsequent citations appearing in parentheses following the quoted material.

Introduction

i. The Beginning and End of the Final Cause

In Aristotle's view of the world, 'everything that exists or comes to be "by nature" comes to be or changes…for a purpose and towards an end, and is present for the sake of that purpose or end'.[1] 'This goal-directedness', writes Mariska Leunissen, 'is an internal tendency possessed by all natural things, which means that teleology operates among all of nature, from the level of the inanimate elements, through that of living beings, and on to the eternal realm of the heavenly bodies' (p. 2). From the time of Aristotle until the seventeenth century, this *telos*, or final cause, which determined the existence of things according to a definite purpose, was understood as the governing principle of both physical matter and moral behaviour. Aristotle's framework for understanding natural phenomena was based upon what he termed the four causes (*aitia*), or explanations. In order to ascertain the cause (*aition*) of something one could 'specify its matter (the material cause), specify what sort of thing it is (the formal cause), say what the thing is for (the final cause), and say what brought it about (the efficient cause)'.[2] While a particular substance may not have an efficient cause or a particular action a material and formal cause, the final cause (*telos*) is distinct because it is applicable to all things, to the rational and animate, as well as the irrational and inanimate. For Aristotle, natural things were believed to have an in-built aptitude to develop towards their final form. So, for example, 'the acorn's development into the oak was the

[1] Mariska Leunissen, *Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.
[2] Stephen Everson, 'Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 176.

transformation of what was potential into what was actual'.[3] On the other hand, rational agents, human beings, were imbued with the will towards fulfilling a variety of acts.

The dictates of Aristotle's ethics and politics, which determined 'ends' as the scale of virtuous activity were, therefore, bound to the causal movements of nature, and this conceptual association remained largely unchallenged up until the latter half of the sixteenth century. As Steven Shapin notes, 'traditional physics on the eve of the Scientific Revolution had a human-scaled character' (p. 29). This thesis aims to show that the scientific challenge to the notion of final causality at the turn of the sixteenth century is reflected in the writings of John Donne. In particular, the thesis suggests that Donne's understanding of the natural world and moral action was grounded in the teleological Aristotelian tradition, and that as scientific changes occur, his work engages with the implications these changes have for the concept of the final cause in natural and moral philosophy.

Aristotle's notion of final causality was central to the medieval Scholastic tradition. Margaret J. Osler notes that this tradition was largely concerned with studies and commentaries on his '*libri naturales*, particularly the *Physics* and *De anima*'.[4] It is in the commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas that Aristotelian natural and moral philosophy are, most influentially, brought into communion with Christian theology. In his *Summa Theologica* (written between 1265 and 1274), Aquinas considered it 'proper to the rational nature to tend to an end, as directing… and leading itself to the end: whereas it is proper to the irrational nature to tend to an end, as directed or led by another, whether it apprehend the end, as do irrational animals, or do not apprehend it, as is the case of those things which are altogether void of

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[3] Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 29.
[4] Margaret J. Osler, 'Whose Ends? Teleology in Early Modern Natural Philosophy', *Osiris*, 2nd Series 16 (2001): 153.

knowledge'.[5] Rational and irrational things tend towards their best possible end, but both find their ultimate cause in God:

> Now it is clear that particular causes are moved by a universal cause: thus the governor of a city, who intends the common good, moves, by his command, all the particular departments of the city. Consequently all things that lack reason are, of necessity, moved to their particular ends by some rational will which extends to the universal good, namely by the Divine will (I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2).

At the time of Donne's education, the Scholastic curriculum was still very much a part of the school and university system. As Osler notes, it was 'dominant in the universities until well into the seventeenth century', and 'the most commonly used textbooks in formal courses on natural philosophy continued to reflect the Aristotelian tradition' (p. 153). This tradition was largely concerned with a comprehensive study of the four causes, and was the method by which Scholastic philosophers hoped to reach the fullest understanding of an object's nature.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle uses the example of a bronze sculpture to illustrate the action of these four causes.[6] The material cause referred to substance, the 'existence of *material* for the generating process to start from', in this case, the shapeless bronze (II. iii. p.129). The formal cause, Aristotle maintained, existed because 'the thing in question cannot be there unless the material has actually received the *form* or characteristics of the type' (II. iii. p.129). In other words, the shape that the sculpture will become is its form and is the sole means by which we identify and name the object. The efficient cause initiates 'the process of the change or its cessation when the process is completed', for example, through 'the act of a voluntary agent… that produces the effect and starts the material on its way to the product, changing it from what it was to what it is to be' (II. iii. pp. 129-131). This voluntary agent, or

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[5] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2.
[6]Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford (London: William Heinemann, 1957).

efficient cause, is the rational figure of the sculptor who gives to the bronze its shape. The 'end or purpose, for the sake of which the process is initiated', is the final cause, which 'animates all the other determinant factors… "for the sake of which" anything exists or is done is its final and best possible achievement' (II. iii. pp. 131-3). In this example, the final cause is the reason for the entire process of the sculpture's creation, and can be defined as the pleasure which attends the perfection and contemplation of art. Scholastic natural philosophy adhered religiously to this formula in its investigations into the essential natures of physical phenomena and combined natural observations with logic and theology. This created a circumscribed and comprehensive system of questioning which was impenetrable to those without training in the School.

By the time of the Renaissance and the rise of humanism, the Scholastic method was already becoming subject to criticism for an over-developed emphasis upon the minutiae of relatively small, rather than grand, questions, even before discoveries in natural philosophy rendered this practice redundant. In his *Praise of Folly* (1511), Erasmus, for example, mocked the analytical abstractions of the method, which he believed detracted from important theological issues in its obsession with natural causes and effects. To this end, he asked a series of mock questions in the Scholastic style:

> Whether divine generation occurred at a particular point in time? Whether several filiations co-existed in Christ? Is it thinkable that God the Father hated Christ? Could God assume the shape of a woman, of the devil, of an ass, of a pumpkin, or a piece of flint? Suppose him transformed to a pumpkin, how could he have preached, performed miracles, been crucified?[7]

The exponents of humanism recognised that, over time, the original teachings of Aristotle had become distorted and that means themselves were now more important than ends.

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[7] Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings,* trans. Robert M. Adams (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 57.

Moreover, with the advent of the Reformation, the idea that important theological questions should rely upon a system based upon natural philosophy and logic drew heavy criticism from those who wished to re-establish the authority of scripture. Martin Luther objected strongly to this practice in his 1517 treatise, *Against Scholastic Theology*, writing:

> 43. It is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle. This in opposition to common opinion.
> 44. Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle.
> ….
> 46. In vain does one fashion a logic of faith, a substitution brought about without regard for limit or measure. This is in opposition to the new dialecticians.
> 47. No syllogistic form is valid when applied to divine terms. This in opposition to the Cardinal.[8]

Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* (1595) might serve as an example of the movement away from Scholastic and towards humanist understandings of final causality in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In the *Defence*, by way of criticising medieval natural philosophy, Sidney writes that 'natural and supernatural philosophers' persuade themselves 'to be demi-gods' if they know 'the causes of things'.[9] His complaint here is not with the philosophers' pursuit of causes, but rather with their definition of what a true and final end should be. This end, inspired by Greek philosophy, has more expansive aspirations than to dispute endlessly over the essence of a particular substance. Philosophy, history and music are, therefore,

> serving sciences, which, as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistress knowledge, by the Greeks called *architectonike*…in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only… So that, the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills, that most serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be princes above the rest (p. 88).

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[8] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works. Vol. 31: Career of the Reformer*: I, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 12.
[9] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology For Poetry (Or The Defence Of Poesy)* ed. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1965] 2002), 88.

Knowledge of nature may serve as an end in itself, but, as Sidney notes, the accumulation of knowledge in the service of 'ethics and politics' is the 'ending end of all earthly learning'. In science, as in the humanist pursuit of public 'virtuous action', causes and ends remain the scale by which all forms of knowledge are measured. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the good Christian to achieve the best possible end of earthly conduct, since 'the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of' (p. 88).

With the onset of the Scientific Revolution, Aristotle's model of the universe was gradually eroded by new discoveries in astronomy and physics, and historians have frequently suggested that the eradication of final causes was central to the displacement of Aristotelian orthodoxy. Shapin argues that 'what had given physics its grip on common sense for centuries was now to be seen as a sign of its inadequacy. Just to state the teleological character of Aristotelian natural philosophy was to count as critique' (p. 30). According to the Aristotelian tradition, the universe was finite and fixed upon an axis with the earth at its centre. A series of spheres containing the elements, planets and stars were believed to revolve around this centre, and the source of all movement was derived from the *primum mobile*, or first mover, the enclosing limit of the cosmos. Following Copernicus' formulation of a heliocentric universe in 1543, a series of astronomical observations made by Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, and Galileo, gradually undermined any claims to the absolute order and spherical perfection once justified by the old cosmological system. Brahe discovered a new star in the Cassiopeia constellation in 1572, proving for the first time that changes in the celestial region were possible. Kepler's revelation that the movements of the planets were elliptical rather than spherical put an end to the ideal spherical planetary motions of Aristotle, and Galileo's observations included sunspots, the four moons of Jupiter, the topography of the moon and many new stars, all of which conflicted with Aristotelian cosmology. In

particular, the discovery of new planets and stars posed a significant threat to the notion of causal movements in the universe, by hinting at the possibility of infinite space.[10]

The theory of an infinite universe, championed most openly by Giordano Bruno in this period, posited that if all space is infinite, then there can be no centre, nor can there be a definite beginning or end. This anti-hierarchical, homogenisation of the cosmos led Bruno to surmise that there existed countless worlds throughout space with equal claims to the importance assumed by the Earth. In his dialogue, *The Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584), he writes that:

> In this way, we know that if we were on the moon or on other stars, we would not be in a place very different from this – and maybe in a worse place, just as there may be other bodies quite as good and even better in themselves and in the greater happiness of their inhabitants. Thus we will know so many stars, heavenly bodies, deities numbering hundreds of thousands, who take part in the ministry and the contemplation of the first, universal, infinite, and eternal Mover.[11]

These infinite multitudes of planets, still owe their existence to the first 'eternal Mover', God, but the Earth is no longer the privileged centre of the cosmos and the accuracy of the Genesis account of creation is called into question.

On the subject of physical matter, an increase in and revival of mechanistic theories of nature worked to undermine the almost universal practice of studying the 'essence', or final form, of a substance as the basis for understanding its true nature. Instead, the material cause, matter itself, was to become the starting point for all observations. One important model of a mechanical universe was to be found in ancient Greek atomic theory, which was increasingly

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[10] On Brahe see John Robert Christianson, *On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe, Science, and Culture in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17. On Kepler's theory see Rhonda Martens, *Kepler's Philosophy and New Astronomy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 69-97. For an account of Galileo's discoveries see Stillman Drake, *Galileo at Work: His Scientific Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
[11] Giordano Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, trans. Edward A. Gosselin & Lawrence S. Lerner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 90-1.

gaining currency in this period. Francis Bacon was an early exponent of the theory and, in the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), argued that

> the natural philosophy of Democritus and some others, who removed God and Mind from the structure of things, and attributed the form thereof able to maintain itself to infinite essays or proofs of nature (which they term by one name, Fate or Fortune), and assigned the causes of particular things to the necessity of matter, seems to me… to have been, as regards physical causes, much more solid and to have penetrated further into nature than that of Aristotle and Plato; for this single reason, that the former never wasted time on final causes, while the latter were ever inculcating them. And in this Aristotle is more to be blamed than Plato.[12]

Atomic theory, as Bacon notes, dispensed with the need for a 'mind' or cause to animate matter. Since, according to the Atomists, the universe was infinite and completely composed of atoms and void space, movement and the creation and dissolution of bodies were believed to be governed by chance. Whilst acknowledging the need to abandon final causes in matters of natural philosophy, Bacon was willing to admit their efficacy in metaphysics and as guiding principles of behaviour. In his own words, he questioned them not 'because those final causes are not true and worthy to be inquired in metaphysical speculations; but because their excursions and irruptions into the limits of physical causes has bred a waste and solitude in that track' (p. 364). The implications of Bacon's assessment are significant because they suggest that natural and moral philosophy cannot be bound by a single natural governing order. Indeed, Bacon remains untroubled by the division of the two sciences. As Osler notes, although 'opponents' of the Aristotelian tradition

> rejected appeals to immanent final causes, which were so closely linked with the Aristotelian idea of form or essence, they acknowledged the finality of intentional actions undertaken by rational actors. The defenders of final causes defended finality

[12] Francis Bacon, *Collected works of Francis Bacon: Philosophical works, Volume I,* eds. James Spedding & Robert Leslie Ellis (London: Routledge [1875] 1996), 363-4.

> in this latter sense, considering finality in the natural world to be the result of God's purposes imposed on the creation (p. 155).

This observation represents an important starting point for this thesis, since Bacon's position on final causality is completely different from Donne's famous conclusion in the *First Anniversary* (1611). In Donne's poem, the world 'Is crumbled out againe to his Atomis. / 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone; / All iust supply, and all Relation', and 'Prince, Subiect, Father, Sonne, are things forgot' (211-5). To consider the fluctuating movement of atoms as a basis for uncovering the truth of the world's composition is represented by Donne as unthinkable. The poem's treatment of atomism is clearly negative in its picturing of 'Atomis' as the end of 'coherence' in the world. Moreover, unlike Bacon's assessment, Donne figures the loss of 'all Relation' and causality in nature as having consequences for the ethical and political structures of the state and the family. If the underlying structure of the universe consists of matter in motion, might questioning the causal nature of its operation also cast doubt on the efficacy of applying causality to the spheres of moral philosophy and politics, as well as to nature?

Whilst atomism, according to the *First Anniversary*, could implicitly undermine political and social institutions, in reality it explicitly contradicted certain central tenets of Christianity, such as the immortality of the soul and the doctrine that God created the universe from nothing. These atheistic and heretical implications of atomic theory meant that its proponents had to tread carefully. As Osler observes,

> These questions had a particular urgency within the context of early modern natural philosophy – especially among adherents of the mechanical philosophy – many of whom wanted simultaneously to eliminate Aristotelianism and to avoid the materialism, deism, and atheism into which the mechanical philosophy threatened to lead them (pp. 152-3).

As a consequence, mechanical theories were often reconciled with a causality which was dependent upon the will of God, a compromise reached most famously by Pierre Gassendi in the later seventeenth century and to which, I suggest, Donne also subscribed.[13] This thesis aims to show that this impulse, to re-establish final causality in the face of shifting perceptions of the natural world can be detected in Donne's work. It argues that, in spite of the appearance of new and compelling theories about the material nature of existence, Donne holds to the principle of final causality in his writing because it remains the most appropriate framework for establishing a sense of order, not just in nature, but also in the ethical, moral and political movements of everyday life. By examining his allusions to final causality, the thesis seeks to add to our understanding of how Donne's writing responds to the period's philosophical and cultural developments, and, as a consequence, provide an indication of his intellectual and personal motivations, both of which, I suggest, are influenced by purposes and ends.

ii. Contextualising the Final Cause in Relation to Donne

As his allusion to atomic theory in the *First Anniversary* suggests, Donne was sensitive to new knowledge, and throughout his work there are references to contemporary astronomy, medicine and other branches of the 'new philosophy'. The remarkable swiftness with which he responded to astronomical discoveries attests to his interests in this area. Marjorie Hope Nicholson, in her essay, 'Kepler, the *Somnium*, and John Donne' (1940), for example, suggests that Donne may have seen the 1609 manuscript of Kepler's *Somnium*, and, as a consequence, borrowed elements to include in his satirical pamphlet, *Ignatius his Conclave*,

[13] On Gassendi's atomism see Lynn Sumida Joy, *Gassendi the Atomist: Advocate of History in an Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1987] 2002); Saul Fisher, *Pierre Gassendi's Philosophy and Science: Atomism for Empiricists* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

published in English in 1611.[14] She argues that the lunar voyage described in the *Somnium* inspired the narrator's disembodied flight, as well as Donne's proposition that Ignatius Loyola establish a Jesuit colony on the moon. In terms of his exposure to new intellectual environments, there is some speculation as to whether, after Oxford, he spent some years at Cambridge, which was more open to unorthodox learning at this time.[15] 'Out of the atmosphere of Cambridge', Charles Monroe Coffin notes, 'proceeded the first champions of the new science of the Renaissance'.[16] These included Francis Bacon, the Copernicans, John Dee and Robert Recorde, and the scientifically minded Thomas Blundeville and Thomas Digges, both published authors of works on astronomy.[17] Donne's time at Lincoln's Inn was similarly given over to studies which were not entirely devoted to the law, if we are to believe the account of his activities in these years recounted in a letter of 1609 to Sir Henry Goodyer. According to Donne, he found himself 'diverted by the worst voluptuousnes, which is an Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages'.[18] In spite of Donne's experiences at the universities and in London, what remains important is that these ideas were current at the time and accessible to any individual who happened to have the means, the

[14] Marjorie Hope Nicolson, 'Kepler, the *Somnium*, and John Donne', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1, No. 3 (1940): 259-280. In *Ignatius*, Donne similarly makes reference to Galileo's telescopic observations in *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610). See Nicolson, 'The "New Astronomy" and English Literary Imagination', *Studies in Philology* 23 (1935): 428.

[15] On the likelihood of Donne's attending Cambridge Bald writes that some 'writers have doubted Walton's further assertion that Donne transferred from Oxford to Cambridge, because there is no record at Cambridge of his ever having had any connection with the University… But the records of the University at this period are far from complete, and there is no need to dismiss Walton's statement'. R. C. Bald, *John Donne, a Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 46. Dennis Flynn, on the other hand, argues that after Oxford, it is likely that Donne left England for Paris, and then embarked on a continental tour with other members of the Catholic nobility, in order to avoid subscribing to the Thirty Nine Articles. Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 134-46.

[16] Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1958), 38.

[17] 'Among those before Donne's time', Coffin observes, 'were Robert Recorde and John Dee, both Copernicans'. Also, 'Contemporary with Dee were Thomas Blundeville and Thomas Digges. Blundeville was a great populariser of scientific learning, whose oft-printed *Exercises* and *Theoriques*, appearing first in 1594 and 1602, respectively, were certainly known to all readers who pretended an interest in geography and astronomy. Digges… was the first Englishman to translate Copernicus and to prepare a map of the heavens according to the new system' (38).

[18] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr., (London, 1651), 51.

education, the curiosity and the contacts. As Jonathan F. S. Post argues, 'schooling was less important than the social connections it enabled'.[19]

It must be noted, however, that Donne's reactions to the new philosophy were far from wholly positive, and this ambivalence has been observed most frequently in the pessimistic utterances of *The First Anniversary* and in the appearance of Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus and Paracelsus in the imaginative diabolical conclave of Ignatius in *Ignatius his Conclave*.[20] Critical interpretations of Donne's intellectual development have, therefore, traditionally fallen loosely into two camps, namely, those who consider him to be immersed in the orthodoxy of medieval learning, and those who find him enthusiastically accepting of the new philosophy.[21] This debate was most memorably undertaken around the first half of the twentieth-century by William Empson and Merritt Y. Hughes. Hughes, in his 1934 essay, 'Kidnapping Donne', set out to dissociate Donne from what he believed was a critical tendency to over emphasise his unorthodox or sceptical opinions.[22] He argued that Donne, in spite of his references to the new philosophy, remained unshaken in his orthodoxy, and stated that 'God was more actual than his world, and the mists of illusion hung around all created things' (p. 57). Empson, in his 1957 essay, on the other hand, casts the young Donne as an

[19] Jonathan F. S. Post, 'Donne's Life: a Sketch', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

[20] On science in the 'First Anniversary' see Catherine Gimelli Martin, 'The Advancement of Learning and the Decay of the World: A New Reading of Donne's First Anniversary', *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 19 (2000): 163-203. Chris R. Hassel disagrees with Coffin's interpretation of *Ignatius*, which finds Donne sympathetic to new astronomers. Hassel, 'Donne's Ignatius His Conclave and the New Astronomy', *Modern Philology* 68, No. 4 (1971 May): 329-37.

[21] On Donne's early scepticism see Louis I. Bredvold, 'The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1923): 471-502. A particular strain of this critical debate on orthodoxy versus the new is devoted to medicine. On Donne's commitment to the older Galenic theory see Nancy Gail Selleck, 'Donne's Body', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 41, No. 1 (Winter 2001): 149-174. For discussions of Donne's connections to Paracelsian medicine and anatomical developments see W. A. Murray, 'Donne and Paracelsus: An Essay in Interpretation', *The Review of English Studies* 25, No. 98 (Apr., 1949): 115-123; F. N. L. Poynter, 'John Donne and William Harvey', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 25 (1960): 233-246; Thomas Willard, 'Donne's Anatomy Lesson: Vesalian or Paracelsian?' *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 3, No. 1 (1984): 35-61; Richard Sugg, 'Donne and the Uses of Anatomy', *Literature Compass* 1, No. 1 (2003 Jan-2004 Dec): 1-13.

[22] Merrit Y. Hughes, 'Kidnapping Donne', *University of California Publications in English* 4 (1934): 61-89, reprinted in ed. John R. Roberts, *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1975). All references are to this latter edition.

unorthodox and radical thinker who, in the style of Bruno, held potentially heretical views. 'To judge from his poems', Empson writes, Donne 'believed that every planet could have its Incarnation, and believed this with delight, because it automatically liberated an independent conscience from any earthly religious authority'.[23] Coffin's *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (1958) is more measured in its approach and makes the important observation that 'Donne does not look at life through any one glass at a time; his personality is prism-like' (p. 6). Indeed, questions concerning natural philosophy cannot be said to have impacted upon Donne's thought more than his enduring commitment to the fields of law and then divinity. Coffin still maintains, however, that Donne recognised in the period's astronomical discoveries 'enough facts to make the old and new systems stand in sharp and irreconcilable contrast' (p. 89). Donne's acknowledgement in his treatise on suicide, *Biathanatos* (1608), that 'by many experiences of new stars, the reason which moved Aristotle seems now to be utterly defeated', is taken by Coffin as an important admission of the veracity of the new system.[24]

Since Donne was brought up a Catholic, there has also been some speculation as to the form and influence of his early education. Coffin maintains that he was trained by the Jesuits and, as a result, was schooled in orthodox Scholasticism. But R. C. Bald, in his biography of Donne, makes the more convincing case that it was, in fact, implausible that he should have received a Jesuit education, given that there were relatively few Jesuits in England at this time, and those who were, would have been in no position to devote their time

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[23] William Empson, 'Donne the Space Man', *The Kenyon Review* 19, No. 3 (Summer, 1957): 57. Empson repeatedly sought to present Donne as an unorthodox thinker, against the conclusions of conservative critics. William Empson, *Essays on Renaissance Literature: Donne and the New Philosophy*, ed. John Haffenden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 341. More recently, Anthony Low has argued that a new rational, scientific way of thinking provided a model for Donne's poetic style, a style which had outgrown Petrarchan modes of expression. Low states that there is 'no question that in his poetry the new image of science has vanquished and fragmented the old imagery of courtly love, and that, by that very fact, it has proven to be clearly the stronger of the two'. Donne's verse, Low suggests, assumes an objective position and 'has a remarkable capacity for suddenly… killing, freezing, and preserving… as if embalmed, for postmortem dissection by a future generation of curious and anxious scholars'. Anthony Low, 'Love and Science: Cultural Change in Donne's Songs and Sonnets', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22, No. 1 (1989: Spring): 8-15.
[24] Ernest W. Sullivan II, ed. *Biathanatos* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 105.

to tutoring.[25] 'That his tutor was a good Catholic', Bald concedes, 'perhaps even a seminary priest, may be accepted without question' (p. 39). In terms of curriculum, Coffin argues that

> The *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas' was invoked as the stabilising and regulating influence which was to condition all theological thinking. Moreover, as the *Summa* of the "angelic doctor" had incorporated the physical system of Aristotle, and had adapted it to medieval ecclesiasticism in all matters pertaining to natural philosophy, or science, Aristotle was to be regarded as the final authority (p. 27).

When Donne moved up to Oxford's Hart Hall in 1584, his experience there, according to Coffin, was 'little more than an extension of his early training' (p. 29). 'In addition to the Roman Catholic atmosphere enveloping this particular bit of Oxford', he observes, 'there must be taken into consideration a curriculum of study hardly less medieval than any that could have been devised by his previous tutors' (p. 29). Like Coffin, Bald also notes the likelihood of an Aristotelian presence during his time at Oxford. 'Aristotelian philosophy fell within the range of university studies', he notes, 'as did the civil law, and so unorthodox and unconfined a student as Donne may well have embarked in his university days on subjects so far beyond the undergraduate curriculum as these' (p. 48).

In spite of these differences in biographical detail, what remains important is that older frameworks of knowledge, informed by the authority of Aristotle and Aquinas, continued to dominate the official channels of education during this period, and any new philosophical developments represented deviations from a system that remained universally authoritative. As Charles B. Schmitt observes, to 'go beyond Aristotle one had first to understand him or, at least, to understand some rudiments of his thought'.[26] In his assessment of the Aristotelian tradition in Renaissance England, Schmitt notes that, after an initial

[25] Bald notes that it 'has often been suggested (no doubt because two of his uncles were of the Order) that Donne had a Jesuit education. A little reflection, however, will show that this was impossible' (39). Donne's uncles were the Jesuits Ellis and Jasper Heywood.

[26] Charles B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983), 28. See also Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

reaction against Scholasticism in the decades following the Reformation and the rise of humanism, in the 'final decades of the sixteenth century… Aristotelian books for undergraduate or more advanced use began to flow from native presses, no doubt in part due to the re-establishment of presses at both Oxford and Cambridge in the 1580s'.[27] Moreover, with the humanist emphasis upon securing authoritative versions of original classical texts, Aristotle's works were subject to a period of liberation from the often inaccurate medieval commentaries. The reason for this revivalism, Schmitt suggests, was because there existed a 'new awareness that the comprehensive nature and persisting validity of the Aristotelian synthesis still had value for the age', and 'still gave the best basis for education available' (pp. 26-7). The Aristotelian tradition was, therefore, alive and well during the period of Donne's education, and within both the old Thomist and the new humanist syntheses final causality remained a constant feature of the physical sciences and ethical and political treatises.

What this thesis suggests, then, is that it is unsurprising that Donne never subscribes with any consistency to either a post-Copernican worldview, or an older conception in the Aristotelian tradition, for the reason that neither was recognisably distinct and, therefore, could not possibly 'stand in sharp and irreconcilable contrast'. In this, I am in agreement with Sarah Powrie, who, following Umberto Eco's contention that the medieval cosmos was 'set in motion or dilated' to agree with the new scientific shift, argues that geocentric cosmology was 'not immediately rejected but was reinterpreted and sometimes fused with the discoveries of the emerging experimental science'.[28] The works of classical and medieval

[27] 21. Schmitt argues that 'there was a general revival of interest in philosophy, particularly of the Aristotelian tradition, in England during the last quarter of the sixteenth century' (26-7).

[28] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13-14; Sarah Powrie, 'Transposing World Harmony: Donne's Creation Poetics in the Context of a Medieval Tradition', *Studies in Philology* 107, No. 2 (2010 Spring): 214. Thomas Docherty also comes close to this interpretation, when he argues that Donne's poems appear to be 'caught up in historical change as part of their very existence and status; they enact the structural modification of themselves, making what was text into palimpsest, scene not of stable meaning but rather of precisely the opposite: change of meaning'. Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (London: Routledge, 1986), 8-9. Similarly, Angus Fletcher suggests that Donne's response to new knowledge was

philosophy, together with the revisions and discoveries of the Renaissance were, therefore, equally legitimate sources for hypothesising on the natural world. Such experimentation was characteristic of the age and is palpable in the works of major scientific figures, including Francis Bacon, Giordano Bruno and Johannes Kepler. For example, Bacon frequently altered his views on atomism and at different points rejected the notion of a void and explored the possibility of Pneumatism, the existence of animating spirits ultimately derived from the tradition of Platonism.[29] Bruno's atomism was similarly committed to fundamentally Aristotelian ideas of matter and form and these were also merged with notions of a Platonic 'world-soul'.[30] Kepler, in spite of his astronomical discoveries, held to an idea of the universe as finite and structured according to the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic cosmology in explicit contradiction to ideas such as Bruno's.[31]

Something of this eclectic methodology can be seen in Donne's admission in *Pseudo-Martyr* that he needed 'freedome and libertie, as in all indifferent things, so in my studies also, not to betroth or enthrall myself, to any one science, which should possesse or denominate me'.[32] Although this passage is written as self-deprecation, a criticism of early inconstancy in his studies, it still provides an insight into a certain sceptical approach. The aversion to dogmatism and unwillingness to be 'possessed' by 'one science' here reveals something of his attraction to disparate forms of knowledge as the way towards intellectual

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contained within a moralistic framework which re-interpreted the actual physical significance of these discoveries in order to justify religious doctrine. To this end, he connects Donne's notions of Grace to William Gilbert's work on the magnet and loadstone, and Paracelsus' ideas of causation in medicine. Angus Fletcher, 'Living Magnets, Paracelsian Corpses, and the Psychology of Grace in Donne's Religious Verse', *English Literary History* 72, No. 1 (2005): 1-22.

[29] See Silvia A. Manzo, 'Francis Bacon and Atomism: A Reappraisal' in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, eds. Christoph Herbert Luthy, John Emery Murdoch & William Royall Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 209-45.

[30] See Hilary Gatti, 'Giordano Bruno's Soul-Powered Atoms: From Ancient Sources Towards Modern Science', in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, eds. Christoph Herbert Luthy, John Emery Murdoch & William Royall Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 163-181.

[31] See Rhonda Martens, *Kepler's Philosophy and the New Astronomy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 146.

[32] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr: Wherein Out of Certaine Propositions and Gradations, this Conclusion is Evicted. That those which are of the Romane Religion in this Kingdome, May and Ought to Take the Oath of Allegiance*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993), 12.

fulfillment. Where Powrie attends to Donne's understanding of Platonic cosmology and space, my focus, whilst acknowledging the extent of his wide-ranging interests, is on the ways in which his work reflects new developments which represent a serious challenge to the stability of the final cause.

Powrie's emphasis upon Platonic immaterial space and the effects of the new astronomy is representative of much of the criticism concerned with Donne's intellectual and literary reactions to the new philosophy, perhaps at the expense of enquiries into shifting attitudes towards physics and philosophical materialism. In these studies, the rupturing of spherical perfection, the shape of the universe and correspondence in the cosmos is taken as the most significant shift to impact on his thinking. Moreover, the metaphysical nature of Donne's speculations on shape and on microcosms and macrocosms in the songs and sonnets, for example, has led critics to pinpoint Platonism as a defining feature of Donne's conception of reality, an existence governed by thought rather than sense.[33] Nicolson's *The Breaking of the Circle* (1960) falls into this category:

> Into the globe, into the universe, man read analogies drawn from his own body, then read them back again to explain his human mysteries. Earthbound in his finite microcosm, his mind was free to roam into the macrocosm, there to create new worlds, made in his own image.[34]

According to Nicholson, the figure of the circle, which had long been the image of divine perfection in classical and Christian symbolism, appealed to Donne's lingering desire for universal connections. This view accounts for the importance of order, inclusivity and communication in the universe as conceived by the intellect, but not for process, for a model

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[33] See for example, Frank A. Doggett, 'Donne's Platonism', *Sewanee Review* 42 (1934): 274-292; T. Katharine Thomason, 'Plotinian Metaphysics and Donne's "Extasie"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22, No. 1 *The English Renaissance* (Winter, 1982): 91-105; Donald R. Benson, 'Platonism and Neoclassic Metaphor: Dryden's Eleonora and Donne's Anniversaries', *Studies in Philology* 68 (1971): 340-56.

[34] Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the 'New Science' upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 20.

of everyday human conduct. The structural integrity of Aristotle's finite, spherical cosmology was, of course, central to medieval and early modern notions of universal stability and correspondence between all things. But so too were the teleological movements which underpinned physics and human activity in the sublunary realm. The idea that Donne was intellectually disconnected from the physical world is taken even further by Lisa Gorton in her essay 'John Donne's use of Space' (1998). She argues here that a palpable sense of space is achieved in Donne's songs and sonnets, a space which is more concerned with the abstractions of shape than with detailed descriptions of physical environments. Donne's metaphorical application of spherical and circular perfection, she suggests, forms a 'kind of language for thinking about relationships'.[35] Coffin also devotes much time to the idea of geometric space, of circles, lines, points and parallels in Donne's work. For Coffin, these often represent the real yet imperceptible qualities of the universe and are the means by which Donne comes to terms with vast and minute spaces (p. 178). What links these studies together is a preoccupation with abstract systems, languages, mathematics and geometries, as substitutes for the real, and thus, they connect Donne's thought with the Platonic tradition, in which the world of ideas, not the world of physical things, signifies reality.

Although Donne was indeed drawn to cosmological connections and the perfection of circles, this critical preoccupation has tended to obscure the equally important linear, teleological ordering of existence represented by the final cause. This study, therefore, sets out to fill the critical space by examining ends and purposes, rather than abstract connections

[35] Lisa Gorton, 'John Donne's Use of Space', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4, No. 2, Special Issue 3 (September, 1998): 2. See also, María J. Pando Cantelli, 'The Poetics of Space in Donne's Love Poetry', *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 19 (2000): 45-57. Cantelli focuses upon close, enclosed spaces in Donne's poetry as opposed to the expansive spaces of the cosmos. On the repeated references to spheres and space in Donne's devotional work see Margaret Maurer, 'The Circular Argument of Donne's "La Corona"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 22, No. 1 (1982): 51-68; Michael L. Hall "Circles and Circumvention in Donne's Sermons: Poetry as Ritual", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 82, No. 2 (1983 Apr.): 201-214; Reinhard H. Friederich, 'Expanding and Contracting Space in Donne's *Devotions*' *English Literary History* 45, No.1 (1978): 18-32. For an account of the historical evolution of the circle and sphere in both religious and scientific thinking see Sarah Powrie, *The infinite sphere: The history of a metaphor in theology, science and literature (1100--1613)* Ph.D., University of Toronto (Canada), 2006.

and communications, as a means of providing an alternative assessment of the impact of the new philosophy upon old ideas. Certain of Donne's Aristotelianisms may be taken for granted, and this might account for the relative lack of direct critical attention devoted to the continuing influence of the Aristotelian tradition. Moreover, it might be safe to assume that, because Donne's reflections upon the world are so often concerned with material substance and the evidence of the senses, the Aristotelian, rather than Platonic tradition would have been more likely to occupy his thoughts on the changing nature of the physical universe. Since final causality is such a pivotal conviction of the Aristotelian tradition, the central objective at the heart of this thesis is to chart the ways in which the idea is renegotiated in Donne's work to fit with new models of nature, but also with his own personal morality and religious belief.

An additional quotation from *The First Anniversary* might help to illustrate some of these issues. Donne's extravagant commemorative poem on the death of Elizabeth Drury sets out to praise her in terms which had no real resemblance to her actual life. Elizabeth was the daughter of Donne's patron Sir Robert Drury and she died in 1610 at the age of fourteen. The first edition of Donne's poem appeared in 1611. Generically, the Anniversary poems do not conform to any single literary precedent and Donne's reasons for composing them remain a subject of disagreement. As Graham Roebuck observes, to 'achieve his goal – although what that goal may have been continues to be disputed – it is clear that Donne employs a great many literary resources that suggest a rich assembly and mixture of the genres, and echoes of genres, known to the early modern world'.[36] In particular, the poems depart stylistically from traditional funeral elegies in that they do not 'confine their attention to the personal circumstance, but restlessly shift the readers' perspectives back and forth between macro- and microcosms, drawing attention to the poet's intellectual agility to a greater degree than was

[36] Graham Roebuck, 'The Anniversary Poem', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 274.

usual in the genre of elegy' (p. 277). Moreover, his 'not having known Elizabeth Drury' Roebuck suggests 'allows the poet to impart a more public voice and, at the same time, a greater freedom to exploit his own distinct voice' (p. 277). The *First Anniversary's* overall project is to praise Drury by suggesting that had she lived, she might have provided a cure for the sick and dying world, and this enables Donne to employ a whole range of images which gesture towards contemporary moral problems. Since the poem frequently reflects on the materiality of the world, the particular issue of the period's scientific advances is forcefully addressed in the famous passage in which Donne writes of astronomy and physics:

> And new Philosophy cals all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
> Can well direct him, where to looke for it.
> And freely men confesse, that this world's spent,
> When in the Planets, and the Firmament
> They seeke so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out againe to his Atomis.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;
> All iust supply, and all Relation: (205-14)

The new philosophy has led men to 'confesse' that the world is 'spent'; but in the following lines Donne refers to an ideal of the deceased Elizabeth Drury, and describes her as 'She that should all parts to reunion bow, / She that had all Magnetique force alone, / To draw, and fasten sundred parts in one' (220-2). The fragmentation of the atomised world, which Donne identifies some ten lines earlier in the poem, is overcome here with the suggestion that Elizabeth Drury might somehow reunite and 'fasten' these 'sundred parts' through a 'Magnetique force'. Instead of the doubt which marks the previous passage, these lines reflect a will to restore a cause, or as Bacon might put it, a 'mind', to the unorganised parts of worldly matter. Such speculations are neither old nor new, but rather combine elements from

magnetism, Platonic notions of the world's soul, atomism and Aristotelian causality.[37] The theme of causality continues to take precedence in the following lines: 'She whom wise nature had inuented then / When she obseru'd that euery sort of men / Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray, / And needed a new compasse for their way' (223-6). The commonplace trope of the world as a sea rests upon the notion that the progress of man's life, its beginnings and ends, is like a voyage. Without the direction supplied by the 'compasse', the rational instrument, whose purpose is to act as an indicator of a ship's course, but also to symbolise the end of the journey, the chaotic nature of the sea will obliterate all sense of causal movement. If Elizabeth Drury were to intervene on behalf of the world, her magnetism would, therefore, have a twofold action, to re-compact dissolving matter and re-establish a sense of direction and linear movement, by becoming a new compass.

One of the most consistent debates surrounding the poem is concerned with the idealistic function of Elizabeth Drury. Harold Love summarises the position, and argues that the

> gap between the two visions of Elizabeth Drury advanced in the poem – animating spirit and vulnerable body – is too wide not to set up serious strains and, indeed, it could be argued that Donne has been far less careful than he should have been about keeping them distinct from one another. In *The Second Anniversary* he tries to make amends for this (p. 131).

Love's interpretation is that Drury 'represents the most perfect state to which matter can aspire', and that her 'perfection is so complete that it has succeeded in disrupting the established boundaries between the spiritual and the physical' (p. 129). As Donne's repeated

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[37] On Platonic spirits see Harold Love, 'The Argument of Donne's "First Anniversary"', *Modern Philology* 64 No. 2 (Nov., 1966): 125-31. On the influence of magnetism and the work of William Gilbert on the poem see Fletcher, 1-22, and Coffin, 84-7. Gilbert hypothesized, through experimentation with the loadstone that the earth essentially operated as a large magnet. His findings were published in his work *De magnete, magneticisque corporibus, et de magno magnete* (London, 1600). Theresa M. DiPasquale has noted the final causality which runs through the poem and is the only critic to address this issue directly in Donne's work. Theresa M. DiPasquale, '"To Good Ends": The Final Cause of Sacramental Womanhood in The First Anniversarie', *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 20 (2001): 141-50.

refrain in the *First Anniversary*, 'She is dead', makes clear, it is not the physicality of Drury that is important, but rather that of the dying world, which might be re-animated by the spiritual idea of her. It should be noted, however, that the unifying potential of Elizabeth Drury is not achieved in this poem; she 'should all parts to reunion bow', and she 'observes' every 'sort of men', but her intervention is never realised. This is understandable, since the poem's professed purpose is 'An Anatomy of the World', and its main concern is, therefore, with the world's death. To conduct an anatomy, however, is to learn from the body. The rationale behind my examination of Donne's work is, therefore, embedded in this sense of the natural and moral rightness of the final cause. To this end, the thesis argues that, even though the *First Anniversary* never reconciles a final cause with the new condition of the world, it remains a recurring preoccupation of Donne's poetry and prose. As Donne notes, it is 'euery sort of men' who suffer by the lack of direction wrought by the new philosophy. If the idea of final cause is withdrawn, then both the order of the physical world and mankind's moral framework are left without an all-important sense of purpose, and it is this attraction to an over-arching purpose which, I hope to show, frequently marks Donne's literary, personal and intellectual responses to the new science.

The second major claim of this thesis is that Donne's interest in purposeful ends has its origins in the intellectual tradition of final causality in moral conduct, and in his own negative experience of inactivity. In this respect, my analysis also draws from the biographical details of Donne's life, and in particular, the idea that restless activity was an important aspect of his personality. Intellectual/psychological biographies, such as John Carey's *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art* (1981), explicitly point to Donne's self-propulsion through life, and locate the source of this movement in ambition.[38] Carey projects onto Donne

[38] John Carey, *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981). Arthur Marotti similarly paints a picture of Donne as being immersed in a coterie culture of courtly ambition. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). More Recently, Hugh Adlington has reassessed the question of Donne's desperate ambition by asking what the term ambition actually meant in the period. By

a certain mercenary careerism and desire for success, and he argues that his 'wish to make his way in the world, and the wish to be integrated into it – inclined him to an active rather than a contemplative life' (p. 62). Not only in his aspirations was Donne driven by motion, Carey suggests, but also in the themes and images which fascinated him, images of change, flux and fluidity. Worldly recognition and permanence are, therefore, considered the driving forces behind Donne's obsession with action. Contrary to this interpretation, I suggest that such an impulse towards activity was, in fact, morally orthodox, and that Donne's own forced withdrawal from the social/political community heightened his desire for new ends by virtue of his immobility.

David Charles notes that 'Aristotle gave the teleological cause a major role in his discussions of physics, metaphysics, biology, psychology, and ethics'.[39] In terms of ethics and psychology, the efficient cause, which is internal to human beings, directs rational agents towards a desired end, or final cause. Actions or processes, Charles writes, 'are ways of achieving an end state desired or needed by the agent, animal, or plant. Aristotle characterises all these as alive…and as such they have the goal of living or living well…Their life is sustained or goes better if the goal is achieved' (p. 230). Donne's adherence to this principle of fulfilment was famously undermined. As a consequence of his secret marriage to Ann More in 1601, he was forced to live in a form of social exile at Mitcham for over ten years, and was consistently denied the social advancement which he sought early in his career. This state of insecurity, which continued until his ordination in 1615, was completely antithetical to the ethical idea, entrenched in his education and in the Aristotelian tradition, that man should pursue the best possible end of social life. In his letters to Sir Henry Goodyer, there

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examining Donne's own expressions on the subject, Adlington suggests that where 'ambition itself is neutral, inordinate ambition is not'. For Donne, excessive aspiration has negative associations. Hugh Adlington, 'Do Donne's Writings Express his Desperate Ambition?' in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 730.

[39] David Charles, 'Teleological Causation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227.

are countless expressions of the hopelessness of a situation in which he cannot contribute to his own or the common good and this may well have conditioned the negative attitude towards idleness and the obsession with a calling which proliferates, for example, in his sermons.[40] To pursue a career and exhibit a heightened awareness of one's mortality does not necessarily translate into self-obsession, ruthlessness and relentless social climbing, as Carey suggests.

Carey's analysis of Donne's motivations remains influential in its central conviction that an essential egotism could account for a multitude of actions and writings throughout the course of his life. However, this thesis claims to offer an alternative to a reading which concentrates on the almost irrecoverable aspects of Donne's ego. Instead, it analyses the textual evidence of Donne's letters, together with his literary engagement with the final cause, to suggest that the effects of isolation and a lack of utility contributed to his ethical grounding in final causality. The personal events in Donne's life, I suggest, in tandem with the period's intellectual developments, help to refine and shape his attitude towards the notion of the final cause in both moral and natural philosophy.

iii. Methodology and Chapters

Since the publication of Coffin's book on Donne and the new philosophy, there have been relatively few extended studies which examine Donne's engagement with philosophical ideas. Ramie Targoff's *John Donne, Body and Soul* (2008), is a recent exception in its attention to theology, philosophy and Donne's overriding concern, throughout his writing, with the body and soul. Indeed, Targoff notes that literary history 'has developed a particular

[40] See for example, *Letters*, 51, 137, and from the *Sermons*; III, 71, IX, 385.

bias against considering Donne as a poet with serious theological or philosophical interests'.[41] Targoff argues that

> However much Donne has been admired for the terrific wit of his conceits, the drama of his voice, the sheer beauty of his lines, he has also been maligned as an author who lacked a real focus or purpose. This is in many ways ironic, because Donne was from very early on credited with having invented metaphysical poetry, which is generally understood to have expanded the scope of poetic language by incorporating ideas and metaphors from other disciplines – philosophy, astronomy, medicine, theology – into its imaginative realm (p. 3).

While the concept of final causality cannot be said to be as central to Donne's thought as questions pertaining to the body and soul, or to the fields of divinity and law, I also argue that an attentiveness to philosophical ideas can be identified in Donne's poetry, letters, sermons and other prose works. As Coffin argues, Donne's interests were 'prism-like', so final causality, whilst being versatile in its application to scientific, political and ethical ideas, exists alongside a variety discourses in his writing. Like Targoff's approach to the body and soul, however, I suggest that a consistency is discernible in Donne's references to notions of final causality, namely that ends and goals represent a stabilising influence in a world of scientific, political, religious and moral change.

Samuel Johnson's application of the term metaphysical to Donne's poetry initiated the critical commonplace which recognised intellectualism and the 'violent yoking together' of seemingly incongruous ideas as the defining features of Donne's writing.[42] The use of complex and far-fetched imagery by the metaphysicals was considered by Johnson and his followers to be artificial, lacking in subtlety and an imperfect reflection of nature. Katrin Ettenhuber has recently reappraised the designation of the phrase 'metaphysical conceit' to

[41] Ramie Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.
[42] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Johnson wrote that in metaphysical poetry 'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together' (I. 200).

Donne's poetry, and argues that the early modern term catachresis is much more suitable for representing topographical and emotional extremes.[43] Ettenhuber notes that, according to early modern rhetoric manuals, catachresis 'was chiefly associated with ideas of the remote similitude' (p. 395), and she suggests that Donne employs the technique in his poetry because the 'far-fetched conceit, as early modern thinkers recognise, is the register of desperation, uniquely suited to capturing extremities of feeling' (p. 413). 'For Donne', Ettenhuber maintains, 'the travels and travails of the mind were everything and, above all, the means to re-create love's emotions through strenuous intellectual activity' (pp. 412-3). My own approach also recognises that Donne's rhetorical tropes were often philosophically encoded and sought to challenge readers. Indeed, in his preface to the philosophical poem, *Metempsychosis* (1601), Donne stated, 'I will have no such Readers as I can teach', which suggests that he assumed an educated coterie readership.[44] As Ettenhuber puts it, when decoding Donne's catachresis, the mind of the reader 'is actively engaged, and the remoteness of the comparison seeks to inaugurate a course of mental connections which infers – "brings in" – the properties needed to establish the similitude' (p. 407). In this respect, the rhetorical features of Donne's poems are often bound up with his ideas; to get to the heart of a poem's particular object, the reader must engage seriously with the intellectual processes which anticipate its conclusion.

The critical difficulty in attempting to categorise the sombre tone, generic fluidity and riddling nature of the Anniversary poems, for example, attests to the complexity of Donne's poetic purpose. Confusion over these poems, which originated in Donne's own time, has led to an extensive list of interpretations. For example, in his conversations with Ben Jonson, William Drummond of Hawthornden claimed that, according to the playwright, 'Dones Anniversarie was profane and full of Blasphemies that he told Mr Donne, it had been written

[43] Katrin Ettenhuber, '"Comparisons are Odious?" Re-visiting the Metaphysical Conceit in Donne', *Review of English Studies* 62 (2011): 393-413.
[44] Herbert Grierson, ed. *The Poems of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 294.

of ye Virgin Mary it had been something to which he answered that he described the Idea of a Woman and not as she was'.[45] Donne's defence of the 'Idea' might be taken as an admission to Jonson of his abstract purposes and suggests that the poem's ideas were equally important as the elaborate rhetorical figures used to present them. Indeed, the idea that poetry was a fit vehicle for the exposition of philosophical and scientific notions was also firmly expressed by Donne's contemporary poet, George Chapman, in the dedicatory letter to his poem, 'The Shadow of Night' (1594):

> But I stay this spleen when I remember, my good Matthew, how joyfully oftentimes you reported unto me, that most ingenious Darby, deep-searching Northumberland, and skill-embracing heir of Hunsdon had most profitably entertained learning in themselves, to the vital warmth of freezing science, and to the admirable lustre of their true nobility, whose high-deserving virtues may cause me hereafter strike that fire out of darkness, which the brightest Day shall envy for beauty.[46]

Censuring those who read 'but to curtail a tedious hour', Chapman envisions a much more intellectually challenging form of poetry, one which will 'strike that fire' of knowledge 'out of darkness'.[47] Critical attention to intellectual contexts can enhance our understanding of the cultural forces that were at play during a particular period; but, of course, the problem with

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[45] Ben Jonson, 'Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden', in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 1.128-78. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote that the Anniversaries were the 'strangest caprices of genius upon record'. Coleridge, 'Coleridgiana. Mss. Notes of Coleridge in the Books of Charles Lamb, Now for the First Time Published', *The Literary World*, (1853), 393. Herbert Grierson argued that it was the strangest poem in English in its 'combination of excellences and faults, splendid audacities and execrable extravagances' (187-9). Louis Martz considered the poems to be based structurally upon the model of Ignatian meditation, whilst Frank Kermode writes that the poems gave Donne 'large-scale structural problems'. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Kermode, ed. *The Poems of John Donne* (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1968), xix.

[46] George Chapman, *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 19. The figures referred to in this passage are the dedicatee, Mathew Royden, Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, George Carey, Second Lord Hunsdon and Ferdinand Stanley, Fifth Earl of Derby. The scientific leanings of these individuals are made clear in the epistle.

[47] 19. Ettenhuber also notes the similarities between Donne's and Chapman's poetic aims. In Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sence* (1595), he writes: 'The prophane multitude I hate, & onelie consecrate my strange Poems to these searching spirits, whom learning has made noble'. 'Reading', Ettenhuber argues, 'is defined by Chapman as relational; interpretive labour dignifies its object and the relationship between author and reader' (411).

reading texts in this way is that by focussing on contexts we begin to look away from the immediate aims of particular literary works. The twin purposes of poetry identified by Chapman, to demonstrate ‘learning’ and ‘beauty’, therefore, informs my analysis of Donne’s work, which not only examines the intellectual foundations of his language, but also the language itself.

In recent years greater emphasis has been placed upon reading Donne’s sermons as contextually specific pieces, bound to the religious and political controversies of the time and tailored to the audience and place of delivery.[48] My discussion of the sermons, like my discussion of the poems, attends to their contexts before moving to a particularised examination of their engagement with notions of final causality. With regard to the letters, these texts provide a unique insight into how Donne conceived of familiar letters as an artful genre of writing. But the letters also record details of Donne’s personal circumstances and provide a strong indication of his moral impulses which are grounded in the pursuit of ends. As Margaret Maurer notes, the early modern fascination with letters as ‘a genre or kind of writing…promoted the value of letters as conveyors of the self but not without appreciation for the art of doing so’.[49] In my analysis, I also draw from those works of natural and moral philosophy, both old and new, which frame the debate on the concept of final causality and with which, in most cases, Donne would have been acquainted. These include, for example, the *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* of Aristotle, the *Summa Theologica* of Aquinas, Seneca’s *Epistles*, Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, and the works of contemporaries such as Bacon, Thomas Hariot and Nicholas Hill. It should also be noted that there was no such thing as academic specialisation in this period, and the boundaries between disciplines were much more fluid than they are today. This is particularly true of the concept

[48] See Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003); Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough, eds. *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History, 1600-1750* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
[49] Margaret Maurer, ‘The Prose Letter’, in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 348.

of final causality, which provided the rationale for a variety of natural and human sciences. As we have seen, changes in the field of natural philosophy could impact upon social, political and religious orthodoxies. In terms of terminology, modern interpretations of the original Greek tend to translate *aition,* or cause, as 'explanation', and *telos* as 'end' or 'goal'. I have chosen to employ the phrases 'final cause' and 'ends' when referring to the *telos*, since this was how early modern commentators typically translated the term.

To help define a sense of Donne's intellectual development, the chapters of the thesis are broadly chronological. Moreover, since the aim of the thesis is to chart changes in understandings of final causality in natural and moral philosophy, the chapters are divided equally between these two subjects. Chapters 1 and 3 are devoted to early modern science, and Chapters 2 and 4 primarily to political/moral philosophy. Chapter 1 is concerned with two of Donne's early verse letters, 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', and makes reference to other poems and prose works which deal with the theme of navigation. These understudied poems, written as literary accounts of Donne's experiences on the Azores expedition against the Spanish treasure fleet in 1597, have been considered, first and foremost, as admirable exercises in classical imitation. What I aim to show is that the particular physical experience of Atlantic voyaging, recounted in the poems, diverges from what Donne would have understood as an Aristotelian account of physical causes. In particular, I suggest that, for Donne, Aristotle's causal theory of motion is challenged by the real experience of oceanic movement by ship, and that, as a consequence, the ethical idea of mankind's purposeful movement towards an end is similarly called into question. The chapter therefore attempts to establish an early instance in which the notion of final causality, which Donne would have taken for granted intellectually, is shaken by the evidence of the senses.

Chapter 2 develops this theme and argues that in Donne's writing concerning the social community there can also be detected an underlying assumption that the concept of

final causality is ethically correct. Looking at a selection of letters, verse letters and *Satyre I*, I show that, during his Lincoln's Inn years (1592-4), Donne plays with the Aristotelian notion of the city as the final cause, the end point and highest form of social life and recognises the dissonance between this ideal and the growing sense of individualism in political and social life. This emergent political and social individualism, I argue, is also analogically connected in some of Donne's later writing to the individualistic nature of the new physics, which, like his experience of social/political organisation, is marked by a lack of connection, correspondence and final causality. Contrary to previous studies which suggest, partly on the evidence of his letter to Goodyer (quoted above on page 11), that Donne was disengaged from the study of law during this period, I suggest that the appeal of Natural Law, as a unifying legal, political and social ideal, continued to colour his perceptions of the city.[50]

Donne's response to the late-sixteenth century resurgence in atomic theory forms the subject of Chapter 3. Building on the work of David A. Hedrich Hirsch, who identified a preoccupation with atomism in Donne's work, particularly in *The First Anniversary*, I argue that this interest is developed at greater length in his later dedicatory poem, 'Obsequies to the Lord Harrington' (1614).[51] Where Hirsch suggests that the atom's irreducibility appeals to Donne's desire for physical permanence after death, I argue that he is much more interested in the idea of mechanical motion as a source for metaphors, similes and conceits. Donne's aim, I suggest, is to praise Harrington through a series of extravagant images which mirror contemporary scientific discourses concerning atomism. In this respect, the pessimistic quality of the Anniversary poems is succeeded by the more positive investigative tone of the 'Obsequies'. Again, like 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', the 'Obsequies' has received scant

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[50] See for example, Arthur Marotti, 'The Social Context and Nature of Donne's Writing: Occasional Verse and Letters', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35-48.

[51] David A. Hedrich Hirsch, 'Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31, No. 1, *The English Renaissance* (Winter, 1991): 69-94.

critical attention, and has mostly inspired comments which dwell upon its obliquity and supposed lack of feeling for its subject. But, as with many of Donne's poems to wealthy and powerful patrons, any lack of genuine feeling is compensated for by the work's rhetorical and intellectual depth. Just as the poems to Elizabeth Drury, who Donne had never met, extravagantly invoke the changing nature of the physical universe, so too does his panegyric to Harrington. Unlike the attempt to establish Drury as a unifying principle, an attempt which is never quite achieved, I suggest that in the 'Obsequies' Harrington becomes a much more successful emblem of order restored to the material universe. Harrington only achieves this status, however, through the intercession of God.

Devotion to God and the proper ends of the Christian life forms the discussion of Chapter 4. In particular, I suggest that the debate on the choice between active and contemplative lives, which originated in the classical period and was invested with a renewed vigour by humanism and the Reformation, is of central importance to Donne's writing, given his own propensity towards activity and aversion to idleness. Moreover, I suggest that the teleological framework of the Aristotelian tradition, incorporated by medieval theology and applied to moral and doctrinal questions, is reflected in Donne's writing concerning action and contemplation. By looking at his sermons, *Satyre III* (ca. 1594-6) and 'Goodfriday 1613: Riding Westward' in relation to the classical, medieval and Renaissance concern with action and contemplation, I aim to chart the ways in which Donne endeavors to reconcile these two modes of living with the ends of the Christian life. The satire and 'Goodfriday', I suggest, experiment with the ethical implications of action and contemplation at moments of particular religious significance for Donne, the former at a period of doubt and apostasy (between 1594 and 1596), and the latter just two years before he took Holy Orders in 1615. What gives order to these two seemingly irreconcilable concepts, I conclude, is Donne's continued adherence

to the concept of the final cause as a framework for rationalising moral, spiritual and physical questions.

The sequence of chapters, therefore, trace a rough chronological trajectory in which Donne's intellectual commitment to the final cause in natural and moral philosophy is initially destabilised by the experience of the senses, by political and ethical shifts and the persuasive theories of mechanical philosophy, but ultimately survives and develops in tandem with these new theories in his mature years. Like other thinkers of the age, then, Donne adapts old and new knowledge to fit within an existing worldview. Employing no fixed, compartmentalised framework of investigation in this period, Donne's knowledge is built upon an eclectic mix of sources, which have as their point of departure the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic universe. Donne's reactions to the new philosophy might then be considered typical of the period in their modifications to the Aristotelian tradition.

1. ‘No Will, No Power, No Sense ’: The End of Motion in Donne’s ‘The Storme’ and ‘The Calme’ (1597)

In September 1608, Donne wrote a letter to his friend Sir Henry Goodyer in which he complained of feelings of futility and a longing for death. Written during the prolonged period of political and social exile which followed his marriage to Ann More, Donne expresses the frustration of inactivity, of a lack of employment and purpose:

> I would not that death should take me asleep. I would not have him merely seise me and onely declare me to be dead, but win me and overcome me. When I must shipwrack, I would do it in a Sea, where mine impotencie might have some excuse, not in a sullen, weedy lake, where I could not have so much as exercise for my swimming. Therefore, I would fain do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body is to be nothing.[1]

What this passage tells us, as John Carey notes, is that Donne sought activity, not only in life, but also at the moment of death.[2] By envisioning a struggle with death, he wished to banish the passivity of expiration and make for himself a death that mirrored the movements of life. According to Carey, ‘the dead and the dying are’, for Donne, ‘more spectacularly alive than the living’ (p. 204). He therefore imagines Donne as drawn to death as something more vital, or more real than life. But Donne’s impressions of active death, his animated metaphors, are derived precisely from the movements of lived experience, the reality of the being he wishes to preserve from nothingness. It is life that Donne projects onto the occasion of death, and in this instance the image of water, of the turmoil of the sea and the stillness of a lake encapsulates the disparities between motion as a form of permanence and rest as annihilation.

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[1] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr. (London, 1651), 50.
[2] Carey devotes a chapter to Donne’s obsession with an animated death in *John Donne, Life, Mind and Ar*t (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 198-231.

The image of shipwreck and a struggle at sea is one with which Donne had a particular affinity, having suffered the perils of adverse weather on his youthful voyage to the Azores in the company of Essex and Raleigh in 1597. Whether he had the Azores voyage in mind when composing his letter to Goodyer cannot be certain, but the conditions of motion and rest, of activity, of purpose, of being and non-being, and of storm and calm are identifiable as common themes which bind this text to Donne's two earlier verse letters, 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', which recorded the expedition.[3] This chapter is about Donne's experience of sea travel. It suggests that the themes of movement and rest, the driving forces behind his maritime imagery, are conditioned not only by the visceral experience of travel by sea, but also by classical and contemporary understandings of space and motion. By examining 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' alongside other instances of navigational metaphor, I argue that Donne's Aristotelian conception of movement as purpose (and therefore life) is undermined as he becomes exposed to the spatial extremes of the Atlantic, to the randomness of motion, the dislocation of extended space and the stagnation of rest.

Navigational images and metaphors are commonplace in Donne's writing, and appear frequently from his earliest poems to his mature sermons. Written at a time of intense interest in oceanic voyaging towards the Americas, and the promise of colonial acquisitions, 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', along with epigrams such as 'A Burnt Ship' and 'Calez and Guyana', represent Donne's earliest literary references to competition in the Atlantic world. 'A Burnt Ship', as Bald notes, was most likely written to commemorate the firing of the Spanish flagship, *San Felipe*, which took place during the English assault on Cadiz in 1596.[4] Donne's epigram focuses on the plight of the Spanish sailors on board the stricken *San*

[3] References to 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' are taken from *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. Wesley Milgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[4] R. C. Bald, *John Donne, a Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 82-3.

Felipe, who, under attack from Raleigh's flagship, were faced with the impossible choice of death by fire, shot or drowning:

> Out of a fired Ship, which by noe waie
> But drowning, could bee rescued from the flame,
> Some men leapt forth, and euer as they came
> Neer the foes ships did by their shott decaie.
> Soe all were lost, which in the Ship were founde
> They in the Sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship drownd (1-6).

The accuracy of Donne's account of this incident suggests that he may well have been at the centre of the action, 'either in one of the ships in the squadron led by Raleigh, or perhaps in one of those carrying the other high officers which had forced a way into the forefront of the battle' (Bald, p. 83). Indeed, the epigram accords with Raleigh's own description of the event, although his prose expresses much more feeling for the mariners. 'If any man had a desire to see Hell itself', Raleigh writes, 'it was there most lively figured'.[5]

Donne's 'Calez and Guyana', according to both Milgate and Bald, was probably written after Cadiz, but before the Azores voyage. More specifically, this would have been around the time that Essex and Raleigh were attempting, without success, to convince Queen Elizabeth to endorse an attack on the Spanish West Indies.[6] In this epigram Donne writes:

> If you from spoyle of th'old worlds fardest end
> To the new world your kindled valors bend
> What brave Examples then do prove it trew
> That one things end doth still begine a new (1-4).

The reference to 'spoyle of th'old worlds fardest end' is suggestive of recent English success against the old world port of Cadiz, whereas 'the new world' of the Spanish West Indies still

[5] Willard M. Wallace, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), 135.
[6] Bald, 88-9; Milgate, 198.

awaits the 'kindled valors' of Essex and Raleigh. The epigram plays with notions of old and new, beginnings and ends, and reflects a positive and restless impulse to fulfil the 'end' of a voyage into the new world. As the paradox of the last line implies, 'one things end', the sack of Cadiz, creates the conditions for a new 'end' to begin.

Roughly contemporaneous with these poems is the first existing portrait of Donne in the guise of an adventurer, dated to 1591 when he was around 18 years old. Dressed in a black doublet, wearing his hair long, with an ear-ring in one ear and equipped with a sword, the portrait is designed as if to evoke the martial spirit of youth, of those young men who were caught up in the Elizabethan enthusiasm for expeditions against the Spanish, epitomised by the exploits of Drake, Essex and Raleigh. As Bald observes, 'the firmly clasped sword' in this portrait has been 'transferred from its natural position at the sitter's side in order to be included in the picture', and, therefore, suggests 'military experience'.[7]

Later, in the elegies, the songs and sonnets and sermons we find frequent allusions to colonial voyaging and the new world, and critics have noted the differing ways in which Donne adapts these images to suit his literary purposes.[8] As Milton Rugoff notes, for nearly 'every difficulty of life' he appears to have found a 'vivid counterpart in the experience of the seafarer'.[9] On the subject of his involvement with the language, technologies and ideology of colonialism, John Gillies points to the elegy 'To His Mistress' as a prime example of the restless symbolism of exploration. 'The Ortelian map', Gillies suggests, 'draws the viewer's

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[7] On the details of this portrait see Bald, 50-4.

[8] Given the breadth with which he applies sea metaphors to a variety of themes, Phillip Edwards, for example, argues that 'Seafaring matters in Donne's writings vary greatly in what they can be used for and applied to as metaphors. They are also equivocal and contradictory in the value they impart to what they are charged to clarify and illuminate'. Phillip Edwards, *Sea-Mark: the Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 75. More specifically, D.C. Allen provides a short survey of the classical and Christian commonplaces which preceded Donne's use of the ship motif. Augustine's conception of the Church as the ship of salvation, or the Ark, and Cicero's ship of state are cited as images which permeate his poetry and prose. D.C. Allen, 'Donne and the Ship Metaphor', *Modern Language Notes* 76, No. 4 (Apr., 1961): 308-312. For Anthony Parr, contemporary adaptations of the ship of state are brought into focus by a politically sensitive Donne, who is awake to the mismanagement of the nation's affairs. He argues that the 'late medieval and Renaissance trope of the ship as emblem of both the public sphere and the collective moral life… the vessel of state and the ship of fools', is given expression in Donne's 'The Storme' and 'The Calme'. Anthony Parr, 'John Donne, Travel Writer', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, No. 1 (March 2007): 70.

[9] Milton Rugoff, *Donne's Imagery: A study in Creative Sources* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 130.

gaze west rather than east. Why? Because the New World "beckons"… its very emptiness, its nakedness perhaps… invites the eye to "rove" in the way that Donne imagines his hands roving over the continent of his mistress's body'.[10] Maps and the instruments of navigation are emblematic, not only of the desire for exploration and possession, but also of the human compulsion towards stability, orientation and connection. In addition, as we saw in the discussion of the compass image of the *First Anniversary* in the Introduction to this thesis (p. 21), they are, for Donne, the means of plotting a course. The act of sea travel in Donne's writing, together with the technical and visual apparatus of navigation, I suggest, often share an identical metaphorical purpose as vehicles for the expression of teleological movement towards a variety of ends. So, the New World 'beckons', not only as a symbol of material and masculine sexual desire, but also because it represents finality, the end point of a journey which has spanned the perilous Atlantic.

Katrin Ettenhuber has noted that Donne's topographical imagery, particularly in the valediction poems, employs the rhetorical trope of catachresis as a means of representing the extremes of distance and of feeling. 'Catachrestic imagery' she argues, 'is crucial to these poems not simply because it measures geographical and emotional distance on a map of rhetorical places. It also demands that the mind travels and, in a moment of etymological manipulation that Donne was so fond of, "travails" while doing so' (p. 399). The ocean and oceanic travel, therefore, provided Donne with a store of material to exploit in the name of representing the catachrestic extremes of vast geographic and cosmographic space compared with the reduced and enclosed spaces of personal relationships. Embedded in the intellectual 'travails' the reader must undergo before reaching the final object of these poems, I suggest, there can be detected an interplay between old and new conceptions of cosmological space, but also an ethical and physical assumption of teleological fulfillment in the Aristotelian

[10] John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the geography of difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62.

tradition. In other words, Donne's metaphors and similes incorporate tropes of new knowledge into an existing older framework.

'The Good Morrow' is a case in point of how Donne fuses old and new accounts of geographic and cosmological space, before abandoning each for the all-encompassing microcosmic space shared between lovers: 'For love, all love of other sights controules, / And makes one little roome, an everywhere' (10-11). Here, the 'love of all other sights', of those physical and external things which exist in space, is 'controlled' and overshadowed by the metaphysical love of the speaker and addressee. As a poem from the songs and sonnets, 'The Good Morrow' conforms to a number of the generic features attributed to the collection. The songs and sonnets were first organised into a coherent group with the second edition of *Poems by J.D.* (1635). Before this the poems circulated in manuscript, as Dayton Haskin observes, 'one by one at different times, perhaps over a period of more than two decades'.[11] For this reason it is not only difficult to assign dates to the poems, but they are also generically diverse, being not simply sonnets and songs, but variations on the 'love lyric'. Haskin suggests that the

> Songs and Sonets are striking for the considerable resistance that they mount against some frameworks within which contemporary love poems were characteristically lodged. Donne avoids making one woman the fixed subject of every poem. Like some other love poets, he keeps the identities of the several women in the poems shadowy. Beyond this, he often refrains from marking the sex of the lover or the beloved. He provided no sequence that generates a larger narrative frame for individual poems; and he does not identify the speakers with the poet who writes the verse. (p. 185)

What these poems frequently demonstrate are 'displays of wit as performances for readers intelligent and imaginative enough to appreciate how the poet makes a cleverly trotted out piece of learning integral to' his love poetry (p. 191). In 'The Good Morrow' the identities of

[11] Dayton Haskin, 'The Love Lyric (Songs and Sonets)', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180.

the speaker and addressee remain 'shadowy' and their love is presented through a serious of elaborate images which depart from the Petrarchan tradition's emphasis on such tropes as the suffering poet, who worships the object of his love from afar. The extent of this departure can be seen in that Donne's familiarity with technologies of navigation has formed the subject of much of the criticism concerned with 'The Good Morrow'. For example, the poem's central metaphor imagines the faces of the speaker and his beloved as cartographic 'hemispheres':

> My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
> And true plain hearts doe in the faces rest;
> Where can we finde two better hemispheares
> Without sharpe North, without declining West? (15-8)

This image has confirmed, for critics, Donne's detailed knowledge of the visual traits of contemporary 'heart-shaped' maps and thus a new model of the earth's geographical dimensions.[12] In the previous lines Donne also writes, 'Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone, / Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne, / Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one' (12-4). Here, he appears to break with the new geography, leaving 'new worlds' to 'sea-discoverers' and preferring that maps be 'showne' to others. Instead, as Lisa Gorton notes, his speaker 'seeks to "possesse" a world, and this is the world one has and one is: the cosmos, or macrocosm of the human microcosm. This is the system that puts people at its centre'.[13] Donne thus represents his lovers as being microcosmically joined at the centre of the cosmos.

[12] The map metaphor of 'The Good Morrow' has inspired the following essays: Robert L. Sharp, 'Donne's "Good-Morrow" and Cordiform Maps', *Modern Language Notes* 69 (1954): 493-5; Julia M. Walker, 'The Visual Paradigm of "The Good-Morrow": Donne's Cosmographical Glasse', *The Review of English Studies* 37 No. 145 (1986): 61-5. Donne's fusing of landscapes and bodies in his poetry is, for Claude Gandelman, an early literary response to the period's anthropomorphic maps, which re-imagined images of states or continents as contemporary or allegorical figures. Gandelman, 'The Poem as Map: John Donne and the "anthropomorphic landscape" tradition', *Arcadia* 19 (1984): 244-51.
[13] Lisa Gorton, 'John Donne's Use of Space', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4, No. 2, Special Issue 3 (September, 1998): 21.

The logic of the human microcosm requires that the macrocosm be finite and measurable, so that the microcosm is a reflection in miniature of everything, or, as Donne puts it in line 11, of 'everywhere'. In this respect, his cosmographic imagination fixes upon the old model of the universe with the earth and mankind at its centre. Gorton argues that in the final stanza the lovers 'are the world other people looked upon in the map' (p. 21). The catachrestic image of a microcosmic universe of two lovers fused into one, cohabiting with a mathematically correct map of the world may seem incongruous in the context of reading and deciphering; but the two images need not be mutually exclusive in an intellectual environment in which the new was often incorporated into the old. Indeed, this visual merging of geographical and astronomical features was the purpose of cosmographical work in the period. As the OED notes, cosmography is the 'science which describes and maps the general features of the universe (both the heavens and the earth), without encroaching on the special provinces of astronomy or geography'.

'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' similarly utilises far-fetched imagery, topographical extremes, old and new cosmology, and sea-travel as a means of representing the distance between two lovers. The famous image of navigational 'stiff twin compasses', as a metaphor for parting and reuniting with a loved one, has traditionally been the locus of critical attention, because of its complexity.[14] But this is not the poem's only catachrestic trope. Donne employs a range of images, throughout the Valediction, which are connected by the seemingly irreconcilable oppositions between spaces, motions and physical and incorporeal things. As Ettenhuber notes, for Donne, 'a relationship under threat can be "strengthened" precisely through the act of working through obscurity; fidelity and

[14] Perhaps the most critically examined geographical metaphor in the Donne corpus is that in 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'. See Marvin Morillo, 'Donne's Compasses: Circles and Right Lines', *English Language Notes* 3 (1966): 173-176; Jay D. Divine, 'Compass and Circle in Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"', *Papers on Language and Literature*: *A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 9 (1973): 78-80; Graham Roebuck, 'Donne's Visual Imagination and Compasses' *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 8, No's. 1-2 (1989): 37-56.

commitment can be re-affirmed and emotional connections re-imagined as part of a journey across the rhetorical map – by a reader willing to go the distance with a remote catachresis' (p. 399).

In stanza three, Donne's 'rhetorical map' encompasses the earth and the heavens:

> Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,
> Men reckon what it did and meant,
> But trepidation of the spheares,
> Though greater farre, is innocent. (9-12)

'Of the new astronomy', Coffin argues, 'the "moving of the earth" is the most radical principle; of the old, the "trepidation of the spheres" is the motion of greatest complexity'.[15] The moving earth is an allusion to the Copernican model of the universe in which the world no longer stands still at its centre. The 'trepidation of the spheares' refers to the irregular, oscillating motion of the eighth sphere of the fixed stars defined by later modifications to the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic cosmology.[16] Coffin maintains that, since 'Donne does not deny the truth of either doctrine…either might be taken to symbolise for him, in the sphere of universal things, the emotion which attends separation' (p. 98). But the metaphor also establishes an opposition between the potentially harmful and frightening movement of the earth compared to that of the eighth sphere, which although 'greater farre' in scale remains 'innocent' of unsettling the established cosmological order. In other words, the speaker's lover can be comforted by the fact that large-scale cosmological deviations from regular place and movement are accounted for in the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic system; the effects of his own departure are, therefore, diminished because they are accommodated by the order of

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[15] 98. Some critics have taken these lines to be an allusion to earthquakes. See, for example, W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review* 54, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1946): 468-488. I agree with Coffin that the earthquake reading does not necessarily preclude the possibility that the new philosophy might also be alluded to here, given the cosmological themes in the poem.

[16] On the theory of trepidations of the eighth sphere, attributed to the astronomer Thabit Ibn Qurra, see James Evans, *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 274-280.

nature. As in ‘The Good Morrow’, the older model here retains its status as the over-riding system in which certain aspects or features may be modified, whilst the integrity of the whole remains intact. Indeed, the convention of conceptualising new knowledge in this way can be seen in that Copernicus’ theory of a heliocentric universe, however radical, upheld most of the major features of the standard astronomy (Evans, p. 280).

The fourth stanza is semantically connected to the third in its retention of cosmological terminology:

> Dull sublunary lovers love
> (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
> Absence, because it doth remove
> Those things which elemented it. (13-6)

The realm of the heavenly spheres, referred to in the previous stanza, is implicitly associated with the transcendent love of the speaker and addressee, by virtue of this images’ juxtaposition with the ‘Dull sublunary lovers’ of line 13. Those who treat love in an earthly, sensual way, whose ‘soul is sense’ cannot endure separation because physicality, the body and not the soul, is the basis of the relationship. This pre-occupation with the virtues of the soul versus that of the body, with extended versus circumscribed space, and with the physical and immaterial feeds into the remaining stanzas in which the lovers ‘Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse’ (20), and are imagined as expanding over space ‘Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate’ (24). The complexity of the relationship and the articulation of extremes in space and emotion, however, has its greatest rhetorical force in the image of the compass.

Donne describes his beloved as the fixed foot of the compass, which although ‘it in the center sit, / Yet, when the other far doth rome, / It leanes, and hearkens after it, / And growes erect, as that comes home’ (29-32). The mobile foot of the compass, or traveller, traces a circle around its central point; however, when it returns ‘home’ it moves in a straight line to become ‘erect’ once more. John Freccero argues that both the circular and straight

movements of the compass represent the spiral motion of the rational soul of man, outlined by Platonic philosophy.[17] The soul's contemplation tends towards the circular motion, whilst the straight motion represents the reality of man's physical existence. Eileen Reeves later borrowed from this interpretation to suggest that the oblique movement in the poem represents the spiralling loxodromes, or rhumb lines of navigational charts.[18] In each of these interpretations, the combination of circular and straight movement to form a spiral is considered the reason for Donne's use of the compass metaphor; the spiral as rational soul is thus taken as the commanding image of the poem.

But I would suggest that the conceit is also marked by its emphasis on final physical reunion with the speaker's beloved, towards a natural end signified by the destination of 'home'. As Ettenhuber notes, although 'they often have less than complimentary things to say about couples who run on physical energy alone…Donne's lovers still seek solace in embodied forms of language and thought' (p. 409). Indeed, the bawdy pun, 'growes erect, as that comes home', suggests that the physical movement is uppermost in the poet's mind. Such physicality might seem contrary to his earlier expression of the lover's transcendent connection which, 'Inter-assured of the mind, / Care lesse, eyes, lips and hands to misse' (19-20). However, the basis for Donne's conceit, the lover's parting, precludes physical union and so the relationship between the lovers must of necessity be oblique and of the mind and soul until the straight movement returns the traveller to his 'real' destination. This does not mean that they become like the 'Dull sublunary lovers', whose 'soule is sense' (13-4), dismissed earlier by Donne as imperfect. Rather, they are distinguished because they participate in both the circular and straight movements which define the life of the mind and body and which are typical of human experience.

Ettenhuber argues that

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[17] John Freccero, 'Donne's "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"', *English Literary History* 30, No. 4 (Dec., 1963): 335-376.

[18] Eileen Reeves, 'John Donne and the Oblique Course', *Renaissance Studies* 7, No. 2 (1993): 168-83.

> Donne asks his lovers to go the extra mile, but he never allows us to ignore the fragility of these rhetorical negotiations: his compasses, for instance, as so many critics have pointed out, do not ultimately square the circle to achieve perfection. Donne refuses to give in to his own analogy, makes us aware of the fact that the compass cannot complete a circle and return to its centre at the same time (p. 413).

This lack of reconciliation between circular and linear movement also emphasises, for the reader, the human imperfections which afflict the speaker and addressee; the speaker aspires to the circular perfection of spiritual love yet cannot escape the physical environs of the earth and the body. The extent to which Donne privileges 'embodied language and thought' can be seen in that the framework of the poem is organised around material images of earth, gold, compasses, distance, of parting and re-uniting. Moreover, the speaker's ultimate object, as well as to provide solace to the woman he has left behind, by emphasising their metaphysical connection, is to look towards the linear motion which will return him 'home'; the navigational compass, after all, is designed to plot a course on a map or chart, a series of motions framed by a point of origin and a final end.

As Donne notes at the close of the poem, the 'firmness' of the fixed foot makes the 'circle just, / And makes me end where I begunne' (35-6). 'Firmness' here represents the ideal of fidelity, but it also has erotic connotations, so that the dissonance between a physical and metaphysical resolution remains at the end of the poem. Moreover, this 'firmness', according to the speaker, completes his circle, makes it 'just', or true; but again, this can only be in a metaphysical sense because to 'end' where he begun would require a straight movement. The logic of these closing lines may not 'square the circle' and the lovers may remain apart, but the desire for finality, or an end, whether physical or otherwise, is clear. The intellectual contexts embedded in the poem are, therefore, not only committed to a finite universe in the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic tradition, but also hint at the ethical and physical necessity of 'ends' in a navigational context.

This assumption of the moral necessity of fulfilling a course, or end, when at sea features regularly in Donne's writing in a variety of contexts. In his elegy, 'Love's Progress', for example, he begins by proclaiming:

> Who ever loves, if hee doe not propose
> The right true end of love, hee's one which goes
> To sea for nothing but to make him sick (1-3).

The twin activities of love and sea voyaging must be undertaken, as defined by the ethical teleology of the Aristotelian tradition, to some definite 'right true end'.[19] To go 'to sea for nothing' is unthinkable when all actions are directed towards an end, and the ocean represents nothing more than a means to that end. The 'right true end' of this particular voyage is to navigate towards the 'Centrique part' (36) of a sexualised female map. John R. Mulder argues that, throughout this poem, Donne wittily distorts the logical arguments practiced by adherents of the Aristotelian tradition, and that the poem's opening begins in the manner of logic textbooks, 'by beginning with axioms and stating his definition' (p. 44). Moreover, Mulder argues that the speaker's subsequent voyage over the map of the woman's body is connected to Aristotle's four causes: 'the efficient cause is the lover, the material the woman's body, the formal her sexual parts, and the final cause sexual intercourse' (p. 44).

While it is difficult to prove that Donne is here rehearsing a fallacious argument concerning the four causes, the poem is clearly grounded in a material universe and its argument pursues a singular end through linear means. For example, in lines 9 and 10, Donne writes that 'Perfection is in Vnity: Prefere / One woman first, and then one thing in her' (9-10). Wholeness, or singularity, as perfection is a commonplace notion which has its origins in

[19] John R. Mulder recognises this teleological reference and argues that Donne begins with a variation on Aristotle's axiom that 'all created things strive towards their proper ends'. This course, he suggests, is 'ordained by nature', and 'whenever nature's end is frustrated, the result is unnatural'. Mulder, *The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 43.

Plato. As Robin Robbins notes, 'Neoplatonists from Porphyry to Ficino reconciled Plato with Christian tradition, imagining a transcendent One who was the perfection of truth and goodness'.[20] Here, the image is employed in the service of double entendre, the final cause being sexual intercourse; the speaker prefers that there be 'one thing in her'. In the following lines Donne compares the woman to a gold coin and concludes that, in spite of all its admirable properties, he loves gold (and by association, women) principally because 't'is made / By our newe Nature, vse, the soule of trade' (15-16). Ideas of use, sex, money, commerce and desire combine in the poem as objects of finality, and this desire is enacted through the speaker's voyage on an imaginary map of the female body.

Before the voyage begins, the speaker announces his destination, the 'Centrique part', and aligns it explicitly with the material world. In deliberate opposition to Petrarchan tropes of female idealisation, Donne writes:

> Although wee see caelestial bodies moue
> Aboue the earth, the earth wee till, and loue:
> Soe wee her Aires contemplate, words, and Hart
> And virtues; But wee loue the Centrique part. (33-6)

Unlike the Neoplatonic leanings of the songs and sonnets which associate lovers with the heavenly spheres, this elegy revels in the earthly language of physical love. The speaker's imagined journey through the 'map', in order to attain 'this desired place'(39), first rehearses the folly of those that 'set out at the face' (40) and then continues on a linear 'southerly', or latitudinal course, beyond the nose, which is likened to the first Meridian, running 'Not 'twixt an East and West, but 'twixt two suns' (48). Donne's cosmologically impossible metaphor of 'two suns' representing eyes stresses the superficial nature of the conceit. In his rhetorical falsification of logical arguments, Donne uses axioms, witty comparisons and cartographic/nautical imagery to demonstrate that the 'right true end' and perfection of love

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[20] Robin Robbins, ed. *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (London: Longman, 2008), 349.

is the realisation of the physical act. The poem is thus designed to elicit admiration for its skilfully irreverent re-imaging of the language and purposes of Aristotelian logic. But, in this context, the voyage trope also provides the perfect analogy of the physical processes required to attain the final cause; the physicality of the 'map' requires that the reader imagine both the terrain of the female body and its geographical equivalents, as well as participate in the mental and material teleological process in search of the 'Centrique part'.

In 'Confin'd Love', Donne conceals a bawdy conceit within a similar call to action: 'Who e'r rigg'd faire ship to lie in harbours, / And not to seeke new lands, or not to deale withal?' (15-16). This time, his irreverent rhetorical reversal of ethical ends is employed to convince the reader of the need for multiple sexual partners, rather than the singular goal of 'Love's Progress'. The penetrative imagery of ship and harbour is, for Donne, a motion which should be carried out in a multitude of ports. Again, Donne distorts an Aristotelian commonplace in the following lines: 'Good is not good, unlesse / A thousand it possesse' (19-20). As Robbins notes, according to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the highest good is that 'which is sought by all' (p. 159). The attraction to purposeful movement, however, was something that Donne took seriously, as we can see from his use of an almost identical metaphor in the sermon of 1619 before his departure for Germany: 'We see ships in the river… but all their use is gone, if they go not to sea'.[21] This sermon, on *Ecclesiast*es 12. 1. 'Remember now thy Creator in the Dayes of thy Youth', was delivered as a farewell to his congregation before departing for Germany as chaplain to the Doncaster embassy. The purpose of this embassy, sent at the behest of James VI & I, was to mediate between the warring factions on the continent, the Protestant forces of the Elector Palatine, and the Catholic armies of the Hapsburg Emperor, Ferdinand II. Again, 'use' provides the impetus for sea travel and Donne employs the comparison to encourage his listeners to fix upon God,

[21] George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds. *The Sermons of John Donne* (California: University of California Press, 1962), II, 246.

as the first and final object of the memory: 'Remember the Creator, and stay there, because there is no prospect farther' (II, 246).

In his *Essays in Divinity* (1614), Donne again invokes the ship metaphor to demonstrate that progress and ends are the natural state of the sea voyage, as well as the way forward in the resolution of religious controversy:

> as in violent tempests, when a ship dares bear no main sayl, and to lie stil at hull, obeying the uncertain wind and tyde … it is best to put forth such a small ragg of sail, as may keep the barke upright, and make her continue neer one place, though she proceed not; So in this question, where we cannot go forward to make Moses the first Author, for many strong oppositions, and to ly hulling upon the face of the waters, and think nothing, is a stupid and lazy inconsideration, which (as Saint Austin says) is the worst of all affections, our best firmament and arrest will be that reverent, and pious, and reasonable credulity, that God was Author of the first piece of these books.[22]

The safest sailing method for a ship to follow during 'violent tempests', Donne explains, is to 'put forth' a 'small rag of sail', rather than the large main sail, to allow the hull to absorb the impact of both 'wind and tyde'. By directing the small sail towards a point at which the wind cancels out the effects of the tide, the ship can remain stationary on the waves, 'continue neer one place, though she proceed not'. Although this common sense advice, in reality, would be the best means of saving the ship from ruin, the metaphor, when applied to theological conviction, suggests that to lie 'hulling upon the face of the waters, and think nothing, is a stupid and lazy inconsideration'. In other words, just as the final cause of the ship is to reach its destination, or 'firmament', so must we decide that, when faced with irresolvable exegetical controversies, God is the final cause of scripture.

[22] John Donne, *Essays in Divinity: Being Several Disquisitions Interwoven with Meditations and Prayers*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 15.

In 'A Hymn to God my God, in my sicknesse', written in 1623 during a period of illness, Donne frames his own sick body as a map, to be examined by physician/cosmographers:

> Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne
> Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be showne
> That this is my South-west discoverie,
> *Per fretum febris*, by these streights to die (6-10)

Per fretum febris translates as the 'straits of fever', and throughout the poem Donne compares images of geographical exploration to the journey towards death; by these 'straits of fever' he will die. According to the Christian tradition, Christ is referred to as *Oriens*, because like the sun he rises in the east, whilst his death, or setting, takes place in the west. To travel west, therefore, is to travel towards death, and Donne goes on to express this notion in the succeeding line: 'I joy, that in these straits I see my West' (11). As the OED notes, in this period, 'straits' could denote a 'narrow or tight place, a time of sore need or of awkward or straitened circumstances, a difficulty or fix'. In *As you like it* (ca. 1599-1600), Shakespeare employs this latter sense of the word to suggest ill luck in an exchange between Rosalind and Orlando: 'I know into what straits of fortune she is driven'.[23] By punning on 'straits' Donne points to a sense of personal difficulty, his sickness, but also to the language of navigation, to the narrow passages, such as the Straits of Gibraltar, which connect larger bodies of water, the seas and oceans of the world. Donne continues this navigational theme in the following lines:

> Is the Pacifique Sea my home? Or are
> The Easterne riches? Is *Jerusalem*?

[23] William Shakespeare, *As you like it*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare The Complete Works: 2nd Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor & Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Act V, Scene III, 677.

> *Anyan*, and *Magellan*, and *Gibraltare*?
> All streights, and none but streights, are wayes to them,
> Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Sem (16-20).

Here, as in the 'Valediction', the search for 'home', or a destination, in this case death, is the rationale behind Donne's geographical speculations. By referring to the disparate locations of the Pacific, the Far East and Jerusalem, he concludes that physical location is immaterial when considering one's journey into the next life.

The idea that Donne invokes geographical landmarks as a means of demonstrating their insubstantiality compared to death and the divine is an orthodox reading of the poem. As Grace Tiffany argues, 'Donne's approach to "that holy room" that is God's presence chamber is made possible only by his soul's discarding of the map that graphs his journey towards death'.[24] But the manner in which he envisions physical and spiritual movement retains the cartographic emphasis upon straits, and thus direction, a point of origin and a destination. In line 18, Donne alludes to those straits, which, depending on one's original position, allow for passage to the north, south, west, and east. The Strait of Magellan provides a natural route which cuts through South America (present day Chile and Argentina) and connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific. The Gibraltar Strait, lies between Spain and Morocco, Europe and Africa, and bridges the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea; it also leads to Jerusalem. 'Anyan' refers to the semi-mythical strait that early modern navigators and cartographers believed would provide access to the Far East via a Northerly passage; the Bering Strait is its modern equivalent. Before Northern America was comprehensively mapped, explorers posited that this continent and China were somehow joined. But the Anyan strait was also the name given to another north-westerly route, which was believed to

[24] Grace Tiffany, *Love's Pilgrimage: The Holy Journey in English Renaissance Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 132. See also David Roberts, 'Donne, Geography, and the "Hymn to God My God in My Sicknesse", *Notes and Queries* 46, No. 2 (June 1999): 256-58. Joseph E. Duncan, 'Donne's "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse" and Iconographic Tradition', *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 3, No. 2 (1984): 157-180. Donald K. Anderson, 'Donne's "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse" and the T-in-O Maps', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 71, No. 4 (1972): 465-72.

have begun somewhere near Hudson Bay and to have stretched all the way down to California.

Given the combinations of possible directions in this poem, none of which Donne seems to privilege over the others, the answer to his first three questions, I would suggest, is no, these earthly locations cannot be his 'home'. However, when he asks whether the straits themselves might be considered a 'home' in line 18, he comes closer to a positive response, to the means by which 'home' might be reached. The closest man will come to achieving rest, or 'home', while he is alive is through process, by following the 'ways' towards a given end. 'All streights', Donne suggests, 'and none but streights, are wayes to them'. In other words, by oceanic travel, the straits are the best means of passing from one part of the globe to the next, to Jerusalem, the Pacific and the East, since they are the natural conduits which separate continents. But the straight motion also denotes the difficulties of everyday existence and man's passing from this life into the next.

Significantly, it is the linear navigational movement between two points which, again, Donne chooses to employ as a metaphor, not only to suggest that life is a process, but also that it has a final end. When faced with geographical immensity and a multitude of directions, knowing that there is a beginning and an end to all journeys provides a sense of stability and orientation. In line 20 Donne writes of 'Japhet', 'Cham' and 'Sem', the sons of Noah, who were believed to have occupied and then populated each of the three regions of the earth referred to in the poem. Harry M. Campbell observes that 'Cham, or Ham, was the youngest son of Noah, whose descendants founded the first great empires of Assyria and Egypt and the republics of Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage'.[25] He goes on to point out that

[25] Harry M. Campbell, 'Donne's "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness", *College English* 5, No. 4 (1944): 195.

> Shem, the eldest son of Noah, was father of the race whose holy city is still Jerusalem. Japhet, or Japheth, another son of Noah, is traditionally credited with being the father of certain races part of whom moved eastward through Asia and on to what is now the Pacific Ocean; hence the association here with the 'Pacific sea' (p. 195).

According to Campbell, the whole stanza 'indicates that neither the world of ancient traditions nor the new world of the Renaissance explorers can tempt Donne to hold back from his own "south-west discovery"', or death (p. 195). But I would also suggest that, as well as combining old biblical and new empirically based geographies, Donne here underlines the sense of man's origins after the flood, his beginnings, compared to his ends, as a means of demonstrating the continuity of linear movement towards death which governs all things. Indeed, four lines later, he reinforces this biblical sense of the Christian's teleological development through time, now compacted and bound up in Donne's individual person: 'As the first *Adams* sweat surrounds my face, / May the last *Adams* blood my soule embrace' (24-5). Donne here participates in the first original sin of Adam and the last redemptive act of Christ and thus becomes the embodiment of man's historical earthly purpose, to sin and be a part of the world and to die and be redeemed. In these examples of Donne's navigational imagery, the specific objects of his metaphorical voyages are diverse; they seek rhetorical, spiritual, theological, political and erotic ends, and are conceived in terms of physical movement. This subtle application of the concept of final causality to a variety of discourses, therefore, points to a belief in the morality of the idea, a general pursuit of purpose which is inherent in the human will.

The early modern history of the Atlantic Ocean represents another important context for Donne's writing – as we have seen, new conceptions of oceanic distance chimed with his preoccupation with partings and reunions, particularly in the songs and sonnets. In biographical terms, Donne was closely connected to England's colonial project through his

dealings with the Virginia Company, at different times, between 1608 and 1622.[26] For example, in 1608/9, during his period of unemployment, he petitioned unsuccessfully for the position of secretary to the company. Later, in May 1622, he was admitted as an honorary member and the following July became a member of the company's governing council. In October of that year, Donne was asked to deliver the company's annual sermon, and Bald notes that the resulting text, although not the first, was one of the earliest 'missionary' sermons, in which the preacher encourages his listeners to spread the gospel 'to the natives of the lands they were opening up for trade'.[27] The sermon, in its discussion of the legality of colonial plantations, reveals something of Donne's attitude towards the ocean. Here, he iterates the standard line, developed by European lawyers, which advocates the plantation of colonies on the basis that uncultivated land, whether occupied or not, could be considered lawfully vacant. In doing so, he also articulates his knowledge of the 'legal' status of the ocean as defined by Europeans: 'For as a man does not become proprietary of the Sea, because he hath two or three Boats, fishing in it, so neither does a man become Lord of a maine Continent, because he hath two or three Cottages in the Skirts thereof'.[28] While land can be measured and occupied, Donne here invokes Hugo Grotius' contention in *Mare Liberum* (1608) that the sea is either 'the property of no one (*res nullius*), or a common possession (*res communis*), or public property (*res publica*)'.[29] Legally, the ocean is uncontainable and unfathomable, and in practical terms, even if it could be claimed, how could it be cultivated or controlled when technologies and methods of navigation remain subject to the unwieldy power of nature?

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[26] See Stanley Johnson, 'John Donne and the Virginia Company', *English Literary History* 14, No. 2 (Jun., 1947): 127-138. Tom Cain, 'John Donne and the Ideology of Colonization', *English Literary Renaissance* 31, No. 3, (Nov 2008): 440-76.

[27] 436. On Donne's knowledge of economics see also, Coburn Freer, 'John Donne and Elizabethan Economic Theory', *Criticism* 38 (1996): 497–520; Thomas Festa, 'The Metaphysics of Labor in John Donne's Sermon to the Virginia Company', *Studies in Philology* 106, No. 1 (Winter 2009): 99.

[28] George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds. *The Sermons of John Donne* (California: University of California Press, 1962), IV, 274.

[29] Hugo Grotius, *The Freedom of the Seas, Or, the Right Which Belongs to the Dutch to Take Part in the East Indian Trade*, trans. Ralph Van Deman Magoffin (New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, 2001), 22.

Walter Lim suggests that Donne's poems give 'to the reader a self launched excitingly into space and time'.[30] But again such an optimistic engagement with vast and unknown spaces, I suggest, is problematic for Donne, particularly in 'The Storme' and 'The Calme'. Here, as in the Virginia sermon, the Atlantic, as something immeasurable, is a space not only of potential but of mystery, in which the traces of human endeavour are nullified in an indistinguishable expanse of water. It is for this reason that his oceanic metaphors are so often obsessed with the transitory nature of mankind compared to the tumultuous yet unchanging expanse of the sea. As his letter to Goodyer notes, it is not a 'sullen lake', but a sea which has the potential to reduce a man to 'impotencie'. On the evidence of his navigational and cosmographical imagery, Donne's worldview was based on a largely orthodox understanding of the Aristotelian tradition. In this he was no different from his contemporaries. But in 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', it is precisely the novel unbounded space of the ocean which elicits Donne's existential reassessment of what he knows about the Aristotelian universe. Before the acceptance and establishment of inertial theory in the later seventeenth century, early modern understandings of physical movement were based upon Aristotelian motion. So, when sensory experience and intellectual assumptions combine, a rupture between what is 'known' and what is felt might reasonably result in a sense of impotency. In order to account for this model of motion, which Donne would have taken as a true representation of physical reality, the following provides an explanation of Aristotle's theory in the *Physics* and its reconsideration in the seventeenth century.

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[30] Walter S. H. Lim, *The Arts of Empire: the Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 65.

I.

Aristotle's cosmological system was finite, fixed and hierarchically structured and, within this model of the universe, all things were governed by movement. As Aristotle put it:

> The whole of the heaven, the whole cosmos, is spherical, and moves continuously… but there are necessarily two points which are unmoved, opposite one another, just as in the case of a ball being turned in a lathe; they remain fixed, holding the sphere in position, and the whole mass revolves in a circle round them; these points are called poles.[31]

The Earth, which turned on the axis of the North and South poles, formed the central point from which the concentric spheres of the elements and planets emanated towards the outermost perfect *primum mobile*, or first mover, which imbued in the lower spheres their circular motions. All movement within this system was derived from a fixed point, the unmoved mover, and the 'orderly arrangement' of the universe was 'preserved by God and through God' (p. 347). 'If there is to be movement', Aristotle wrote, 'there must…be something which causes movement, and if movement is to go on always, that which causes it must go on always and, if it is to be continuous, that which causes it must be one and the same and unmoved, un-generated and unalterable'.[32] In addition to the movement of the spheres, for Aristotle, all things in nature, which were composed of the four elements, moved with purpose towards their natural place. So, for example, air and fire rise and earth and water fall unless forced against their natural inclinations. Furthermore, as we have seen, the act of creation itself was defined as a process of movement, or change, in which material substance moves towards its final form. 'Nature', he wrote, 'is the distinctive form or quality of such things as have within themselves a principle of motion, such form or characteristic

[31] Aristotle, *On the Cosmos*, trans. D. J. Furley (London: William Heinemann, 1955), 349. Subsequent citations are from this edition.
[32] Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations, On Coming- to- Be and Passing-Away*, trans. E. S. Forster (London: William Heinemann, 1955), II. 10, 319.

property not being separable from the things themselves'.[33] These natural things are distinct from 'manufactured or "made" things' because an artificial object does not have 'within itself the principle of its own making' and generally 'this principle resides in some external agent' (II. i. p. 109). Aristotle believed, therefore, that inanimate objects could only move if impelled by an external force. In the *Physics*, he explained that

> the motion of one body is initiated and sustained by the impact and pressure of another body, and is therefore incidentally passive to that body, it is natural that the moving cause of the motion should carry over to the thing moved certain characteristics of its own…. (III. ii-iii. p. 207)

Alexandre Koyre observes that this movement 'throughout its duration' required 'the continuous action of an external mover':

> Remove the mover, and the movement will stop. Detach it [the moving object] from the moved, and the movement will equally stop. Aristotle, as we know well, does not admit action at a distance; every transmission of movement implies according to him a contact. Therefore there are only two kinds of such transmission: pressure and traction. To move a body you have either to push or to pull it.[34]

This causal movement, ultimately derived from the first mover, presupposes a universe of continual motion, of generation, corruption, growth and changes of place. In attempting to define the process of motion, Aristotle described it, somewhat paradoxically, as the actualisation of something as yet still incomplete, a kind of provisional being which can never truly be realised; if it did it would cease to be motion. Koyre explains this difficult concept as

> the being of everything that changes, of which the being is alteration and modification and which is only in changing and in modifying itself. The famous Aristotelian

[33] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford (London: William Heinemann, 1957), II. i. 115.
[34] Alexandre Koyre, 'Galileo and Plato', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4, No. 4 (Oct., 1943): 411.

> definition of movement – *actus entis in potentia in quantum est in potentia* – which Descartes will find perfectly unintelligible – expresses admirably the fact: movement is the being – or the *actus* – of everything which is not God (p. 410).

Movement, then, is potentiality, and all things are defined by a purposeful progression towards the fulfilment of the final cause. Aristotle's ethics, like his physics, are based upon an identical teleology. Those natural things in which the principle of movement inheres included animals and man, and both follow the path towards the 'end', albeit in different ways. Aquinas, who influentially merged Aristotelian thought with Christian theology, summarised this distinction in the *Summa Theologica*:

> Those things that are possessed of reason move themselves to an end; because they have dominion over their actions through their free-will, which is the "faculty of will and reason". But those things that lack reason tend to an end, by natural inclination, as being moved by another and not by themselves; since they do not know the nature of an end as such, and consequently cannot ordain anything to an end, but can be ordained to an end only by another.[35]

For Aristotle and Aquinas the human will is directed towards the 'good', the performance of a virtuous task, or the realisation of a virtuous state, and so follows a variety of purposes in life in pursuit of the end.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Aristotle's physics had become the subject of much scrutiny. So much so that Francis Bacon in the *Novum Organum* (1620) could argue that 'the final cause rather corrupts than advances the sciences, except such as have to do with human action'.[36] While Bacon retained the ethical aspect of the final cause, in matters of natural philosophy he held that the definition of material according to its essence, or final form, was contrary to the inductive method. In order to understand the materials of

[35] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2.
[36] Francis Bacon, *Collected Works of Francis Bacon: Volume 4, the Philosophical Works*, eds. James Spedding & Robert Leslie Ellis (London: Routledge, [1875] 1996), 120.

nature, matter itself must form the basis of enquiry. As Descartes put it, in the *Principles of Philosophy* (1644):

> When dealing with natural things we will, then, never derive any explanations from the purposes which God or nature may have had in view when creating them and we shall entirely banish from our philosophy the search for final causes. For we should not be so arrogant as to suppose that we can share in God's plans.[37]

Instead, the physicist should consider God as 'the efficient cause of all things; and starting from the divine attributes which by God's will we have some knowledge of, we shall see, with the aid of our God-given natural light, what conclusions should be drawn concerning those effects, which are apparent to our senses' (Descartes, p. 202). This mode of thinking would define the mechanical philosophy which gained ground throughout the seventeenth century, and which increasingly considered matter to be without an inherent final cause. In tandem with Galileo's experiments with moving objects, this passivity of matter now pointed towards the theory of inertia as the most likely state of bodies in motion, either constantly moving or constantly at rest. Contrary to the push and pull of Aristotle's formulation, Galileo, in his treatise on sunspots (1613), argued that, with

> all the external impediments removed a heavy body on the spherical surface concentric to the Earth will be indifferent to rest and to movement toward any part of the horizon, and it will remain in the state in which it has been put; that is, if it has been put in a state of rest it will remain in it, and if it has been put in motion, toward the west, for example, it will maintain the same state.[38]

Although later defined much more fully by Descartes, Gassendi, and finally Newton, the initial seeds of the theory of inertia were implicit in Galileo's writings. As Stillman Drake

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[37] Rene Descartes, 'Principles of Philosophy', trans. John Cottingham, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 202.

[38] Galileo Galilei & Christoph Scheiner, *On Sunspots*, trans. Eileen Reeves & Albert van Helden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 125.

notes, 'the essential core of the inertial concept lies in the ideas', first articulated in the above treatise, 'of a body's indifference to motion or to rest and its continuance in the state it is once given'.[39]

At the same time, the discovery of new stars and planets, by Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler and Galileo, although never stated by the astronomers themselves, undermined Aristotle's harmonious cosmology by pointing towards the possibility of infinite space. Convinced of the infinity of the universe, Giordano Bruno controversially displaced the world from its position at the centre of the cosmos, arguing that in infinite space there can be no centre, and that the Earth was just one of a potentially infinite amount of planets.[40] This challenge to certain structural aspects of the Aristotelian universe, as we have seen, was not enough to topple what was still the most comprehensive and plausible available worldview. As Margaret J. Osler notes,

> Even after the content of natural philosophy changed to reflect the metaphysics of the mechanical philosophy and new developments in astronomy, the science of motion, physiology, and natural philosophy continued to be constructed on the skeletal framework of Aristotle's Physics, and "physics", at this time, referred to natural philosophy.[41]

But the new philosophy did represent a serious challenge to the notion of purposeful movement, and, according to Koyre, implied 'the disappearance from the scientific outlook of all considerations based on value, on perfection, on harmony, on meaning and on purpose' (p. 404).

Written at this time of transitional movements in scientific thinking, Donne's 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', as I go on to suggest, reflect an Aristotelian worldview challenged

[39] Stillman Drake, 'Galileo and the Law of Inertia', *American Journal of Physics* 32, No. 601 (1964): 606.
[40] On Bruno's visit to England in 1583 and his reception at Oxford see Ernan McMullin, 'Giordano Bruno at Oxford', *Isis* 77, No. 1 (Mar., 1986): 85-94, and Mordechai Feingold, 'Giordano Bruno in England, Revisited', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67, No. 3 (September 2004): 329-346.
[41] Osler, 'Whose Ends? Teleology in Early Modern Natural Philosophy', *Osiris*, 2nd Series 16 (2001): 154.

by the particular environment of the Atlantic Ocean. As a consequence of extreme natural forces, Donne's poems represent an early indication of his own scepticism concerning the inviolability of Aristotle's theory of motion at a time when it was most open to scrutiny, and this doubt is made manifest in each poem's form. Indeed, as we will see, the form of the verse letter was particularly suited to questions concerning the causal nature of the material world.

II.

In 1596 Donne joined the Earl of Essex's successful raid on the Spanish port of Cadiz, as a volunteer. If we are to believe his expressions in 'Calez and Guyana', a certain eagerness for further action following this success is discernible in his enthusiastic call for the fulfilment of 'new ends' across the Atlantic: 'one things end doth still begine a new' (4). The opportunity to pursue these 'new ends' came the following year, when Donne found himself participating in the disastrous Azores expedition, in which the fleet was beset by a storm almost immediately after leaving Plymouth, and then later becalmed near the Azores. Both of these experiences were recounted by Donne in the verse letters addressed to his friend Sir Christopher Brooke, and adapted, as Anthony Parr notes, with some poetic licence, to present the storm and calm as occurring sequentially (p. 71). Previous criticism of 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' has generally conformed to the idea that there is a certain artificiality about their representation of events. Parr, for example, finds in them a 'quasi-mannerist' tendency which obscures 'conventional descriptive purposes' (p. 70). He therefore prefers to identify them as comments on contemporary politics. Similarly, B. F. Nellist argues that the poems lack realism and they 'present the reader with few clear visual details, and no account of the size

or shape or colour of things'.[42] Clayton D. Lein goes further than Nellist in finding the particular classical precedents from which Donne borrowed. He argues that the works of Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Seneca provided models for almost all of 'The Storme's' metaphors, leaving little room for original descriptive imagery.[43] What Nellist suggests, along with the later analysis of Lein, is that the poems participate in the long tradition, inherited from classical literature, of imagining the sea, its storms and calms dispassionately in terms of the ruling power of fortune. For Nellist the sea is 'the type for all earthly instability' (p. 511).

Nellist is correct in his observation that the poems register the 'passions aroused by participation in the situation' (p. 513). But by removing Donne from the actual experience of the voyage, both Nellist and Lein overlook the importance of sensory perception to the poems' meanings. In addition, while their borrowings from the sea tropes of classical literature are without question, the poems are also immersed, as with much of Donne's work, in contemporary ideas about the natural world. The suggestion that the verse letters are derived solely from classical sources overlooks their distinctly Atlantic setting and context, with which ancient mariners would have had little experience. As Ted-Larry Pebworth and Claude J. Summers argue, the genre of the verse letter is 'fundamentally referential and occasional', and 'necessarily rooted in external reality. Hence, full appreciation of any particular verse letter requires knowledge of the contexts from which it arises'.[44] Nellist's remark that 'we seem isolated in some strange world' cut off from time and space 'with only the elements for company' (p. 511) therefore seems self-defeating when we consider that not only are the poems contextually specific, but isolation in a spatially disorienting 'strange world' conforms to the physical details which Donne has no choice but to record in the

[42] B. F. Nellist, 'Donne's "Storm" and "Calm" and the Descriptive Tradition', *Modern Language Review* 59 (1964): 511.
[43] Clayton D. Lein, 'Donne's "The Storme": The Poem and the Tradition', *English Literary Renaissance* 4, No. 1 (1974): 137-163.
[44] Ted-Larry Pebworth and Claude J. Summers '"Thus Friends Absent Speake": The Exchange of Verse Letters between John Donne and Henry Wotton', *Modern Philology* 81, No. 4 (May, 1984): 361.

undifferentiated spaces of ocean and sky. Moreover, while Lein suggests that Donne 'constructed a rhetorical set piece whose every vital movement and gesture refers to classical patterns', he falls short of acknowledging the rhetorical conventions which transform imitation into inspiration (p. 138). In what follows, I depart from these interpretations by suggesting that, in the verse letters, Donne conceived of both the act of being and the act of writing in similar terms. That is to say, both are bound to the material world through their necessary purposeful motion. So, any changes to the structure of the Aristotelian natural world will necessarily impact upon the world of the poems. In this respect, they move well beyond their classical antecedents.

The first eight lines of 'The Storme' open with an address to the recipient Christopher Brooke, and a comparison of the skilled artist's truthful rendering of 'history' to that of the poet/letter writer:

> Thou which art I, ('tis nothing to be soe)
> Thou which art still thy selfe, by these shalt know
> Part of our passage; And, a hand, or eye
> By *Hilliard* drawne, is worth an history,
> By a worse painter made; and (without pride)
> When by thy judgment they are dignifi'd,
> My lines are such: 'Tis the preheminence
> Of friendship onely to'impute excellence (1-8).

Straight away we are presented with an indication that the poem will be preoccupied with its own status as art, as Donne blurs the boundaries between textual and visual representation. L. E. Semler argues that Donne here recognises the 'hierarchy of genres' outlined by Leon Battista Alberti, in which the importance of history painting, or *istoria*, was thought to outweigh that of portraiture.[45] But in this instance, Donne reverses the hierarchy, so that 'a

[45] L. E. Semler, *The English Mannerist Poets and the Visual Arts* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998), 56.

history' or grand narrative of the voyage is not what 'The Storme' will re-enact, but rather a personal dramatic composition, recounting his own experiences; Brooke will only discover 'Part of our passage'. In this respect, Donne prefers to affect the *difficulta* of Nicholas Hilliard, a portrait painter of intricacy and detail, rather than spatial and narrative expansion, which will transcend that of a 'worse painter' or poet. This allusion, as Ann Hurley notes, refers 'to that part of portraiture that the knowledgeable individual would know to be technically the most demanding, the drawing of "hand" and "eye"'.[46]

In the first eight lines, Donne hints at the causal nature of the verse letter, the sense of time, participation and process, of writing, sending, receiving and reading, which underwrites the genre. As Margaret Maurer notes, most of Donne's verse letters to friends are preoccupied with the process of their own creation.[47] Here, Donne employs the trope of modesty, 'Thou which art I, ('tis nothing to be soe)', to suggest that it is only when Brooke receives and reads the letter that its contents and thus Donne's experience will be invested with any value: 'Thou which art still thy selfe, by these shalt know / Part of our passage… 'Tis the preheminence / Of friendship onely to'impute excellence'. The implication, then, is that should Brooke never receive the letter and 'impute' its 'excellence', then both Donne and his writing will remain un-actualised and thus 'nothing'. Elsewhere in his work, the notion that the writing of letters enabled a metaphysical connection of souls was a favourite conceit of Donne's. For example, in another letter to Goodyer, written 9 October 1607, he writes that 'this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of extasie, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, which doth then communicate it self to two bodies' (*Letters*, p. 11). In 'The Extasie', he similarly embarks upon a Neoplatonic suspension and

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[46] Ann Hurley, *John Donne's poetry and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 173.
[47] Margaret Maurer, 'The Verse Letter', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 209.

union of souls, an experience which can only be 'read' once the souls return to their corporeal home:

> To'our bodies turn wee then, that so
> Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
> Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
> But yet the body is his booke. (69-72)

Where suspended souls themselves may understand 'loves mysteries', on earth such things can only be apprehended by sense, by the tangible materials of body and book.[48] Words, for Donne, can therefore participate in a transcendent state of rapture which outstrips the strictures of space and yet finds final expression in the body. In this respect, language communicates feeling and is equated with corporeal sense. In the verse letters, however, there is no sense of an immaterial Platonic simultaneity of understanding between two people. Instead, ideas of time, process, motion and potential dominate, which generate a feeling of expectation, of an eventual, but not guaranteed, social and literary connection.

In drawing attention to the equivalent forms of portraiture and verse letter, *istoria* painting and history narrative, another dualism is brought into play, that of the personal and public mode. Where the verse letter and portrait suggest the intimacy of friendship, or coterie readership, the narrative history of a well-known event in English foreign policy binds the poem to a public theme.[49] As Parr notes, 'Donne must have been aware that his own descriptive effort in the two poems would be read as an account of the voyage, and as an interpretation of it' (p. 62). Stephen Burt, on the other hand, argues that here Donne seeks to

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[48] Previous commentary on 'The Extasie' is extensive, and has most notably centred on the issue of the poem's elevation of either body or soul. See M. Y. Hughes, 'The Lineage of "The Extasie"', *Modern Language Review* 27 (1932): 1-5; George Williamson, 'The Convention of "The Extasie", in *Seventeenth Century English Poetry,* ed. William R. Keast (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 132-143; Helen Gardner, 'The Argument about "The Extasie"', in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies presented to F. P. Wilson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 279-306; Rene Graziani, 'John Donne's "The Extasie" and Ecstasy', *Review of English Studies* 19, No. 74 (1968): 121.

[49] On Donne's verse as written for a specific coterie readership, see Marotti, 'The Social Context and Nature of Donne's Writing: Occasional Verse and Letters', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35-48.

elevate 'private, 'miniature' values above public ones', that 'a hand or eye by Hilliard is worth a big history-painting by "a worse painter", precisely as a private friendship… is better than a life of futile, unsuccessful or grandiose action on the world stage'.[50] But Donne's valorisation of hands and eyes, as the pinnacle of representation, has another context, free from issues of public and private spheres. Not only are hands and eyes the means by which both painter and poet create their work, they are also the recipients of sense, the boundaries between the external world of nature and the internal world of thought.[51] The artist can, therefore, draw on established textual and visual models, but only the immediacy of sense will provide the additional quality of authenticity. Contrary to Lein's interpretation, 'The Storme' draws inspiration from sensory experience as a means of qualifying classical reference, a practice which was, in fact, entirely in keeping with the methods of ancient rhetoric.

This merging of the sensory with the literary is powerfully expressed in 'The Storme's' succeeding lines, in which England, 'from out her pregnant intrailes sigh'd a winde' (13), and 'As to a stomack sterv'd, whose insides meete, / Meate comes, it came; and swole our sailes' (20-1). The motif of food as nourishment for poetic expression was a standard *topos* in classical and Renaissance rhetoric. Quintilian, for example, used the comparison to argue that the purpose of reading was not to memorise and blindly reproduce the words of others:

> just as we do not swallow our food till we have chewed it and reduced it almost to a state of liquefaction to assist the process of digestion, so what we read must not be committed to the memory for subsequent imitation while it is still in a crude state, but

[50] Stephen Burt, 'Donne the Sea Man', *John Donne Journal, Studies in the Age of Donne* 16 (1997): 145.
[51] On the significance of hands according to Cicero and in the Renaissance see David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 242-4.

> must be softened and, if I may use the phrase, reduced to a pulp by frequent re-perusal.[52]

Similarly, Robert Burton paraphrased the Senecan maxim, 'as meat is to the body, such is reading to the soul'.[53] The image of wind as divine breath and poetic inspiration was also a rhetorical commonplace. As Terence Cave notes, 'in Homer's own phrase "winged words", the notion of a language animated or inflated by some authentic wind is one of the most persistent *topoi* of Western language theory'.[54] The 'art-nature antithesis as an opposition between reflection and intuition', is important, in this respect, since immediacy comes from the movements of nature rather than existing forms of art (p. 127). Donne's purpose, then, is not to imitate, but to surpass his models by wittily distorting the conventions of imitation and inspiration themselves. Much like Donne's conceit in 'The Storme', the image of a ship's sails swollen with wind was employed by Quintilian as an example of discerning eloquence, of 'a privileged sign of plenitude' (p. 147):

> This precaution may be employed while we are clearing harbour, if the wind drive us forward before all our tackle is ready. Afterwards, as we proceed upon our course, we shall trim our sails, arrange our ropes, and pray that the breeze may fill our sails. Such a procedure is preferable to yielding ourselves to an empty torrent of words… that the storm may sweep us where it will (X, vii, 23, p. 145).

Of course, the inverse qualities of the wind, or *spiritus*, as unpredictable, storm-like or unwieldy, can similarly undermine rhetorical abundance, risking 'denunciation as absence or inanity' (Cave, p. 147). As Donne tells us, the wind was such that speech first becomes overbearing and confused ('Thousands our noyses were, yet wee'mongst all / Could none by

[52] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian,* Volume 4, trans. H. E. Butler (London: William Heinemann, 1968) X, I, 19, 13.
[53] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 2, Sec. 2, Mem. 4, ed. Holbrook Jackson (London: J. M. Dent, [1932] 1972), 93.
[54] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: problems of writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 145.

his right name, but thunder call' (41-2)) and then inarticulate: 'Hearing hath deaf'd our saylers: and if they / Knew how to heare, there's none knowes what to say' (63-4). By the end of the poem, Donne reveals that:

> Darknesse, light's elder brother, his birth-right
> Claims o'r this world, and to heaven hath chas'd light.
> All things are one, and that one none can be,
> Since all forms, uniforme deformity
> Doth cover… (67-71)

A universal darkness, wrought by the storm, has now replaced edifying light, the sun 'that should teach' (37), so much so that 'all formes', including that of the poem, are reduced to confusion and 'uniform deformity'. As we have seen, the poem is concerned with its status as verse and letter and with the process of creation. Deprived of an essential form, neither the speaker, nor the poem, nor the idea is guaranteed an eventual union with the letter's recipient, and the last line, although acknowledging the desire for connection, reveals an unwillingness for Brooke to share in the formlessness of the poem and the experience: 'though thine absence sterve me,'I wish not thee' (74). The abundance of nourishment enjoyed while the sails absorbed wind like 'meat' has now dissipated, leaving Donne 'starved' of inspiration and of Brooke, who is the reason for the letter's existence. 'The Storme's' initial profession of confidence in the fullness of poetic utterance, before the movements and excesses of nature adversely affect all means of communication, is, therefore, intentional. This is also why the windless world of 'The Calme' is preoccupied with the loss of control, emptiness and 'unsteady thoughts'. I return to 'The Storme' on page 74; but, for the moment, the following discussion continues to address the relationship between words and nature as they are represented in 'The Calme'.

In 'The Calme's' space of physical paralysis, communication with the rest of the fleet is redundant. Donne recounts, for example, that there is no use for 'lanthornes' (17), the

lights by which the ships maintained contact while in motion. Signalling by lanterns, fixed to the ship's stern, was a common practice among medieval and early modern sailors, a visual language transmitted through light.[55] The image of lantern light extinguished, therefore, subtly evokes the pervading loss or absence of speech. Moreover, the fleet's immobility means that they 'can nor left friends, nor sought foes recover' (21), neither the Spanish treasure fleet, nor the other half of the English expedition under Essex. Essex had set off in pursuit of the Armada, leaving half of the fleet under Raleigh. Raleigh's group was left becalmed off the Azores, and Bald argues that Donne's presence in Raleigh's squadron is 'strongly suggested' by these lines, (p. 90). Deprived of friends and the natural instinct towards mobility, the mariner's thoughts turn inward, 'Each one, his owne Priest, and owne Sacrifice' (26), united only in madness and in death: 'Onley the Calenture together drawes / Deare friends, which meet dead in great fishes' jaws' (23-4). Contrary to the feeling of being 'involved in mankind', articulated in Donne's famous maxim in the *Devotions*, 'No man is an Island entire of itself', in their still isolation in 'The Calme', islands are precisely what the ships have become: 'as those Iles which wee / Seeke, when wee can move, our ships rooted bee' (9-10).[56] These lines, in their evocation of alienation and solitude, represent a macabre reversal of the 'pre-eminence' of friendship, the rapture of communication and inclusivity that Donne so often valued and desired. Pebworth and Summers note that, 'Donne's profession of friendship as his "second religion" is well known' (p. 361). Moreover, the extensive volume of letters that Donne composed during his lifetime testifies to his love of written communication. This correspondence was mostly directed towards friends and those he admired, rather than towards matters of business. The only 'early seventeenth-century figure of literary distinction from whom more letters have survived', Bald observes, 'is

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[55] On the use of ship lanterns in the Renaissance see Peta Motture & Michelle O'Malley, *Re-Thinking Renaissance Objects: Design, Function and Meaning* (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 83-90.
[56] Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasion*s, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1975), 'Devotion XXVII', 89.

Francis Bacon, and it is undoubtedly on the strength of his many official letters and state papers that his total is higher' (p. 3).

For Donne, writing and speaking are acts of reciprocation and the measure of a subject's participation in the external world; language is movement and action. He later expressed this notion whilst preaching on the effectiveness of rhetorical persuasion to present 'a Demonstration to my soule', 'actually, really, clearly, constantly', concluding that the 'eloquence of inferiours is in words, the eloquence of superiours is in action'.[57] Such an admission suggests the animate nature of the written and spoken word, a theory which Donne aimed to put in to practice. For example, again, in a sermon preached before King Charles I in 1629, the *topos* of wind-blown ship symbolises the motive power of words:

> But as that Pilot which had harboured his ship so farre within land, that he must have change of Winds, in all the points of the Compass, to bring her out, cannot hope to bring her out in one day: So being to transport you, by occasion of these words, from this world to the next; and in this world, through all the Compasse, all the foure quarters therof; I cannot hope to make all this voyage to day. To day we shall consider only our longitude, our East and West (IX, 50).

Like a ship in a sheltered harbour, awaiting shifts in wind direction, Donne's rhetoric acknowledges the limits of 'transport' in all directions by 'occasion' of his words. The winds of eloquence will move his congregation only according to the longitudinal line, the difficult course from East to West, birth to death. The false modesty generated by the image of the harboured ship is quickly replaced by a confident assertion of Donne's skill as pilot/preacher, guiding souls along the uncertain terrain of life. The whole sermon is organised according to a navigation from east to west, and foregrounded with the idea of the equivalence of words and movement. His opening address plays on the half rhyme of 'wrought' and 'wrote' and

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[57] *Sermon* VI, 227, preached at Whitehall, March 1624. See Arnold Stein, *John Donne's Lyrics: The Eloquence of Action* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 15-18.

points to the creation of things (*res*) by God and of words (*verba*) by Moses, 'God in doing, Moses in saying' (IX, 49):

> The holy Ghost hovered upon the waters, and so God wrought: The holy Ghost hovered upon Moses too, and so he wrote. And we beleeve these things to be so, by the same spirit in Moses mouth, by which they were made so, in Gods hand. (IX, 48)

Doing and speaking as comparable earthly acts are allied in a physical sense and derived from an active God. It is from the words of Moses that Donne inherits the ability to 'transport' his congregation. Here, Donne's words seek to effect both a metaphorical and actual transportation in which he will 'Preach the oppressor, and preach the wanton, and preach the calumniator into another nature' (IX, 58).

But as 'The Calme' demonstrates, the physical environment can determine the operation of speech. Removed from the familiar surroundings of London, the city streets and the Inns of Court, the specific space of the becalmed ship distorts the rules and conventions of social discourse. Indeed, Donne reflects upon the lost society of London in his lonely image of newly evacuated courts and theatres. All 'our beauty, and our trim, decays', he writes, 'Like courts removing, or like ended playes' (13-4). Antonis Balasopoulos suggests that in this period of increased maritime voyaging,

> the *novum* of oceanic space is vital to the fashioning of the alternative social worlds that populate sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century utopias, constituting in fact something like the material precondition for the imaginative dislocations such texts attempt.[58]

On Donne's ship in 'The Storme' the disparate groupings of social class, the nobility, gentleman volunteers, and, most likely, pressed prisoners, suggested by repeated allusions to

[58] Antonis Balasopoulos, '"Suffer a Sea Change": Spatial Crisis, Maritime Modernity, and the Politics of Utopia', *Cultural Critique* 63 (Spring 2006): 133.

'prisons' and 'chains', are levelled, first by the prospect of death, and then by the dearth of the calm. Rather than creating a social utopia, however, the altered material conditions engender a universal nothingness. Without external stimuli, movement of both bodies and words becomes impossible; as the penultimate line puts it, 'Wee have no will, no power, no sense' (55). Donne's love of paradox here finds expression in the incongruity between the poem's action, the human loss of control, and its self-conscious, tightly controlled form. Indeed, throughout a major portion of 'The Calme', Donne's syntactic arrangement is designed as if to give the impression of uncertainty or disorientation. In the first line of the poem, Donne adheres to the standard subject, verb, and object arrangement when he writes (subject, verb and object, in each example, are indicated by bold type and the letters S, V and O.):

a) **S** **V O**

Our storme is past, and that storms tyrannous rage… (1)

But in the second line he complicates the structure by delaying both the subject and object:

b) **S** **O** **V**

A stupid calme, **but nothing it**, doth **swage** (2)

In other words, 'nothing', the subject, 'doth 'swage it', the object, which, in this case, is 'A stupid calme'. In the following examples, Donne continues to invert the typical order of subject, verb and object:

c) **V** **O**

As steady'as I **can wish,** that **my thoughts** were,

Smooth as thy mistresse glasse, or what shines there,

S

The sea is now… (7-9)

d) **O**

…and, as **the Iles** which wee

S **V**

Seeke, when wee can move, **our ships rooted** bee (9-10)

e) **O** **V**

No use of lanthornes; and in **one place lay**

S

Feathers and dust, to day and yesterday (17-18)

f) **O** **V**

And on **the hatches** as on Altars **lyes**

S

Each one, his owne Priest, and owne Sacrifice (25-6)

g) **O**

Or like **slacke sinew'd *Sampson***, his haire off,

V **S**

Languish our ships (34-5)

In each of these examples the decision to delay the subject defers the reader's understanding and adds to the poem's overall sense of expectant foreboding. This is a marked departure from the syntax of 'The Storme', in which the subject usually begins the sentence, with the exception of lines 6-7:

h) **O** **V**
When by **thy judgment** they are **dignifi'd**,

S
My lines are such (6-7)

Significantly, this hesitation, or delay, occurs at the moment that Donne hopes his words will be received and 'dignified' by Brooke's 'judgement', and, therefore, registers an early instance of doubt in the poem. This subtle grammatical rendering of anxiety hints at the theme of desired finality, completion and validation which resides at the heart of each verse letter. Just as the syntax of 'The Storme' suggests an intensity of thought, or frantic stimulation while the winds of inspiration blow, the more measured, introspective pace of 'The Calme' similarly reflects the physical condition of the ship and speaker.

However, by writing 'wee have no will, no power, no sense; I lye' (55) in 'The Calme', Donne reaffirms his agency with the closing statement. The 'lie' carries the suggestion of lying down through fatigue or a lack of 'power', but it also suggests that Donne is not telling the truth. His will, power, sense, and thus his purpose, are retained through his ability to feel and to write, even if the overriding feeling, for the present, is one of misery. So, although the tempest and subsequent calm reduces man to a lifeless and speechless nothing by the poem's end, the verse letters themselves, Donne hopes, will function as connections to the world and affirmations of agency, validated and actualised by the understanding of their recipient Christopher Brooke. Donne's lines become as authentic as a Hilliard only when by Brooke's 'judgment they are dignifi'd' (7). As Cave notes, 'everything depends on that

invisible emission, on the blowing of a wind whose unpredictability may be stabilised by the reciprocal "inspiration" of a properly attuned reader' (pp. 145-6). In spite of the artifice of the verse letters and Lein's suggestion that 'not a single major detail of Donne's storm lies outside' of classical reference, they are, nevertheless, driven by the problems of sense and feeling (p. 147). The movements of nature, the winds and waves of the storm, are central to the movement of words, which are, in turn, conceived as a material expression of Donne's mind. The genre of the verse letter, through its actual mobility between writer and recipient, functions as the ultimate expression of words in action. However, as 'The Calme' shows us, when the movements of nature cease, the mind and the body threaten to follow suit.

In suggesting that both poems record an actual physical as well as psychological experience, what follows builds upon Linda Mizejewski's analysis of the poems as meditations on the cosmological shift from old to new philosophy.[59] Mizejewski demonstrates that in 'The Storme', Donne introduces a world of harmonious correspondences, of macrocosm and microcosm, only to tear them down as elemental forces reduce old certainties to doubt by the end of the poem, a doubt which is compounded in 'The Calme'. But in charting the disorientating effects of a shift in cosmological space, she disregards the centrality of motion and rest to the poems and the period's spatial understandings.

III.

'The Storme' opens, as Mizejewski suggests, with stable accounts of the universal connections between a finite cosmos, the world and man:

[59] Linda Mizejewski, 'Darkness and Disproportion: A Study of Donne's "Storme" and "Calme"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76, No. 2 (1977): 217-230.

> England, to whom we'owe, what we be, and have,
> Sad that her sonnes did seeke a forraigne grave
> (For, Fates, or Fortunes drifts none can soothsay,
> Honour and misery have one face and way.)
> From out her pregnant intrailes sigh'd a winde
> Which at th'ayers middle marble room did finde
> Such strong resistance, that it selfe it threw
> Downeward againe; and so when it did view
> How in the port, our fleet deare time did leese,
> Withering like prisoners, which lye but for fees,
> Mildly it kist our sailes, and, fresh and sweet,
> As to a stomack sterv'd, whose insides meete,
> Meate comes, it came; and swole our sailes… (9-21)

In this passage, the natural movements of the Earth are framed in biological terms, mirroring those of man, and therefore identifying man as the microcosmic centre of the finite universe. For example, Donne writes that England, 'from out her pregnant intrailes sigh'd a winde', and so draws on cosmological and meteorological traditions which encouraged a belief in the equivalence of the world and man. Wind from the 'intrailes' of England thus 'swells' the sails of the ships which are analogically connected to the 'sterv'd' stomachs of the mariners. The opening of the poem thus envisions a harmonious co-operation between the concentric spaces of Earth, England, the ships and their occupants. Donne here conforms to the standard finite conception of universal space, accounted for in the Platonic and Aristotelian/Ptolemaic traditions. But this is also the Aristotelian world of motion. For example, Donne's description of the origins and movement of the wind as 'sighing' out from the landmass of England is derived from Aristotle's *Meteorology*. For Aristotle, wind is 'a body of dry exhalation moving about the earth' caused by the heat of the sun.[60] As the natural inclination of hot air is to rise, this exhalation moved upwards only to be met with the cold middle region of air, which contained clouds, rain, snow and hail, or as Donne terms it, the 'ayers middle marble roome' (14). Rebounding against this region the air was thrust down again and flowed

[60] Quoted in Liba Chaia Taub, *Ancient Meteorology* (London: Routledge, 2003), 90.

horizontally, following the circular motion of the celestial sphere. Aristotle's theory on the winds, therefore, accorded with his law of natural motion, which posited that the four elements, from which all things were derived, moved towards their natural place: air rises and earth falls unless met with resistance.

The eventual movement of Donne's ship is similarly explained in terms of Aristotle's model, in this case, his conception of forced motion. Contrary to what we now recognise as inertial movement, the continual motion of matter unless physically obstructed, for Aristotle, a body could only move through a series of contacts, pushed or pulled. For a large sailing ship such as Donne's, the elements, the wind and the tide, supply the contacts required for motion. Donne's immobilised fleet 'leasing time' in the port can, therefore, only be set in motion by the impelling 'kiss' of the wind, just as it eventually stops four lines later as the wind disappears, like English 'countrimen / Which bring friends one dayes way' (23-4) only to return home. At this early stage of the poem, before the forces of nature intervene, Donne's representation of the movement of inanimate objects conforms to the Aristotelian tradition. The act of motion, as we have seen, was a principal constituent of Aristotle's cosmology, and was the process by which things could achieve their final potential. The nature of a thing, for Aristotle, is defined by its end and its purpose. In 'The Storme', Donne's restlessness and desire for movement are palpable in the static 'withering prisons' that the ships have become. So that when the wind does finally arrive, it is with a sense of release and then fulfilment as the sails are swollen to resemble a well-fed stomach. The next line, in which the sailors react with joy 'as Sara'her swelling joy'd to see' (22), borrows from Genesis 21 the forlorn hope of child-bearing now realised. But it also carries the suggestion of expectation and purpose, the sense of purpose that Donne shared with his fellow gentleman volunteers, and which he explicitly expressed in 'Calez and Guyana' in anticipation of such a voyage: 'What brave Examples then do prove it trew / That one things end doth still begine a new' (3-4). As

Aristotle put it in the *Physics*, 'that which is born starts as something and advances or grows towards something else. Towards what, then, does it grow? Not towards its original state at birth, but towards its final state or goal. It is, then, the form that is nature.' (II. i. p. 117). The world which Donne initially presents us with, then, is one of order, in which man and nature correspond spatially, and move towards an ideal of fulfilment.

It is at this point in the poem, however, that the old cosmological assumptions begin to unravel. As the storm sets in, Donne loses his sense of sight, hearing and spatial perspective:

> But when I wakt, I saw, that I saw not;
> I, and the Sunne, which should teach mee'had forgot
> East, West, Day, Night, and I could but say,
> If the'world had lasted, now it had beene day.
> Thousands our noyses were, yet wee 'mongst all
> Could none by his right name, but thunder call;
> Lightning was all our light, and it rain'd more
> Then if the Sunne had drunke the sea before. (37-44).

These lines register the particular spatial and temporal problems of navigating the Atlantic in the period before the solution to the problem of longitude. That the longitudinal line is what Donne refers to here is suggested by the obscurity of East and West, rather than the latitudinal North and South. In order to calculate, or, in the case of longitude, estimate the ship's position, mariners had to have recourse to fixed points, often relying on solar eclipses, the Pole Star or, as Donne notes, the Sun. But as 'The Storme' makes clear, sailors were at the mercy of the elements, which could disorient ships and obscure the fixed stars by which they sailed. Without points of reference both time and place become incalculable.[61]

[61] The 'struggle against distance', epitomised by the Atlantic Ocean, exposed mariners to entirely new forms of spatial immensity and temporal confusion. As Fernand Braudel put it, 'however man tackled the obstacle of distance, splintering the oars of close-manned galleys, driving the post-horses to death, or apparently flying over the waves under a fair wind, he always met with passive resistance and distance took a daily revenge for his most strenuous exploits'. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Volume 1 (California: University of California Press, 1996), 369.

Antonis Balasopoulus argues that the ocean, in this period, was the 'world's most massive and politically consequential image of a nonplace', since it lay 'simultaneously within the planetary imaginary and out-side the bounds' of the known earth (p. 131). The dislocating experience of sailing the Atlantic, therefore, owed much to the connections between geography and astronomy. Not only were the topographies of the earth and the heavens conceptually aligned as spatially extended regions, but also to understand ocean space itself required knowledge of the heavens, which, until the new astronomy proved otherwise, were believed to be regular and fixed. For Aristotle, in a finite universe ships, or boats, could symbolise emplacement. In his *Physics*, he employed the image of a ship in a river as a means of demonstrating the order of a universe organised according to immovable boundaries:

> when a boat moves through the flowing water of a river, the water is related to the boat as a vessel-continent rather than as a place-continent; and if we look for stability in "place", then the river as a permanent and stable whole, rather than the flowing water in it at the moment, will be the boat's site. Thus whatever fixed environing surface we take our reckoning from will be the place (IV. v. pp. 313-5).

In other words, the mariner is contained by the ship, the ship by the river, and the river by the riverbed. The implication here is that the riverbed itself is relative to the earth and, therefore, contained by a series of fixed places that are framed between the earth and the immovable outermost sphere of the universe. As Aristotle goes on to claim, 'the centre of the universe and the inner surface of the revolving heavens constitute the extreme "below" and the supreme "above"; the former being absolutely stable, and the latter constant in its position as a whole' (IV. v. p. 315). In this context the ship, although moveable, becomes an exemplar of universal stability. With the onset of the new philosophy, however, Aristotle's ship image is adapted to suggest the opposite. The two most important developments of the new science, as we have seen, were the suggestion of inertial movement, first touched upon by Galileo, and

the proposition of infinite space, which followed the discovery of new stars and planets. In the wake of these discoveries, Descartes, for example, revisited the scientific conundrum of a ship's location relative to fixed points in the universe:

> If we believe the earth moves and suppose that it advances the ship the same distance from west to east as the ship travels from east to west in the corresponding period of time, we shall again say that the man sitting on the stern is not changing place; for we are now determining the place by means of certain fixed points in the heavens. Finally, if we suppose that there are no such genuinely fixed points to be found in the universe… we shall conclude that nothing has a permanent place, except as determined by our thought (p. 228).

The suggestion that nothing has a permanent place has profound implications for a sailor set adrift on the middle of the ocean. His ship is subsumed in a process of perpetual flux in boundless space. For Donne, the conditions of the storm reduce the ship to a state of sickness and decay which pre-figures his image of the world in *The First Anniversary*. He observes that the mast is shaken with an 'ague, and the Hold and Wast / With a salt dropsie clog'd, and all our tacklings / Snapping, like too-high-stretched treble strings' (54-56). Where once the ship was defined as a stable space in the hierarchy of correspondences, it is now out of tune with the universe.

For Galileo, the analogy of a ship on the ocean similarly provided a fitting subject for the exposition of an inertial concept of motion:

> And thus a ship having received one single time some impetus, would move continuously through a quiet sea around our globe without ever stopping, and if one were to bring it gently to rest it would perpetually remain at rest, provided that in the first case all the extrinsic impediments could be removed, and in the second one that no external mobile cause came upon it (p. 125).

Anthony Low argues that, in *The Second Anniversary* (1612), Donne anticipates this law of inertia in his image of a ship continuing to move once the wind has ceased to blow its sails:[62]

> But as a ship which hath stroke sail, doth runne,
> By force of that force which before, it wonne,
> Or as sometimes in a beheaded man,
> Though at those two Red seas, which freely ran,
> One from the Trunke, another from the Head,
> His soule be saild, to her eternal bed,
> His eies will twinkle, and his tongue will roll,
> As though he beckned, and cal's back his Soul… (7-14)

For Low, the related simile of a man appearing to continue to think following his beheading suggests that Donne saw this momentum as a sign of the world's death. In fact, his description of the ship's movement as impelled by 'force of that force which before, it wonne' resembles Jean Buridan's much earlier theory of impetus in its suggestions of a protracted motion towards a final and natural stop, rather than Galilean perpetual and unimpeded movement.[63] The natural end in this case is death. The theory of impetus was devised as an antidote to Aristotle's unsatisfactory explanation of the motion of projectiles, based on his assertion that all movement required continuous contact. Aristotle's flawed concept, termed *antiperistasis*, posited that a body, as it moves through the air, 'creates a vacuum in its wake', and 'since nature abhors a vacuum, the surrounding medium rushes in to fill it, striking the object from behind and thus impelling it further' (Drake, p. 63). Seeking a more plausible explanation, Buridan wrote that when

> a mover sets a body in motion, he implants into it a certain impetus, that is, a certain force enabling a body to move in the direction in which the mover starts it, be it upwards, downwards, sidewards, or in a circle. The implanted impetus increases in

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[62] Anthony Low, '"The Turning Wheele": Carew, Jonson, Donne [and the First] Law of Motion' *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 1, No's. 1-2 (1982): 69-80.
[63] The theory was first touched upon by John Philoponus in the 6th century, and developed further by Buridan during the first half of the 14th century.

> the same ratio as the velocity. It is because of this impetus that a stone moves on after the thrower has ceased moving it.[64]

By locating the force of movement temporarily within the object, Buridan discounted the need for a sustained pushing movement from behind. In the same way, Donne's ship might move by virtue of an initial gust of wind, but as Buridan notes, the resistance of air and gravity will eventually bring it to a halt. In 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' there are no suggestions that Donne foresees inertial movement. On the contrary, the withdrawal of the wind and accumulation of water resistance in 'The Calme' leads the fleet to its condition of tortured stasis. The theory of impetus was a modification, rather than a refutation, of the Aristotelian position. Buridan agreed with Aristotle, insomuch as impetus was believed to be derived from an initial external (rather than internal) force which imbued an object with a certain momentum, setting it in motion towards a definite end: the '*mover* sets a body in motion' (Pederson, p. 210). In this respect, both Aristotle and Buridan are bound to the teleological notion of purposeful ends. But in 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', it is this sense of purpose, so central to Aristotle's physics and ethics, which Donne finds lacking in both human nature and the physical world. For Donne, the ocean exists beyond the rules of classical physics. As we have seen, at the end of 'The Storme' he describes the ocean as 'uniformly deformed': 'All things are one, and that one none can be, / Since all formes uniforme deformity / Doth cover' (69-71).

Elsewhere in his writing, when the possibility of movement is withdrawn, ocean space assumes a negative aspect. Stephen Burt argues that, in his sea-themed writing, Donne demonstrates a desire for privacy and enclosure as the antithesis of the public and exposed world symbolised by the ocean. 'The sheltered, shared better world exalted in Donne's verses is said to resemble a fragile boat', Burt suggests, whilst 'the public realm Donne fears,

[64] Jean Buridan, quoted in Olaf Pedersen, *Early Physics and Astronomy: a Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1974] 1993), 210.

downgrades or repudiates is sometimes itself a ship, and sometimes an imperilling sea' (pp. 137-8). But I would suggest that Donne is much more concerned with the avoidance of enclosure, particularly whilst travelling on the ocean. For example, in *Satyre III*, echoing 'The Storme's' image of sailors 'coffined' in their cabins, Donne writes:

> Dar'st thou aid mutinous Dutch, and dar'st thou lay
> Thee in ships' wooden sepulchres, a prey
> To leaders' rage, to storms, to shot, to dearth? (17-19)

Here, death, as the ultimate 'rest', takes place, paradoxically, on a moving ship. In both cases, this metaphorical death is caused by the withdrawal of active agency, either through the chance of storms, subjection to the whims of naval commanders or bombardment by enemies at sea. To 'lay' passively as 'prey' to active forces is precisely what Donne seeks to avoid. Similarly, in 'Love's War' the ship is cast as a prison:

> To mew me in a ship, is to enthral
> Me in a prison that were like to fall;
> Or in a cloister, save that there men dwell
> In a calm heaven, here in a swaggering hell.
> Long voyages are long consumptions,
> And ships are carts for executions (21-26).

The shipboard scenario imagined here is one of confinement in a vessel which is likely to 'fall', either to an enemy or to the elements. In other words, individual will, as with *Satyre III*, is at the mercy of power and chance. The certainty of death is portrayed in terms of restricted motion. Encased in a sick body and chained in a cart bound for the scaffold, the condemned subject can exercise no control. Again, it is enclosure itself, rather than movement which troubles Donne.

As Masood ul-Hasan argues, the 'utter unwilling submission to others' exhibited in *Satyre III* chimes with Donne's sympathetic attitude towards prisoners whose plight, being unable to exercise their freedom, struck a chord with him.[65] Indeed, as 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' suggest, Donne shared his Azores experience with sailors who may have been prisoners or were destined for jail. Parr argues that references to ships 'Withering like prisoners' (18) and 'tottered sails' (57) hanging like chains 'graphically links' their 'destitute condition to the fate that many of the poorer recruits had temporarily avoided' (p. 70). It is perhaps these same sailors that Donne observes, throughout 'The Storme', 'coffined' and 'imprisoned' in their cabins, a situation which he himself refuses to accept. Rather than seek shelter below deck, Donne's descriptions reveal the fact that he was immersed in the tumult of the storm. He observes the rising winds 'assaile' (30) the sails, witnesses the confusion of darkness and the noise of waves and thunder, notes sardonically the frightened sailors' emergence from cabins like 'jealous husbands' (50) to hear news of the ship's condition, and envies the Old Testament sleep of Jonas 'when the storm rag'd most' (34). The fear of enclosure evidenced by the ship images of *Satyre III* and 'Love's War' might then be understood as a comment on Donne's own experience of sea travel. Although, as in his letter to Goodyer, he acknowledges the 'impotency' of his situation during the storm, it is still preferable to meet death head on rather than hide from it in seclusion.

By 'The Storme's' end, Donne's experience of motion is defined by matter in flux and indistinguishable chaos rather than purpose, as the fleet is removed from all stable points of connection, from England and the Azores, from the stars and Sun:

> Darknesse, light's elder brother, his birth-right
> Claims o'r this world, and to Heaven hath chas'd light.
> All things are one, and that one none can be,
> Since all formes uniforme deformity

[65] Masood ul-Hasan, *Donne's Imagery* (Aligarh, India: Faculty of Arts, Muslim University, 1958), 46.

> Doth cover; so that wee, except God say
> Another *Fiat*, shall have no more day. (67-72)

Yet the poem's closing image of a primordial chaos in which darkness returns all things to a state of 'uniforme deformity' hints at the possibility of renewal, since it is from undifferentiated chaos that matter takes form in the creation myths of Christianity and antiquity. As Michel Jeanneret puts it, the 'primordial magma is a formless potentiality waiting for its form, the wellspring where the seeds of life are nestled, the symbol par excellence of the desire for transformation'.[66] Although death and the end of time threaten during the tumult of the storm, the poem achieves a structural circularity through its early suggestions of pregnancy and its closing image of the world's rebirth. Donne noted in his letter to Goodyer that the impotence of inactivity brought him to the contemplation of death and of nothing. But chaos at the end of 'The Storme', and by extension the storm itself is not the nothing that Donne fears, but the potentiality of something. Movement here still carries the suggestion of life and Donne has not given up the hope that God will restore the world to light with 'Another *Fiat*'.

In the static world of 'The Calme' we find that all motion and, therefore, all hope has disappeared. Donne recounts that the ships are rooted to one spot and that the sea has become as smooth as 'thy mistresse glass, or what shines there' (8). This image simultaneously pays tribute to the beauty of the addressee's 'mistresse' and evokes the disconcerting reflective qualities of the sea. So indistinguishable are the spaces of sky and sea that he imagines the ship as a kind of atmospheric phenomenon between heaven and earth or as Donne puts it, the ship is 'meteorlike, save that wee move not, hover' (22). In the Aristotelian tradition, as Craig Martin notes,

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[66] Michel Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from da Vinci to Montaigne* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 2.

> meteorological phenomena were considered imperfect because they were composites of the elements that had not been transformed into a new substance. The forms of the elements remain, thus rendering meteorological phenomena without their own essential natures and substantial forms independent of the four elements.[67]

Unlike the final causes which Aristotle applies to physical phenomena in his natural philosophy, 'meteors' 'do not participate in the formation of organs and organisms, which have clear purposes and ends' (p. 42). By figuring his ship as a meteor, then, Donne not only stresses the perplexed nature of the fleet's 'hovering' physical reality, but also its complete lack of direction towards a true end.

At the beginning of 'The Storme' Donne invokes the styles of visual art represented by Alberti and Hilliard, in order to express confidence in his own skills of representation. Alberti's advice concerning a central perspective, clear horizon and definite boundaries in painting was intended to produce visual spaces which were ordered and rational.[68] In the portraits of Hilliard, the traits of the individual subject often fill the picture plane and constitute the totality of the work.[69] In his *Art of Limning* (1600), Hilliard wrote that 'all Painting imitateth nature or the life in every thing' (p. 22). For Hilliard, the 'life' of every thing included 'the inner life, the emotions and passions of his subject, as they outwardly manifest themselves in the appearance of the flesh'.[70] So, where Alberti's style stressed the stability of space, and that of the body in space, Hilliard sought to capture the inner 'self', by means of the outside. On the Atlantic, however, this centredness is not possible. Balasopoulos suggests that, 'To the eye of the early modern navigator, the open sea presented a sight that was at the antipodes of the centred and isotropic space of Alberti and Brunelleschi' (pp. 134-

[67] Craig Martin, *Renaissance Meteorology: Pomponazzi to Descartes* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 42-3.
[68] Rocco Sinisgalli, ed. *Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting: A New Translation and Critical Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[69] Arthur F. Kinney & Linda Bradley Salamon, eds. *Nicholas Hilliard's Art of Limning* (New Hampshire: Northeastern University Press, 1983).
[70] Clark Hulse, *The Rule of Art: Literature and Painting in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 134.

5). The mariner experiences a space in which horizon, reflection and light blend to distort visual comprehension.

In the Aristotelian tradition, sight was considered superior to the other five senses. Aristotle claimed that 'all men naturally desire knowledge', and that an 'indication of this is our esteem for the senses':

> for apart from their use we esteem them for their own sake, and most of all the sense of sight. Not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions.[71]

With Thomas Aquinas' reiteration of Aristotle's theory that 'sight judges about sensible objects in a more certain and perfect way than the other senses do', the precedence of vision became entrenched in European thinking.[72] Indeed, in the *First Anniversary*, Donne writes that 'Sight is the noblest sense of any one' (353), and notes that if outward appearances change (because of the death of Elizabeth Drury), then vision suffers: 'Yet sight hath onely color to feed on, / And color is decayd' (354-5). Although the Platonic tradition acknowledged that sight alone, without reason, could often prove deceptive, it was not until the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century that touch began to enjoy a similar status as vision. As David Summers argues, for Enlightenment thinkers,

> Sight does not apprehend forms, but rather "motions", or the effect of motions, and in general it might be said that the senses came increasingly to be understood as kinds of touch, as the Atomists had long before argued and Aristotle had denied. Also, touch came increasingly to be understood to have the best and final access to the world that sense reveals. "Feeling" rather than "seeing" became the metaphor for basic sensation (p. 326).

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[71] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (London: William Heinemann, 1933) I. 980a.

[72] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle,* Volume 1, ed. John Patrick Rowan (Washington D. C.: H. Regnery, 1961), 8.

This sensory condition is true of the mirror-like world of ‘The Calme’. Donne’s confident claims to truthful representation in ‘The Storme’ are now unachievable in ‘The Calme’, in a space of no discernible features or motions. Unable to look outward, the mariner’s thoughts turn inward, and ‘feeling’ becomes the primary sensation. So, what we find is that just as an Alberti-esque perspectival scene is thwarted by close vision, the self-assuredness of a Hilliard portrait is replaced by existential doubt on the nature of being. As we have seen, the effects of nature are central to the creation of Donne’s poems in the same way that they are the basis for artistic composition. Without motion, vision is distorted and the final causality required to complete and give definition to the voyage and to the poems, threatens to remain unrealised.

The prevailing theme throughout ‘The Calme’ is that of motion and purpose lost. Sailors, mad with the tropical fever ‘calenture’, or the inescapable heat, seek relief by leaping into the sea only to be met by ‘great fishes jawes’ (24) or a ‘brimstone Bath’ (30). The ‘crawling Gallies’ (37), by virtue of their internally generated movement, self-propelled by oars, now mock the immobilised wind-dependent ships, becoming almost an emblem of the mechanical motion which will replace the absolute system of Aristotle. Towards the poem’s end Donne reflects on ‘Whether a rotten state, and hope of gaine’ (39), or the ‘thirst / Of honour, or faire death’ (41-42), ‘out pusht’ him to join the expedition and concludes that ‘I lose my end’ (44). With the loss of impetus, of an original motive force, comes the loss of purpose. ‘Stagge, dogge, and all which from, or towards flies,’ Donne continues, ‘Is paid with life, or pray, or doing dyes’ (45-6). In their expression of the desire for an active death, these lines share the sentiment of his letter to Goodyer, that ‘doing’ equates to being, even if such ‘doing’ would end being. But there is also an additional sense that physical motion constitutes distraction from the troubled motions of the mind when the body is still. The first indication that Donne’s motive for joining the voyage might be to fly from the

responsibilities of thought, comes with his allusion to the story of Jonas in 'The Storme', when he writes:

> *Jonas*, I pitty thee, and curse those men,
> Who when the storm rag'd most, did wake thee then;
> Sleepe is paines easiest salve, and doth fullfill
> All offices of death, except to kill (33-6).

Donne interprets Jonas' seaborne flight from the commandment of God not only as an instance of fear of God, which he himself will later re-enact in the *Holy Sonnets*, but also as an act of forgetting. Jonas' sleep here becomes a 'salve', a way of negating pain, and an imitation of the release of death.[73] Donne's own confused reflections on his original motives for joining the voyage, for wealth, honour, death, or to banish the 'queasie paine' (40) of love, suggest a concurrent desire for mental escape.

On the becalmed ocean, however, the healing effects of sleep or distraction are inoperable. Donne not only experiences the frustration of personal idleness, but also the immobility of extended non-descript space, a space which is antithetical to the dynamic theory of nature postulated by Aristotle. To move 'from or towards' can be the conditions of life and death, generation and corruption, but what Donne experiences on the smooth sea is a state of non-existence. 'What are wee then?'(51) Donne asks, 'How little more alas / Is man now, then before he was? he was / Nothing; for us, wee are for nothing fit' (51-3). In 'The Storme's' closing image of chaos and the possibility of God's fiat, Donne points to man's generation out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, and so recalls its potentiality. But for Donne and his companions in 'The Calme', their current condition is potential unrealised, they 'are for nothing fit', or as the letter to Goodyer states 'to be no part of any body is to be nothing'. In his *Pensees* (1670), Blaise Pascal would later reflect on the condition of post-Galilean man

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[73] In *Biathanatos* Donne uses Jonas as an example of a willing death, or suicide. Ernest W. Sullivan II, ed. *Biathanatos* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 102-3.

when in ‘complete rest’. He suggests that men have ‘a secret instinct which leads them to look for distractions and occupations…which derives from…feelings of constant wretchedness’, and that the ‘whole of life goes on like this’:

> we seek repose by battling against difficulties, and once they are overcome, repose becomes unbearable because of the boredom it engenders. We have to get away from it and beg for commotion. We think about either our present afflictions or our future ones. Even when we think we are protected on every side, boredom with its own authority does not shrink from appearing in the heart’s depths, where it has its roots, to poison the mind.[74]

Pascal’s observation on human psychology mirrors earlier developments in natural philosophy. His position, which figures movement as a compulsion for mankind, is understandable when we consider that bodies, things, matter and all tangible substances were, for Aristotle as for the new philosophers, inseparable from motion. In this respect, the still world of ‘The Calme’ has the veil of unreality, since to remove movement is to remove animation. Donne would later echo his thoughts on seeking an active death in the *Second Anniversary* (1612), when he observed that there ‘is motion in corruption’ (22). An active death on the stormy sea is, therefore, preferable to the void of the calm in which motion is even removed from the process of decay. As the famous line, which Ben Jonson had by heart, puts it, ‘in one place lay / Feathers and dust today and yesterday’ (17-18). The last lines of the poem, ‘wee have no will, no power, no sense; I lye / I should not then thus feele this miserie’ (55-6), express the bleak realisation that Donne retains his sense of feeling in an inanimate space where there is nothing to feel. As we have seen, his lie cancels the claim of the penultimate line. In the unreal world of ‘The Calme’, Donne therefore comes close to the understanding of motion, later defined by Pascal: ‘our nature consists in movement; absolute stillness is death’ (p. 126). In ‘The Storme’, the active struggle against the storm negated the

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[74] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees and other Writings*, eds. Honor Levi & Anthony Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 46.

fear of death and hinted at the possibility of renewal, but in ‘The Calme’ Donne has only the unsteady thoughts of non-being, reflected in the immovable surface of the sea.

In these verse letters, then, we see an early instance, during the 1590s, of Donne’s belief in both a natural and human final cause shaken by the effects of nature on an isolated ship-bound community of, seemingly, rational actors. Because the natural purpose of the ship, to be impelled by a series of contacts towards its destination, is thwarted when the atmospheric conditions of wind and tide are withdrawn, the sailors too are necessarily deprived of a true end, being trapped in a stagnant space in which ethical norms become irrelevant. In the next chapter I argue that in Donne’s early writing throughout the 1590s, his verse epistles and *Satyre I*, the final cause continues to feature in his thinking about human conduct in the social community, in this case, the city.

2. The End of the City: ‘Nourishing of Civill Societies’ in the Lincoln’s Inn Years, 1592-94

In his *Politics*, Aristotle conceived of the formation of the city as a natural final cause, bound to the physical processes of the universe. He defined the city-state as ‘the partnership finally composed of several villages’ which ‘has at last attained the limit of virtually complete self-sufficiency, and thus, while it comes into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the good life.’[1] Every city-state, according to Aristotle, ‘exists by nature, inasmuch as the first partnerships so exist; for the city-state is the end of the other partnerships, and nature is an end’ (I. i. 7-9. p. 9). The basic principle underlying Aristotle’s ideal community is that the greatest good can only be achieved in the political organisation of the city, that the city is ‘a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal’ (I. i. 7-9. p. 9). Developing in stages from the union of men and women, through families and then villages, the city is the end product and the perfect form of society. Should a man prove ‘citiless’ by nature or fortune, he must either be ‘low in the scale of humanity or above it’, an animal or a god (I. i. 7-9. p. 9). Moreover, because the city is the final object towards which mankind strives, it is ‘prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually. For the whole must necessarily be prior to the part; since when the whole body is destroyed, foot or hand will not exist except in an equivocal sense’ (I. i. 9-12. p. 11). Bound as this model is to an ideal of nature, it has analogues in Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.[2] For example, the notion that form (city) gives shape to and organises matter (individuals) is reflected in Aristotle’s repeated references to matter as the ‘underlying material of all things that have in themselves the principle of movement and change’, and form as ‘the nature of a thing… the “kind” of

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[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann, [1944] 1972), I. 7-9, 9.

[2] Bernard Yack notes that ‘it is clear from Aristotle’s other works that form precedes matter in many constructed and natural wholes’. Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotelian Political Thought* (California: University of California Press, 1993), 92.

thing it is by definition'.[3] The Aristotelian tradition of conflating social organisation with the movements of nature, I suggest, can be identified in Donne's thinking about the city, and this chapter traces his growing concern about the problems of a natural process towards a 'common good' in his early Lincoln's Inn works (composed between 1592 and 1594), namely the verse letters and *Satyre I* (1593).[4] As we have seen in the previous chapter, and particularly in 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', the ethical ends of human activity are connected to the physical processes of the universe. In Donne's city works, I maintain, there exists a similar concern with a material and social sense of final causality.

I.

In the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas stressed the parity between nature and society, adapting and embedding Aristotle's axioms into Christian medieval and Renaissance thought:

> Now, in natural things, everything which, as such, naturally belongs to another, is principally, and more strongly inclined to that other to which it belongs, than towards itself. Such a natural tendency is evidenced from things which are moved according to nature: because "according as a thing is moved naturally, it has an inborn aptitude to be thus moved", as stated in Phys. ii, text. 78. For we observe that the part naturally exposes itself in order to safeguard the whole; as, for instance, the hand is without deliberation exposed to the blow for the whole body's safety. And since reason copies nature, we find the same inclination among the social virtues; for it behoves the virtuous citizen to expose himself to the danger of death for the public weal of the state; and if man were a natural part of the city, then such inclination would be natural to him.[5]

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[3] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford (London: William Heinemann, 1957), II. I. 113.
[4] The phrase in the title of this chapter is taken from 'Paradox VI: That the guifts of the body are better then those of the mind or of Fortune', and the extended version suggests that, 'nourishing of *Civil Societies* and mutual Love amongst men … is our chiefe end why we are men…' Helen Peters, ed. *Paradoxes and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 12.
[5] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I, Q. 60, Art. 5.

Borrowing from Aristotle's *Politics* and *Physics*, Aquinas suggests that man's 'reason copies nature' and that, theoretically, the ideal citizen will follow a natural inclination towards self-sacrifice in the name of the community or 'whole'. As Kevin Sharpe observes, man 'fulfilled himself as a man in so far as he was part of the commonweal, and had no social existence (Aristotle would have said no fulfilment of his humanity) outside it'.[6] By invoking Aristotle's general law of final causality, that things move towards a specific purpose, or have an 'inborn aptitude to be' moved, Aquinas does not distinguish between the potential movement of physical matter and that of man. Moreover, for both Aristotle and Aquinas, justice is the highest good that may be achieved in the city, since justice is a principal element in the preservation of the common good. Laws were similarly understood as deriving from nature and the abstract concept of Natural Law became the means of authorising human actions and judgements based upon an innate human reason.[7] Natural Law, according to R. S. White,

> decrees that human beings, because they have been given the capacity of reason and, according to the Renaissance Christian, the spark of conscience, know enough of the general precepts of the eternal law to live virtuously and make just laws. Natural Law is assumed to be as unchanging as eternal law, but, since social circumstances and attitudes change, it is a barometer by which people must adapt their worldly laws to come as close as possible in a fallen world to enacting and obeying divine law (p. 4).

Aquinas' contention that 'reason copies nature', that man can discern right actions from wrong according to a natural instinct, exemplifies the extent to which human faculties and the movements of the universe were understood as corresponding parts of one system.

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[6] Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 48.

[7] On the subject of Natural Law in the Renaissance R. S. White observes that Renaissance legal theorists 'accepted the existence of two major, mutually compatible and ideally synonymous spheres of justice: God's law (often called divine or eternal law) and man's law (positive law)'. 'Since the former is unknowable to human eyes', White notes, 'a bridge between the two systems was required in order that man-made law should coincide with God's law. Accordingly, medieval and Renaissance theorists revived from the pre-Christian Aristotle and Cicero… the notion of Natural Law'. White, *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

In the Renaissance state the influence of Aristotle and Aquinas meant that notions of the inter-connectedness of society and cosmos survived intact, with the individual 'defined and identified according to the predetermined role allotted him in the community that he inhabited'.[8] 'That community', Paul Raffield argues, 'could be the family, the household, the city or the state; but the ultimate and primary allegiance of the individual was to the universe' (p. 80). According to Renaissance scholarship, 'the universe embodied a fundamental law of nature; it was a manifestation of divine order' (p. 80). Although passed down to the Renaissance second-hand through various commentaries, most significantly that of Aquinas, these foundational Aristotelian precepts were also encountered through the humanist interest in studying classical texts in their original forms. The humanist enthusiasm for political and moral philosophy meant that Aristotle's ethical and political works were studied in the original, and freed from the ecclesiastical modifications of the medieval commentaries. As Charles B. Schmitt notes,

> The new approach to the study of Aristotle deviated from the old in various ways. First, some attempt was made to study and understand the Greek text or at least some crucial sections of it. Second a greater effort was made to translate Aristotle into a more elegant Latin. Third, greater use was made of ancient writers on Aristotelian subjects in endeavouring to get behind the meaning of the Stagirite's words. Fourth, the works on moral philosophy were given a great degree of emphasis. Fifth, the tendency to go back to the Aristotelian text led to the rejection of many characteristic medieval philosophical doctrines.[9]

The Aristotelian model of political organisation, therefore, continued to dominate political discourse, and the availability of works and commentaries from the classical age to the Renaissance testifies to its enduring relevance in this period. For example, in England, towards the latter years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and the end of Donne's period of study at the Inns of Court in 1594, Richard Hooker drew upon these traditions to define a Godly

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[8] Paul Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law in Early Modern England: Justice and Political Power, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 80.
[9] Charles B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983), 23.

Commonwealth in his treatise *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594).[10] This work influenced both the ecclesiastical and political organisation of England, and Hooker draws extensively from Aristotle, as well as from Aquinas, when he writes that 'the law of the commonweal' is the 'very soul of a politic body, the parts wherof are by law animated, held together, and set on work in such actions as the common good requireth'.[11] As Ian Ward argues,

> The "common good" which pervades the *Laws* is very much an Aristotelian one, and it is this concept which binds the whole idea of the godly commonwealth. In matters of metaphysical theology, Hooker closely followed Aquinas, and so the idea of the "good" as the ambition of rational law fits neatly with the basic Thomist model of natural law.[12]

As the embodiment of English law and a crucial physical presence in city life, the Inns of Court, during the period in which Donne was a member, developed into 'humanist commonwealths' and came to represent classical notions of the common good (Ward, p. 266). As Raffield observes,

> Their physical expansion during and after the reign of Elizabeth was aligned strongly with the Aristotelian principle that the ultimate purpose of the state was to enable men to live well as virtuous citizens, in accordance with Hooker's insistence on the interdependence of spiritual and secular values. (p. 54)

The city of London was thus animated figuratively by the presence of the Inns, and the ideal was that the city should be held together by a movement towards a common good manifested in the law. City, state, man and laws were represented as being bound in a natural harmony that drew legitimacy from the rational order of the Aristotelian universe. As Sharpe argues,

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[10] According to Bald, Donne entered Lincoln's Inn in May 1592. Bald, *John Donne, A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 53.

[11] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 87-8.

[12] Ian Ward, *Shakespeare and the Legal Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

'to reflect on the universe, the relationship of man to God or the hierarchy in the animal kingdom was also to reflect on the nature of the commonweal and of the order and degrees within it' (p. 48).

The notion of the city, or society, as the manifestation of the common good is addressed at various times in Donne's work. For example, in a letter to Henry Goodyer in 1611, whilst Donne was travelling in France with Sir Robert Drury, he describes himself as an 'Animal sociale', echoing Aquinas' version of the Aristotelian 'political animal', before expanding on the idea of a progressive development of the social community:[13]

> First, common, and mutuall necessity of one another; and therefore naturally in our defence and subventions we first flie to our selves; next, to that which is likest, other men. Then, naturall and inborn charity, beginning at home, which perswades us to give, that we may receive: And legall charity, which makes us also forgive. Then an ingraffing in one another, and growing together by a custome of society: and last of all, strict friendship.[14]

In 'Meditation XI' of his *Devotions* (1624) Donne similarly elaborates on an organic conception of the state which makes the state analogous to the parts of the human body:

> And since the brain, and liver, and heart hold not a triumvirate in man, a sovereignty equally shed upon them all, for his well-being, as the four elements do for his very being, but the heart alone is in the principality, and in the throne, as king, the rest as subjects, though in eminent place and office, must contribute to that, as children to their parents, as all persons to all kinds of superiors, though oftentimes those parents or those superiors be not of stronger parts than themselves, that serve and obey them that are weaker.[15]

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[13] On Aquinas' use of this phrase see Holly Hamilton Bleakley, 'Thomas Aquinas, Political Thought', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (New York: Springer, 2010), 1287. The phrase man is '*animal sociale communi bono genitum'*, a social animal begotten for the common good, was also used by Seneca.
[14] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr. (London, 1651), 43-4.
[15] Anthony Raspa, ed. *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasion*s (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1975), 56-7.

Jeanne Shami and Dave Gray have addressed the political nature of the *Devotions*, and argue that Donne 'took the occasion of his sickness to offer political advice to the young Prince Charles, to whom the *Devotions* was dedicated'.[16] Given the political atmosphere during the early seventeenth century and the debate over the divine right of the Stuart monarchs, Donne's reference to 'the heart alone' as being in 'the principality, and in the throne, as king', is designed to stress the natural political order. Donne conceives of the heart as the sovereign of a state, supported and given strength through the mutual interest that all organs, the brain and liver, have in the preservation of the heart and thus the whole body.[17] The 'eminent place and office' of the brain and liver identifies them as being in the political class, or Parliament, superior to lesser parts of the 'body', yet subordinate to the monarch/heart.

There has been much critical debate concerning Donne's 'absolutism'. Debora Shuger's recent article suggests that a clearer definition of what 'absolutism' meant in the period might provide a greater insight into Donne's position.[18] Shuger argues that, rather than adhering to the definitions of sovereignty outlined in continental Europe, 'English 'absolutist' thought' was 'derived from the medieval civil-law distinction between *gubernaculum* and *jurisdictio*'(p. 693). 'This *gubernaculum/jurisdictio* distinction' she continues, 'associated Parliament with local government and also, in conjunction with the courts, with private property rights. In regards to the latter, the king was clearly under the law' (p. 694). Although Donne was without doubt a committed monarchist, the obliquity of his pronouncements on the subject of divine right, has led critics to argue that he eschewed 'partisan or factional' judgements in his work, not least because of the danger involved in public expressions

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[16] Dave Gray & Jeanne Shami, 'Political Advice in Donne's Devotions, no Man is an Island', *Modern Language Quarterly* 50, No. 4 (1989): 338.
[17] On politics in the Devotions see Mary Arshagouni Papazian, 'Politics of John Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions: or, New Questions on the New Historicism', *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 27, No. 3, (1991): 233-248.
[18] Debora Shuger, 'Donne's Absolutism', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 690-704.

regarding the King and Parliament.[19] Moreover, David Nicholls argues that Donne continued to see the law in a traditional way, as something distinct from the government of the King. 'Despite the positivism of the Late Middle Ages and of the Reformation period', he maintains, 'a strong tradition had continued into the 17th century which insisted that law is something other than the dictate of a sovereign, whether human or divine. It was represented by Hooker in the preceding century and had clearly influenced the thinking of Donne'.[20] This tradition also encompassed an adherence to civic society as a natural end, 'a concept of nature shared with Hooker and derived from medieval adaptations of Aristotle, "that the nature of a thing is the form by which it is constituted, and that to do against it, is to do against nature"' (p. 202). Rooted in early seventeenth-century discussions on matters of state was the influence and authority of the Aristotelian tradition.

In the *Devotions*, Donne continues his political metaphor of the body as state and stresses the duty of subjects towards their sovereign with an invocation of Natural Law and its complex application in the world:

> (as many things bind us, even by the law of nature, and yet not by the primary law of nature; as all laws of propriety in that which we possess, are of the law of nature, which law is, to give every one his owne, and yet in the primary law of nature there was no propriety, no *meum et tuum*, but an universal community overall; so the obedience of superiors is of the law of nature, and yet in the primary law of nature there was no superiority, no magistracy); but this contribution of assistance of all to the sovereign, of all parts to the heart, is from the very first dictates of nature, which is, in the first place, to have care of our own preservation, to look first to ourselves. (pp. 70-1)

Referring to the 'primary law of nature' as prefiguring 'propriety' (*meum et tuum*, meaning 'mine and thine', or private property), Donne points to the chronology whereby 'a universal community' gives way to 'second dictates of nature' (p. 70), which conferred the right of

[19] Shami, 'Donne's Sermons and the Absolutist Politics of Quotation', in *John Donne's Religious Imagination Essays in Honour of John T. Shawcross*, eds. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Frances M. Malpezzi (Conway: UCA Press, 1995), 380-412.
[20] David Nicholls, 'The Political Theology of John Donne', *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 52-3.

private property through natural reason. This aside on the niceties of Natural Law, in which Donne reflects upon a form of communism free from 'superiority' and 'magistracy', is quickly displaced by a return to the 'first dictates of nature' (p. 70), the commitment of parts to the whole and the mutual obligations of subject and sovereign. But he goes on to observe that care of the individual, looking 'to ourselves', might also be a means of preserving the state, and thus a troubling departure from the Aristotelian and Thomist natural inclination towards self-sacrifice. For Aristotle and Aquinas, and for Donne in his letter to Goodyer, individual self-preservation is the preliminary step in the realisation of a true end in community. Donne thus laments the reversal of this order, noting a trend in which 'our true end is ourselves', and where the King's law is observed for personal expediency rather than the common good (p. 71). In this Meditation, then, there is a growing sense that the parts are out of tune with the whole, that the state does not now exist prior to the individual, but grows from a foundation of self-interested individual bodies. Indeed, Donne addresses the complex nature of Natural Law in his treatise on suicide, *Biathanatos* (1608), in which he questioned the authority of the concept, since its vague definition notoriously provided a multitude of conflicting interpretations. Natural Law 'is so variously and unconstantly deliver'd', he writes, 'as I confess I read it a hundred times before I can understand it once, or can conclude it to signify that which the author should at that time mean'.[21]

In another letter to Goodyer in 1609, Donne again broaches the subject of society and its connections to the cosmos, this time referring directly to London. Beginning with 'true friendship', he defines this bond as a product of nature, as steady in its ways and motions as the *primum mobile*, or first mover of Aristotle's cosmology. 'The first sphere onely which is resisted by nothing', Donne writes, 'absolves his course every day; and so doth true friendship well placed, often iterate in act or purpose, the same offices' (*Letters*, pp. 26-7).

[21] Ernest W. Sullivan II., ed. *Biathanatos* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 40.

Perfect friendship, as with perfect motion, will fulfil its intended purposes according to a natural order. The motions of an imperfect friendship are then compared to the lower spheres of the planets, whose movements are unpredictable, since they naturally resist the animating force of the first mover, resulting in 'trepidations' (p. 27). Such imperfect friendships, Donne suggests, are 'not moved primarily by the proper intelligence, discretion, and about the naturell center, vertue', and they return 'to the true first station and place of friendship planetarily, which is uncertainly and seldome' (p. 27). The point of conceiving of ideal friendship in cosmological terms is to impose order on the social life of man in conformity with the laws of the universe.

But, contrary to his expressions above concerning the order and final purpose of the city, Donne notes in the succeeding lines that, in London and the Court, there exists a randomness of actions and motions, through which ends and purposes are obscured:

> I have ever seen in London and our Court, as some colours, and habits, and continuances, and motions, and phrases, and accents, and songs, so friends in fashion and in season: and I have seen them as sodainly abandoned altogether, though I see no change in them, nor know more why they were left, then why they were chosen…Our assent therefore, and arrest, must be upon things, not persons. And when we are sure we are in the right way, for great persons, we may be glad of their company, if they go our way; we may for them change our place, but not our end, nor our way, if there be but one, as in Religion. (pp. 27-8)

Inconstancy of 'habits', 'fashions', 'phrases' and friendships characterises the society of the city, in which the people follow 'persons' rather than 'things'. These 'things' we may take as ideals, virtues or values, towards which the individual ought to move, for to try to 'arrest' or follow 'persons' in their fickle pursuits can only lead to disunity. The remainder of the letter seeks to advise Goodyer on the inconsistent habits of a fractured city which Donne believes has 'neither the body of Religion, which is morall honesty, and sociable faithfulness, nor the soul, Christianity' (p. 30). According to Donne, the 'body' or form of organised religion, just

like the state, should be bound by ‘morall honesty’ and ‘sociable faithfulness’, contracted in a union of parts with a shared purpose. He continues in the letter to press this theme of religious unity:

> You know I never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion; not straightning it Frierly, *ad Religiones factitias*, (as the Romans call well their orders of Religion) nor immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittemberg, or a Geneva; they are all virtuall beams of one Sun, and wheresoever they finde clay hearts, they harden them, and moulder them into dust (p. 29).

In his advice to Goodyer, Donne resolves, therefore, upon the guiding principle of a definite object, a true ‘end’ which is as fixed as Aristotle’s first mover and as singular as one’s Religion.

Donne’s *Satyre I* (1593) shares many of this letter’s attitudes towards the city.[22] *Satyre I* is the first of a sequence of five poems in this genre written by Donne in imitation of the classical models of Horace, Juvenal and Persius, and which deal with a range of vices associated with city life.[23] Joshua Scodel argues that Donne borrows from the classics an ethical tradition of liberty, and suggests that ‘Satire 1 and Satire 4 are both modelled on Horace’s Satire 1.9, the Roman poet’s comical description of an impertinent pest’s encroachment upon his freedom’.[24] In this respect, the aloof, mocking voice of Donne’s satiric persona resembles that of the Roman poets, but in a contemporary London setting and context. Although based on classical satire, it is generally accepted that Donne’s satires go beyond their models in complexity. As Gregory Kneidel argues:

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[22] References to the satires and verse letters are from *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. Wesley Milgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[23] Heather Dubrow has charted the influence of both Horace and Juvenal on the Satires. Heather Dubrow, ‘“No Man is an Island”: Donne’s Satire and the Satiric Tradition’ *English Literary History* 19 (1979): 71-83.
[24] See Joshua Scodel, ‘“Nonne’s Slave”: Some versions of Liberty in Donne’s Satyre I and IV’, *English Literary History* 72, No. 2 (2005): 365.

> In each of his Satires and throughout his Satires, Donne is looking for something. Perhaps it is an unattainable ideal (truth, liberty, justice); perhaps it is something more personal and circumstantial (employment, admiration, safety). One prevalent view over the past several decades has been that Donne's Satires constitute a "drama of self-discovery" in, as it were, five acts. Whether or not this is true, and regardless of what kind of self we say Donne discovers, it is clear that neither Donne's classical models nor his contemporaries conceived of the same kind of drama.[25]

The 'unattainable ideal' Donne strives towards in *Satyre I*, I suggest, is a classical concept of civil community. In this poem Donne's satiric persona narrates his experience of being dragged from his studies and taken on a walk through the streets of London with a tiresome companion. As in the 1609 letter to Goodyer, in the satire's opening lines a sense of purpose or a true end is similarly thwarted for Donne's speaker who leaves his study to follow this 'fondling motley humorist', an exact type of the city dweller who prefers to fix upon 'persons' rather than 'things':

> Away thou fondling motley humorist,
> Leave mee, and in this standing woodden chest,
> Consorted with these few bookes, let me lye
> In prison, and here be coffin'd, when I dye;
> Here are Gods conduits, grave Divines; and here
> Natures Secretary, the Philosopher;
> And jolly Statesmen, which teach how to tie
> The sinewes of a cities mistique bodie;
> Here gathering Chroniclers, and by them stand
> Giddie fantastique Poets of each land.
> Shall I leave all this constant company,
> And follow headlong, wild uncertaine thee? (1-12)

[25] Gregory Kneidel, 'The Formal Verse Satire' in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 132. Karen Newman has examined Donne's city works in light of the changing topography and urban spaces of early modern London, and argues that *Satyre I* reflects the bustling mercantile life of the capital, rather than the Rome of Horace and Juvenal. Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). This trend towards uncovering the connections between literature and the urban life of early modern London has been the subject of much recent criticism. See, for example, Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: social relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); J. F. Merrit, *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stowe to Strype, 1598-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Mark S. R. Jenner & Paul Griffiths, eds. *Londonopolis: essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Lena Cowen Orlin, ed. *Material London, ca. 1600* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); J. F. Merrit, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community, 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

The satirist claims to desire solitude and enclosure within his study, imprisoned and ‘coffin’d’, and mimicking death in a space which is the antithesis of the bustling city streets. ‘Consorted’ with his books, he identifies himself as one of these volumes, a material object organised in some part of the ‘standing wooden chest’. This line appears under the OED definition of ‘consort’ as ‘To associate in a common lot, to sort together (persons or things)’. But in the period in which Donne was writing, consort was also used in the sense of ‘A partner, companion, mate; a colleague in office or authority’, ‘To associate oneself (with), to keep company’, ‘To accord, agree, harmonize’, and was also used interchangeably with ‘concert’, suggesting a sense of musical harmony. The whole passage is crowded with the imagery of coming together. Donne employs a range of words such as ‘consorted’, ‘conduits’, ‘chroniclers’ and ‘constant company’ which consort together in alliteration and assonance, as well as in meaning; all present a sense of gathering and converging.

Punning on ‘grave’, the satirist alludes to the works of ‘Divines’ long dead and, therefore, appropriately ‘coffin’d’, whose role as ‘God’s conduits’ make them the channels by which knowledge is imparted to the living. The word ‘conduits’ also evokes the *polis*, in its suggestions of city streets and the arteries of the body politic, and paves the way for the image of ‘jolly Statesmen, which teach how to tie / The sinewes of a cities mistique bodie’.[26] As a ‘constant’ companion of Divines, Aristotle (‘Nature’s Secretary’), and ‘jolly statesmen’, Donne’s speaker associates himself with the triple authority of religion, nature and state and thus with an abstract ideal of the city as the common good in a way that recalls Hooker’s godly commonwealth. Indeed, the means by which statesmen teach how to ‘tie the sinewes of a cities mistique bodie’ is through the law, and this line has a parallel in Hooker’s own

[26] In the OED ‘conduit’ is variously defined in this period as ‘An artificial channel or pipe for the conveyance of water or other liquids; an aqueduct, a canal’; ‘Any natural channel, canal, or passage in the animal body’ or in ‘geological or geographical formations’; ‘The channel or medium by which anything (e.g. knowledge, influence, wealth, etc.) is conveyed’.

definition of the commonwealth as ‘a politic body, the parts wherof are by law animated’ and ‘held together’ (Hooker, pp. 87-8).

In analyses of Donne’s Lincoln’s Inn years there has been a tendency to identify him with the group of young men who, rather than commit to a serious study of the law, sought to mimic the manners and fashions of court, and indulge in literary and leisurely activities. Arthur Marotti, for example, argues that Donne’s ‘commitment to the law, was evidently, not a wholehearted one’ (p. 35). Bald is less dismissive, suggesting that ‘though he never attempted to practice the law, nor was ever called to the bar, Lincoln’s Inn was of great importance in Donne’s development, and he made friendships and formed associations there which persisted for most of the rest of his life’ (p. 53). Kneidel, however, suggests that Donne remained attentive to the legal culture of the Inns and that it ‘may be possible to reconsider *Satyre I* as part of the institutional history of English law’.[27] But while Kneidel seeks to align the poem with contemporary debates on English common law, I suggest that it has at its heart a more fundamental interest in the notion of Natural Law and its connections to the ideal city, evident in Donne’s satirical commentary on the concept’s inconsistency with the real world. In his letter to Goodyer in 1609, in which he used the metaphor of a ‘sullen weedy lake’ to complain of the passivity of his situation without employment, Donne reflected upon the role of the law:

> At most, the greatest persons, are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moalls for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute something to the sustentation of the whole. This I made account that I begun early, when I understood the study of our laws: but was diverted by the worst voluptuousnes, which is an Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages: beautifull ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation, and a course which I thought I entred well

[27] Gregory Kneidel, ‘Donne’s Satyre I and the Closure of the Law’, *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Reforme* 28, No. 4 (2004): 94. Jeremy Maule has also suggested that Donne’s intellectual attraction to the law, its language and its effect on his various professions as secretary, controversialist and preacher, has been underestimated. Jeremy Maule, ‘Donne and the Words of the Law’, in *John Donne’s Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19-36.

> into, when I submitted my self to such a service, as I thought might imploy those poor advantages, which I had (*Letters*, p. 51).

Donne's condemnation of his 'Hydroptique immoderate desire of humane learning and languages', might be taken as an admission of a neglect of the law in his early years in favour of an adherence to the literary culture of the Inns. But he nevertheless acknowledges his proficiency in law; he 'understood the study of our laws', and hoped to employ his 'poor advantages' in the service of Sir Thomas Egerton. Indeed, in the first twelve lines of *Satyre I* Donne plays with this tension between the 'constant company' of the study and the less advisable company of a 'wild, uncertaine' companion. In the letter, law, for Donne, is also the means by which men can 'contribute something to the sustentation of the whole'.

Robert Ornstein, in his article, 'Donne, Montaigne and Natural Law' (1956), examines the extent to which Donne found the concept of Natural Law problematic in his defence of suicide, *Biathanatos* (1608). The criticisms that Donne levelled at Natural Law centred on the legal folly of applying a universal principle to local and specific issues, without a reasoned consideration of individual circumstances. But rather than abandon the precept altogether, Ornstein argues that

> Donne accepts a Thomistic definition of natural law not for the sake of argument, but because it represents a return to first principles. Nature, he believes, establishes only one categorical imperative, only one immutable law: that is to follow the dictates of reason. And though circumstances may "condition" actions and custom influence our opinions, neither circumstance nor custom can prevail over true discursive reason.[28]

'In *Biathanatos*', Ornstein concludes, 'Donne looks back upon a medieval Christian heritage out of which he fashions a satisfactory moral framework' (p. 229). *Biathanatos* controversially sought to establish reason as the basis for a defence of suicide. So Donne, in

[28] Robert Ornstein, 'Donne, Montaigne and Natural Law', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 55, No. 2 (Apr., 1956): 225.

effect, employed orthodox arguments in the service of an unorthodox thesis. The notion that reason leads men to seek organisation and community in the city, however, was uncontroversial. As we have seen, Aquinas argued that, ‘since reason copies nature, we find the same inclination’ towards community ‘among the social virtues’. In the guise of a Lincoln’s Inn scholar, surrounded by works which uphold the values of the city, Donne’s speaker in *Satyre I* figures reason and law as the commonwealth’s unifying forces. But, enclosed in a coffin and a grave, the volumes of the city theorists, which signify a purposeful movement of parts towards the whole, have little connection to the real spaces of London.

Gail Kern Paster argues that an ‘idea of two cities is almost always implicit in expressions of the idea of one city. These two cities, two halves of a single urban idea, have the paradoxical relationship of the ideal and the actual, bound together yet forever straining apart’.[29] Donne’s poem follows this pattern by setting up several binaries between outside/inside, public/private, active/passive, unity/disunity and real and ideal. In referring to ‘Giddie fantastique poets’ Donne’s speaker subtly acknowledges his own status as a poet and satirist and thus his impending betrayal of the ideal for the real, as he chooses to follow his ‘wild, uncertain’ companion into the reality of London’s streets. This allusion to the satirist’s abandonment of his private study explains why poets who share the ‘wooden chest’ along with philosophers and statesmen are described as ‘Giddie’. As the OED notes the word giddy refers to madness, confusion, or ‘Whirling or circling round with bewildering rapidity’. Such giddiness mirrors the movements of the satirist’s wild companion. Like the citizens of the letter to Goodyer, the humorist is in thrall to the transitory fashions of the city, with no conception of a true purpose, and his staccato movements are expressed in Donne’s lines, in which he is accused of being unable to define ‘Whither, why, when, or with whom thou

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[29] Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 11. Although the idea of two cities is also suggestive of Augustine’s earthly and heavenly cities in *The City of God*, my purpose in this chapter is to examine Donne’s attitude towards the temporal city and civil society. On Donne’s connections to Augustine see Katrin Ettenhuber, *Donne's Augustine: Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

wouldst go' (64). At other points he is described as a 'lost sheep' (93) (after Luke 15. 3-7) attracted to fragmentary glimpses of 'men of sort, of parts, and qualities' (105), and his restless activity has no useful outlet or direction as he 'followes, overtakes, goes on the way' (94). The satirist even compares him unfavourably to a horse when he writes of his theatrical stooping to well-dressed courtiers: 'But to a grave man, he doth move no more / than the wise politic horse would heretofore' (79-80). Donne's reference to the popular performing 'politic horse', which was known for bowing at the name of Queen Elizabeth rather than the King of Spain, represents an ironic mirror of the humorist's behaviour, since, unlike the humorist, the horse refuses to acknowledge those who are deemed unworthy. As Milgate notes, the horse, named Morocco, 'could indicate the number of coins in a purse, add up a throw of dice, dance… and "beck for the King of Scots and for Queen Elizabeth, and when ye spoke of the King of Spain, would both bite and strike at you."' (p. 124). By punning again on death, Donne's 'grave man' is an echo of the 'grave Divines' of the earlier ideal of the city and, therefore, a character in which the humorist has no interest.

Joshua Scodel argues that *Satyre I* distorts the Horatian notion of walking and following one's desires in the city as a form of freedom; instead, the 'foolish companion is not free, for he is the passive slave of his mutable desires' (2005, p. 366). The opening lines of the poem are suggestive of Stoic 'inner freedom', of a retreat from public life as the greatest good. But Scodel maintains that to read the satirist as Stoic in inclination is ultimately untenable since 'the satire's images of prison and coffin suggest that Stoic retirement, far from being a realm of freedom, is an oppressive, death-like constriction upon worldly engagements' (p. 369). While the satirist's character is far removed from the Stoic ideal in his abandonment of retirement and study, I suggest that it is not freedom that he desires, but community, and neither retiredness nor aimless wandering can fulfil this purpose. The satire is obsessed with the idea of 'company' as something that remains out of reach. For

example, images of marriage, the foundational social contract of the commonwealth, are rendered completely unstable in the mock-union of the poem's principal actors. The satirist, having been induced to 'leave' his 'constant company' of philosophers, appeals to the humorist not to 'leave him in the middle street' for a 'more spruce companion' (15-6), before bawdily invoking the marriage contract: 'For better or worse, take me or leave me: / To take, and leave me is adultery' (25-6). When the speaker does, in fact, leave the confines of his study, his companion immediately breaks these imaginary vows and he is left in public rather than private isolation. Similarly, the humorist's unrequited desire for the attentions of the wealthy or the landed is figured in marital terms: 'As though all thy companions should make thee / Jointures, and marry thy dear company' (35-6). Moreover, in his 'giddy', excited movements he is rebuked by the satirist for his 'adulterous' and fruitless efforts to identify with a 'well-favoured youth': 'Stand still, must you dance here for company?' (83-5). In every attempted instance of social intercourse authentic 'company' is consistently denied.

By the end of the poem the humorist has exhausted himself, 'quarrell'd, fought' (110) and bled in the unfulfilled pursuit of a prostitute, and now 'constantly a while must keepe his bed' (112). Returning to the theme of constancy, the satire concludes with the humourist confined in a state of stillness; however, since it is only for 'a while' that he 'must keepe his bed', there remains the suggestion that his purposeless wanderings are not at an end. It is in his own self-criticism, at the moment he crosses the threshold of his study, that the satirist admits the rupture between the ideal and real city, between form and formlessness, community and isolation: 'But how shall I be pardon'd my offence / That thus have sinn'd against my conscience?'(65-6). Religious language is here set in opposition to that of the poem's opening, as the satirist 'offends' and 'sins' against the secular and spiritual law previously upheld as an ideal model of the commonwealth, whilst the reference to his 'conscience', another use of the 'con' prefix, is ironically bound to the 'constant company'

of the unified city. To sin against reason and 'conscience' is to subvert Natural Law and the right reason imparted to members of the Christian commonwealth. By entering into the discordant spaces of contemporary London, Donne's speaker inadvertently becomes a part of it, abandoning movement towards a true end, and, in spite of his sardonic observations, now shares the humourist's fixation on 'persons' rather than 'things' through his own 'Giddie' and frivolous walk through the city. In this vision of London, there is no sense of 'consorting' or connecting towards a common end, but rather a series of individual movements cut off from participation in the whole. In what follows I argue that this impulse towards connection and a definite end can also be detected in the early verse letters.

II.

Like *Satyre I*, Donne's early verse letters were composed during his Lincoln's Inn years (1592-1594) and also engage with questions of the ethical life of the city and its relationship to classical models. Arthur Marotti observes that 'after entering Lincoln's Inn, Donne found himself, at the age of twenty, in an intellectually and culturally rich environment with access to both the pleasures and opportunities of London and the Court' (p. 36). But, as we have seen, the Inns also provided for serious reflection upon the law, ethics and the state. Donne was among the first to develop the genre of the verse letter in English following the examples of Horace and Seneca. This genre presupposes a writer and recipient, lends itself to the possibility of exchanges of verse, and can be simultaneously public and private, artificial and personal.[30] Marotti argues that Donne 'preferred known readers for his writing' and the verse letters, addressed to particular persons and, most likely, confined to a particular coterie

[30] On questions of the verse letter's status as public/private, or authentic/artificial see Gary P. Storhoff, 'Social Mode and Poetic Strategies: Donne's Verse Letters to His Friends', *Essays in Literature* 4 (1977): 11-18; Margaret Maurer, 'John Donne's Verse Letters'. *Modern Language Quarterly* 37 (1976): 234-59.

audience, conform to this interpretation.[31] As a number of the recipients have been identified, certain biographical details can be gleaned from the letters.[32] Moreover, they have generated interest for what they reveal about Donne's understanding of friendship.[33] Generically, they combine elements of lyric poetry and letter writing, and the inspiration behind their composition has been understood as largely 'occasional'. As Margaret Maurer argues, if 'to Donne, a Verse Letter is not simply a letter, it is also not simply a poem detached from particular circumstances'.[34] Maurer also notes that recurring features of the poems include a concern that Donne 'or his correspondent live virtuously', 'dependence on correspondence as a source of inspiration', a preoccupation 'with their own creation', and attention to Donne's 'geographical separation' from his addressee (pp. 209-10).

In terms of their classical models, Allen Barry Cameron argues that, as with Horace and Seneca, Donne's epistles manifest 'a moral regard for the inner life of man', but that he 'consistently transforms the classical Stoicism of Horace and Seneca into his own contemporary moral vision'.[35] The Roman influence on the form of the epistles is without question, and they often rehearse the classical trope of seeking refuge from the city. But the verse letters also extend further than a Stoic 'regard for the inner life of man', bound as they

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[31] Marotti explores the influence of the social culture of the Inns on the epistles. Marotti, 'The Social Context and Nature of Donne's Writing: Occasional Verse and Letters', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35. Ted Larry Pebworth & Claude J. Summers attend to the historical contexts which informed the exchange between Donne and Wotton. Pebworth & Summers, '"Thus Friends Absent Speake": The Exchange of Verse Letters between John Donne and Henry Wotton', *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 81, No. 4 (1984): 361-77.

[32] Bald helped identify both the recipients of the letters and their likely dates of composition in his article, 'Donne's Early Verse Letters', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 15 (1952): 283-289.

[33] David Cunnington examines the differing roles of friendship expressed in the letters. David Cunnington, 'The Profession of Friendship in Donne's Amatory Verse Letters', in *John Donne's Professional Lives,* ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 97-119. On sexuality and the verse letters see Ben Saunders, '"Straight from Your Heart": Convention, Sincerity, and Sexuality in Donne's Early Verse Letters', *Journal x: A Journal in Culture and Criticism* 4. No. 2 (2000): 113-32, and George Klawitter, 'Verse Letters to T. W. from John Donne: "By You My Love Is Sent"', in *Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context*, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Harrington Park, 1992), 85-102.

[34] Margaret Maurer, 'The Verse Letter', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 212.

[35] Allen Barry Cameron, 'Donne's Deliberative Verse Epistles', *English Literary Renaissance* 6 (1976): 372.

are to the material conditions of early modern London. In the examples examined here, I suggest that along with the self-referential nature of the verse letters and their plays on geographical distance, Donne experiments with the notion of the final cause as a framework for expressing the ethical ends of writing and friendship. The verse letters are, after all, frequently concerned with demonstrating virtue in the tradition of classical moral philosophy. This subtle inclusion of ethical ends sometimes comes across because of the sense of movement in the verse letters, and sometimes finds expression in Donne's rhetorical invocation of notions of matter and form. More specifically, such images are employed to suggest the verse letter's fulfilment of true friendship.

In Donne's letter to Thomas Woodward ('Haste thee harsh verse'), for example, there exists a sense of motion and physicality which belies any suggestion of Stoic retirement, as Donne alludes to a flight from plague-stricken London:

> Haste thee harsh verse as fast as thy lame measure
> Will give thee leave, to him, my pain and pleasure.
> I have given thee, and yet thou art too weak,
> Feet, and a reasoning soul and tongue to speak.
> Plead for me, and so by thine and my labour,
> I am thy Creator, thou my Saviour.
> Tell him, all questions, which men have defended
> Both of the place and pains of hell, are ended;
> And 'tis decreed our hell is but privation
> Of him, at least in this earth's habitation:
> And 'tis where I am, where in every street
> Infections follow, overtake, and meet:
> Live I or die, by you my love is sent,
> And you'are my pawns, or else my testament (1-14).

Donne frequently communicated in verse with Thomas Woodward and his older brother Rowland Woodward, both of whom were part of Donne's Lincoln's Inn coterie (Bald, p. 74). In terms of the letter's date, Milgate argues that the reference to 'infections' in line 12 suggests that it was composed 'in or after August 1592, in which month, after about nine

years without alarm, plague was reported in London, growing more serious daily; the danger lasted into 1594' (p. 213). The presence of plague and the geographic distance of Woodward provide the contexts which inspire the poem, and the central conceit reflects upon the process of correspondence, the act of writing and the letter's transmission: 'Haste thee harsh verse as fast as thy lame measure / Will give thee leave, to him'. Robin Robbins argues that the opening establishes a 'conventional Petrarchism' with its play on 'pain and pleasure', and that this is carried on in the allusions to death and deprivation, the 'privation of him', in the succeeding lines.[36] But this opening also creates a restlessness borne out of a deferred sense of poetic fulfilment, an anticipation of the point at which the letter will be received and validated by Woodward.

Physical motion is suggested by the letter's principal conceit in which the words are animated with living yet imperfect body parts. According to Donne, it has a 'lame measure', inadequate in both physical capacity and poetic rhythm. The poem is written in iambic pentameter, and although seven out of fourteen lines have an extra syllable, which might summon images of a hobbling imbalance, or 'lame measure', this does not necessarily mean that it has an imperfect metrical design.[37] It is more likely that Donne here employs the familiar trope of false modesty. When he puns on the poem's 'weak feet', he aligns the letter's limping movement with the trochaic inversion which falls on the first syllable of the line, significantly, on the word 'Feet' itself. The letter's 'reasoning soul' is equated with the message its author wishes to convey, made possible through its possession of a speaking 'tongue' which will 'plead' on his behalf. Imagining himself as the 'Creator' of this animated letter, which, in turn, is his 'Saviour', Donne plays on the paradox of his condition as God and a mortal for whom the letter is the incarnation of Christ in imperfect bodily form. It thus both owes its existence to Donne and is the means of his redemption. This conceit also

[36] Robin Robbins, ed. *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (London: Longman, 2008), 49.
[37] Lines 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have 11 syllables.

borrows from the commonplace notion of the poet as creator, as having the form of a work pre-existent within his mind before it joins with matter and is realised in words. As Aquinas writes,

> Just as in the mind of every artist there already exists the idea of what he will create by his art, so in the mind of every ruler there must already exist an ideal of order with respect to what shall be done by those subject to his rule [law]… Now God, in His wisdom, is the creator of all things, and may be compared to them as the artist is compared to the artefact.[38]

This conception of the artist as 'maker' or creator was popularised in the Renaissance, particularly by Sir Phillip Sidney, who sought to rehabilitate the poet in his *Apology for Poetry* (1595):

> Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of human nature; but rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry.[39]

'The skill of the artificer', Sidney stresses, 'standeth in that *Idea* or fore-conceit of the work' (p. 85). Notions of form, matter and creation in poetry were thus analogically linked to God's creative power. Donne's work frequently made use of the rhetorical conceit that the matter of writing should adhere to the form first conceived by its author. For example, in another letter to Goodyer he concludes with the remark: 'Even this Letter is some example of such infirmitie, which being intended for a Letter, is extended and strayed into a Homilie. And whatsoever is not what it was purposed, is worse, therefore it shall at last end like a Letter…'[40] In spite of Donne's straying 'into a Homilie', the matter of the letter should

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[38] Mary T. Clark, ed. *An Aquinas Reader* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), I. ii, Q. 93, 310.
[39] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or, The Defence of Poesy*, eds. Geoffrey Shepherd & Robert W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1965] 2002), 85-6.
[40] *Letters*, 112. This is no evidence in this letter which would enable an accurate date to be assigned.

complement the form, otherwise the true end or purpose may be lost on both writer and recipient. In the same way, a final form and purpose, Donne suggests jestingly in his dedicatory poem, 'Upon Mr Thomas Coryats Crudities' (1611), is precisely what is missing from Coryat's travel narrative.[41] 'Infinite worke, which doth so far extend', Donne writes, 'That none can study it to any end. / 'Tis no one thing, it is not fruit nor roote. / Nor poorely limited with head or foot' (9-12). The book is 'Infinite', not because it will be immortalised, but because it is so prodigiously long and meandering that reaching its physical and conceptual 'end' is neither physically nor intellectually possible. Rather than being 'one thing', a complete and aesthetically compact work of literature, matter and form, 'roote' and 'fruit', and beginning and end are lacking.

Referring explicitly to the physics of motion in a letter of 1610 addressed to 'Your self' (believed to be Henry Goodyer), enclosing a book with his correspondence, Donne again plays with notions of textual matter and form:[42]

> I Send you here a Translation; but it is not onely to beleeve me, it is a great invention to have understood any piece of this Book, whether the gravity of the matter, or the Poeticall form, give it his inclination, and *principium motus*; you are his center, or his sphere, and to you as to his [proper place] he addresses himself (*Letters*, p. 207).

This time, since the book, as a material artefact, is already in existence, Donne divides it into parts with the form referring to the structure or shape of the work (the formal cause), and matter the intellectual substance. Goodyer is the 'proper place' of the book, and its '*principium motus*', or first principle of motion, in this case, its content or style, is what compels it towards the reader. This metaphor reflects the mutuality of matter and form in

[41] On Donne and Coryat see Bald, 192-5. See also Raymond-Jean Frontain, 'Donne, Coryate, and the Sesqui-Superlative', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 29, No. 2 (2003 Winter): 211-24; Brandon S. Centerwall, '"Loe Her's a Man, Worthy Indeede to Travell": Donne's Panegyric upon Coryats Crudities' *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 22 (2003): 77-94.

[42] John Klause argues that the book in question is Donne's biblical translation of *The Lamentations of Jeremy*. Klause, 'The Two Occasions of Donne's "Lamentations of Jeremy"', *Modern Philology* 90, No. 3 (Feb., 1993): 337-359.

Aristotelian physics, since the fact of being requires the co-operation of each. The notion that either may represent the '*principium motus*', however, breaks down with the acknowledgement that Goodyer himself, as reader, becomes the final cause, the reason for its existence. Compounding the faultiness of the metaphor, Donne then goes on to request that the book be passed on to 'my Lady Bedford'. If 'you can think it fit', he writes, 'put it amongst her papers' (p. 207). Given that Donne was actively seeking employment during this period, if his metaphor were taken to its logical conclusion, the final cause of the book would, in fact, be Lady Bedford, or more specifically, his own pursuit of patronage.

In Donne's epistle 'To Mr B.B.' (dated 1594 by Milgate), the recipient is understood to be another member of the Lincoln's Inn coterie, Beupre Bell. In this poem, Bell performs a similar role in actualising the text which is wanting in 'matter':

> Hence comes it, that these rhymes which never had
> Mother, want matter, and they only have
> A little form, the which their father gave;
> They are profane, imperfect, oh, too bad
> To be counted children of poetry
> Except confirmed and bishoped by thee (9-14).

Robbins argues that Donne's image of rhymes lacking maternal 'matter' and possessing only a little paternal 'form' is derived from the 'Aristotelian doctrine… that the female merely supplied material to be shaped by the male seed' (p. 48). Little 'form' may also be read in light of early modern modifications to earlier theories of conception, in this case, the homunculus provided by the father and which grows inside the mother's womb would account for the 'form'. These lines also have a secondary sense which, as Milgate notes, is derived from Plato's *Timaeus*. The 'mother', Milgate observes, 'is the invisible formless stuff of creation which receives all "forms" that are imposed by the "father" (or creator)'. The 'mother', moreover, 'was identified with the Aristotelian "matter"' (p. 221). In these lines,

then, Donne alludes to the Platonic notion of form as masculine in its ordering of feminine matter, as the father who begets life by shaping disjointed material into ‘things’. As the ‘father’ of his rhymes they have shape, but lack the Muse/mother’s provision of ‘matter’, or poetic inspiration. In physical terms form without matter cannot exist, just as his ‘bastard’ lines cannot ‘be counted children of poetry’ unless ‘confirmed and bishoped’ by Bell. Here, Donne points to the Church’s capacity to recognise bastards as legitimate, and, as with Goodyer, only Bell can provide the true form of the epistle as a reader.

In these literary experiments, writing, for Donne, appears to have a dual status as something realised and complete once created by the author, but also as incomplete until digested and understood by the addressee; in other words, it exists in a state of potentiality. In this respect, the second aspect of writing corresponds with Aristotle’s definition of movement as the actualisation of something as yet still incomplete. He explains this difficult concept in the *Physics* as follows:

> the fact turns out to be that movement is a realisation, but an uncompleted one; because a potentiality, as long as it is such, is by its nature uncompleted, and therefore its actual functioning – which motion is – must stop short of the completion: on the attainment of the end, the motion towards it no longer exists, but is merged in the reality (III. II. pp. 204-5).

This tension between matter, form and motion characterises Donne’s epistle to Woodward. From Donne’s perspective, his verse is ‘harsh’, flawed and the delivery of its ‘idea’, his ‘pain and pleasure’ to Woodward has yet to be realised, since the letter itself is the object to which the speaker directs himself. Existing in motion, the letter is incomplete, a potentiality, until it reaches its destination. Given Donne’s tendency to eschew imitations of Petrarch, the reference to ‘pain and pleasure’ also has Aristotelian connotations. For Donne, his pain is the consequence of a lack, his separation from Woodward, whilst pleasure is associated with a desired end. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* two forms of pleasure are theorised. The first posits

that there are ‘pleasures which restore us to our natural *state*’ and these ‘are only accidentally pleasant’ (VII. xi. 2. p. 433). The second and best form is identified not as an end in itself, nor as a process, but as a kind of sensation which accompanies the attainment of some specific good, what Aristotle terms an unimpeded ‘activity of our natural state’ (VII. xii. 2-3. p. 435). Restorative pleasure is understood in physical terms, as the return to a natural equilibrium, for example, in the act of quenching thirst. The pleasures attending activity, on the other hand, are immaterial and manifest in the act of contemplation, of feeling or thinking. Aquinas summarised the position, writing that ‘the good which is obtained and is actually possessed, is the cause of pleasure: wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 12) that pleasure is not compared with generation, but with the operation of a thing already in existence. Now that which is being moved towards something has it not as yet…Therefore movement is not a cause of pleasure’ (I-II, Q. 32, Art. 2).

For Donne, pleasure in ‘Haste thee harsh verse’ consists in the former restorative definition, in a sense of physical fulfilment and reciprocated love. Physical fulfilment may represent the lesser of the two, but given the balance between pain and pleasure, desire and lack, it is not excessive and thus agrees with Aristotle’s commitment to the idea of moderation. As Aristotle notes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, ‘everybody enjoys savoury food, wine, and sexual pleasure in some degree, though not everybody to the right degree’ (VII. xiii. 3. p. 443). Significantly, the potential metaphorical destination of ‘Haste thee harsh verse’ is not in the city, but is rather represented by the unifying influence of Woodward. London, the place in which the speaker resides, is, on the contrary, cast as a kind of hell: ‘Tell him, all questions, which men have defended / Both of the place and pains of hell, are ended’, for it has been ‘decreed our hell is but privation / Of him, at least in this earth’s habitation: / And ’tis where I am’. Here, Donne draws from theological controversy concerning the location of hell and concludes that it is a ‘privation’, a denial of the presence of God, or, in

this case, Woodward. But in the following lines he contradicts himself by giving hell a very specific location in London: ‘And ’tis where I am, where in every street / Infections follow, overtake, and meet’. Afflicting every street, the plague is personified by Donne in the same terms (‘following’ and ‘overtaking’) as he will use to characterise the random movements of the humorist in *Satyre I*. Donne thus presents the plague-ridden city as a place not only of discord, but of decay, its citizens’ movements being replaced by the indiscriminate wandering infection. The last lines retain the sense that the letter has not yet been received and thus preserve the poem in its state of potentiality: ‘Live I or die, by you my love is sent, / And you’are my pawns, or else my testament’. Donne may ‘live or die’, and thus the letter will become, respectively, his ‘pawns’, pledges of his continuing friendship, or his ‘testament’, a final statement following his death in which his sentiments are bequeathed to Woodward.

In order to support his Petrarchan reading of the poem, Robbins takes the Westmoreland MS (*W*) as his copy-text, supported with several Group II MSS, and changes the position of the comma in line 13 so that it reads: ‘Live I or die by you, my love is sent’. In *W* the comma is completely absent from the line. By placing a comma after ‘you’, Robbins identifies the addressee as Woodward, rather than the letter itself, and also stresses the ‘Petrarchan intensification of the “pain and pleasure” of l.2 in accord with the *post mortem* experience implied in “our hell is but privation / Of him”’ (p. 50). As we have seen, not only was the threat of death from plague a real possibility, but Donne was also often at pains to distance himself from straightforward tropes of Petrarchan love. Milgate’s adherence to the 1633 edition of Donne’s poems as copy-text, therefore, results in a more accurate reading. The pretext of the letter’s flight may be the plague, but it is friendship which supplies the poem’s real object. This object is realised through the process of letter writing and underwritten by an ethical assumption of finality, of potentiality and actuality, in the Aristotelian tradition.

According to Aristotle, the bonds of friendship were essential to the formation of the city, and the common purpose shared between friends meant that the best examples were realised in the state. 'Friendship appears to be the bond of the state', he writes in the *Politics*, 'and lawgivers seem to set more store by it than they do by justice, for to promote concord, which seems akin to friendship, is their chief aim' (VIII. i. 3-6. p. 453). Aristotle acknowledges that friendship is a good thing because it binds together the city, but, in the verse letters, as we have seen, Donne appears to promote his own personal friendships as a refuge from, and as something which exists independently of, the city. Barbara Everett writes that Donne was '– despite the abstract habits of thought which might appear to dissociate him from place – a Londoner by Nature as well as by birth and breeding'.[43] While this is the case, his attraction to London perhaps had more to do with the friends he found there rather than its physical or political qualities. Indeed, during the 1590s, Donne would have been distinctly aware of his position as part of a persecuted Catholic minority, and thus the larger community would almost certainly have seemed contrary to an ideal of the greatest good, in comparison to his group of trusted friends. As Dennis Flynn observes, the influence of Donne's Catholic background pervades his writings and thought and we should connect his 'birth and early years, as well as his subsequent life and writings, to his family's religious persecution, imprisonment, exile, and death'.[44]

In Donne's verse epistle 'To Mr E. G.' (Everard Guilpin), he again focuses on the status of his writing, his geographic distance from Guilpin and his own situation in London:

> Even as lame things thirst their perfection, so
> The slimy rimes bred in our vale below,
> Bearing with them much of my love and hart,
> Fly unto that Parnassus, wher thou art.
> There thou oreseeest London: Here I'have beene,

[43] Barbara Everett, 'Donne: A London Poet', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 58 (1972): 245.
[44] Dennis Flynn, 'Donne's Family Background and Early Years' in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 394.

> By staying in London, too much overseene.
> Now pleasures dearth our City doth posses,
> Our Theatres are fill'd with emptines;
> As lancke and thin is every Street and way
> As a Woman deliver'd yesterday. (1-10)

According to Milgate, 'Donne's poem seems to refer to a time of plague in London, doubtless the serious visitation from August 1592 until 1594' (p. 216). Robbins speculates, however, that the poem might have been written in either June-August 1592, or June-August 1595, on the basis that Donne writes: 'Nothing wherat to laugh my spleene espyes, / But bearbaitings or Law exercise' (11-2). If there were a serious outbreak of plague at this time, Robbins argues, then all forms of public entertainment, including plays and bear-baitings, would have been prohibited by order of the Privy Council (p. 53). The city is empty, not as a consequence of plague, but because the law-term has come to an end and Donne is most likely writing during the Inns of Court vacations. As with the epistle to Thomas Woodward, Donne's lines, as 'lame things', seek 'perfection' and poetic fulfilment through their transmission to Guilpin in his 'Parnassus', overlooking London. This Parnassus, as Carey notes, refers to Guilpin's house on Highgate hill which stood above London.[45] In contrast to this tribute to Guilpin's poetic genius, the 'vale below', where Donne dwells, represents the Thames valley and thus the city, and the phrase 'slimy rimes', as Milgate notes, alludes to the myth whereby the sun's heat could generate creatures out of the slime found in rivers (p. 216). No purpose, in this case, pleasure again, can be achieved in the city, which paradoxically 'possesses' only 'dearth', whilst its theatres are similarly 'fill'd' with 'emptiness'.

The ideal form of the *polis* as an organic community, filled with corresponding parts, is inverted with the grotesque, emaciated image of 'every Street and way' being as 'lancke and thin' as a 'woman delivered yesterday'. Donne here borrows from the classical personification of the city or state as an idealised female. As Lawrence Manley observes, this

[45] Donne, *John Donne: the Major Works*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1990] 2000), 421.

is ‘a very old tradition which originates in the myths of the Cretan and Asian goddess Cybele’, and one that Virgil recounts in the *Aeneid*.[46] Paster also notes that because ‘the city is walled for most of its history, it is early associated with the female principle. Classical personifications of the city as a noble woman wearing a turreted crown carry over into Christian iconography, with the virgin assuming the functions of the classical city goddess’ (p. 4). Thomas Dekker similarly played upon the female aspects of London, noting the particular ambiguity of its double nature as both bride and prostitute. ‘Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest’, he writes ‘and all things in thee to make thee foulest: for thou art attir’de like a Bride, drawing all that look upon thee, to be in love with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes’.[47]

According to the ideal, London was married to its citizens in a symbolic expression of the common good of the city. However, in Donne’s vision of London there are no suggestions of marital or familial bonds in the evacuated ‘streets and ways’. Pregnancy usually symbolises potential, and, as we have seen in ‘The Storme’, he employs the biblical image of Sarah to this effect. But having been ‘deliver’d yesterday’, London is now devoid of any potentiality and deprived of the social combinations which work towards a common good. Donne’s ‘slimy rimes’ are juxtaposed with this postnatal image. ‘Bred’ in London, they have the capacity to ‘fly unto’ Guilpin’s Highgate ‘Parnassus’ and thus escape the stagnation of the city, as will Donne himself: ‘Therefore Ile leave’it, and in the Cuntry strive / Pleasure, now fled from London, to retrieve’ (13-4). In this letter the country symbolises the end point of pleasure, but elsewhere Donne expresses a keen dislike of rural living. For example, in a letter to Goodyer in 1609 he wrote of the ‘barbarousnesse and insipid dulnesse of the Country’ (*Letters*, p. 63). Similarly, in his verse epistle to ‘Mr I. L.’, identified by Robbins as

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[46] Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 141.
[47] Thomas Dekker, *The Seuen deadly Sinnes of London* (London, 1606), ‘The Introduction to the Booke’, sig. A2v.

Ingram Lister, Donne wrote disparagingly of what he perceived to be inferior country pleasures:

> You doe not duties of Societies,
> If from the'embrace of a lov'd wife you rise,
> View your fat Beasts, stretch'd Barnes, labour'd fields,
> Eate, play, ryde, take all joyes which all day yeelds,
> And then againe to your embracements goe. (7-11)

Here, the pursuits of country living, surveying the land, 'eating', 'playing' and 'riding', are antithetical to the 'duties of societies'. These duties, Donne concludes, are to be found in the twin activities of poetry and friendship: 'Some houres on us your frends, and some bestow / Upon your Muse…' (12-13). Indeed, as the last lines to Guilpin imply, the pleasures he seeks in the country are city ones that have 'fled from London', rather than pleasures native to the country itself. Significantly, this epistle again concludes in a state of potentiality. He will 'strive' to retrieve pleasures in the country; however, this does not mean he will attain them.

III.

In Donne's verse letter to Sir Henry Wotton, 'Sir, more than kisses', country, court and city are branded as equally undesirable. Donne most likely met Wotton at Oxford and they remained lifelong friends and correspondents. According to Scodel the epistle to Wotton 'was probably written in 1597 or 1598, around the time Donne began his court career as secretary to Lord Keeper Egerton'.[48] Like *Satyre I* and the other verse letters, this longer poem to Wotton is highly suggestive of Stoic retirement in its rejection of all three modes of living. For Marotti, both this epistle and the one from Wotton, which it responds to, are

[48] Joshua Scodel, 'The Medium Is the Message: Donne's "Satire 3", "To Sir Henry Wotton" (Sir, More Than Kisses), and the Ideologies of the Mean', *Modern Philology* 90, No. 4 (May, 1993): 480.

straightforwardly Stoic in tone.[49] However, David Norbrook and Joshua Scodel each suggest that the poem's imagery moves beyond an idealisation of the Stoic contemplative life.[50] According to Norbrook, Donne here departs from a Stoic balancing of 'opposing humours' (p. 11), of action and contemplation, whilst Scodel argues that Donne transforms the Aristotelian 'mean' in order to 'define a sphere of individual freedom' (p. 501). My reading of the poem similarly identifies a development which emerges from, and transcends, Stoic thinking; however, I suggest that, like the 'city' poems previously discussed, the dissipation of a sense of community and the new reality of individual political/social agency effects a kind of disorientation and sense of isolation, as Donne tries to theorise a new mode of existing out-with traditional communities. In this respect, I depart from Norbrook's argument that Donne 'sees each individual as undergoing a … process of absolute alienation from a pristine republican self' (p. 11). Contextualising the poem as part of a general European reaction against burgeoning absolutism, Norbrook figures Donne as lamenting absolutist incursions on republicanism. I argue, however, that Donne's ideal community is not a republic, but a form of the mixed model promoted by Aristotle, Aquinas and latterly Hooker. Scodel also reads the poem as striving for individual freedom; but I suggest that such a novel idea of freedom is disturbingly disharmonious if not channelled towards some particular purpose.

The poem begins with an expression of the letter's capacity to transcend distance and join Donne and Wotton in a 'mingling of souls': 'SIR, more then kisses, letters mingle Soules; / For, thus friends absent speake' (1-2). Donne goes on to say that: 'This ease controules / The tediousnesse of my life: But for these / I could ideate nothing, which could please…' (2-4). The most suggestive terms in these lines are 'controules' and 'ideate', since

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[49] Marotti, 'Coterie Poet', 119-20.
[50] David Norbrook, 'The Monarch of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics' in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, eds. Elizabeth D, Harvey & Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3-37.

they provide the starting point for the epistle's most pressing concerns. That Wotton's letters should 'control' the tediousness of Donne's life implies not only that his position is one of inactivity, but also that his life itself needs a measure of regulation. In an isolated existence letters are the only touchstone of civilisation and order, and without them Donne 'should wither in one day, and passe / To'a bottle'of Hay, that am a locke of Grasse' (5-6). His reference to 'ideate' emphasises the need to have and express ideas to prevent the self from 'withering'. But it is also hints at an idea of community and order. Norbrook notes that

> Wotton helps him to ideate – a word he generally associates elsewhere in reference to the ideal republics of Plato and More. What Donne is trying to "ideate" in this letter is some standpoint from which he can scrutinise his society without becoming implicated in its power structures (p. 10).

The implication in the poem is that, in actuality, neither country, nor court, nor city, can fulfil the perfection of the ideal commonwealth. This insinuation is developed at greater length in the following lines, in which Donne elaborates on the failings of all three:

> Life is a voyage, and in our lifes wayes
> Countries, Courts, Towns are Rockes, or Remoraes;
> They breake or stop all ships, yet our state's such,
> That though then pitch they staine worse, wee must touch (6-9).

The 'life as voyage' trope here may seem commonplace; but, as we have seen, positive ship metaphors, for Donne, frequently suggest a sense of purposeful motion, whereas negative ones refer to dynamic activity brought to a halt, and are thus equated with death. In these lines the same pattern applies, with countries, towns and courts being the obstacles, 'Rockes or Remoraes' that 'breake or stop' ships. As with the other verse letters, process is the only alternative to the stagnating, or corrupting effects of traditional social communities. As Donne writes in the succeeding lines:

> But Oh, what refuge canst thou winne
> Parch'd in the Court, and in the country frozen?
> Shall cities, built of both extremes, be chosen?
> Can dung or garlike be'a perfume? or can
> A Scorpion or Torpedo cure a man?
> Cities are worst of all three; of all three
> (O knottie riddle) each is worst equally.
> Cities are Sepulchers; they who dwell there
> Are carcases, as if no such there were.
> And Courts are Theatres, where some men play
> Princes, some slaves, all to one end, and of one clay.
> The country is a Desert, where no good
> Gain'd, (as habits, not borne), is understood.
> There men become beasts, and prone to more evils;
> In cities blockes, and in a lewd court, devills (14-28).

'Refuge' is unattainable in the 'hot' court and 'cold' country, and cities, as a mixture of both, 'built of both extremes', are similarly uninhabitable in spite of the allusion to the mean, theoretically achievable by the union of opposites. Like the other poems we have looked at, this poem is in dialogue with Aristotle. As Scodel observes, 'although the *Nicomachean Ethics* defines the virtuous mean as the avoidance of contrary extremes, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* discusses two kinds of intermediates, those that negate the two extremes and those that are compounded out of the contraries that they mediate' (p. 502). Donne states that 'Cities are worst of all three', before invoking the 'knottie riddle' of the holy trinity to express the paradoxical notion that each can be 'worst equally'. If life is a voyage, its destination, or the final point in its course, cannot be found in any of these locations. Again, cities are cast as sites of death, as 'Sepulchers' filled with 'carcases'; similarly, the only certain 'end' for the 'slaves' and 'Princes', moulded of the same 'clay' in the theatre of court, is death. This represents a marked departure from Aristotle who draws firm distinctions in the *Politics* between rulers and ruled, sovereigns and slaves (I. ii. 22-3, p. 31). So too the country, as a desert, cannot sustain the 'good'. If any 'good' is attained by country dwellers, rather than being 'borne' within them, it is merely 'gain'd' as 'habits' or customs and 'not understood'. This choice of abode marks them as 'beasts', echoing Aristotle's claim, in the

Politics, that those who live outside of the commonwealth are no better than animals (I. i. 7-9. p. 9). As 'blocks', city dwellers are subject to a certain immovability and idiocy; as the OED notes, this word carries the suggestion of 'inertia, senselessness, stupidity.'

Donne follows up this criticism with an image of pre-creation chaos:

> As in the first Chaos confusedly,
> Each elements qualities were in the'other three;
> So pride, lust, covetize, being severall
> To these three places, yet all are in all,
> And mingled thus, their issue'incestuous.
> Falsehood is denizon'd. Virtue'is barbarous. (29-34)

As we have seen, chaos, as the starting point of creation, is matter without form but with the potential to generate life, to be brought to an eventual natural order. Here, Donne's imaginary polity, as an 'incestuous' compound of all three, is unnatural, and the reason which should exist in the subjects of the commonwealth is undermined, as 'virtue' becomes 'barbarous' and 'falsehood is denizon'd', naturalised as a citizen. Warning of the dangers of consorting in such a community, Donne writes, 'Let no man say there, Virtues flintie wall / Shall locke vice in mee,'I'll do none, but know all. / Men are spunges, which, to poure out, receive, / Who know false play, rather then lose, deceive' (35-8). Here, he appears to refute the idea, derived from Stoicism, that man can dispassionately observe and avoid the intrigues of court and city. Seneca, for example, advised that 'a wise man in the common business of life' should keep 'out of the way from those that may do him hurt', that he should 'have a care also of listeners… and meddlers in other people's matters; for their discourse is commonly of such things as are never profitable, and most commonly dangerous either to be spoken or heard'.[51] For Donne, however, 'men are spunges', who must absorb impressions from their

[51] Seneca, *Seneca's Morals, By Way of Abstract*, trans. Sir Roger L'Estrange (New York: A. L. Burt Company Publishers, 1834), 120.

environment before they have anything to express, and who would rather 'deceive' in the pursuit of self-interest than defend 'Virtues flintie wall'.

The consequence of living in such places is a fracturing of social identity, as Donne reflects in the following lines:

> I thinke if men, which in these places live
> Durst looke for themselves, and themselves retrieve,
> They would like strangers greet themselves, seeing then
> Utopian youth, growne old Italian (43-6).

Scodel argues that the 'contrast between "Utopian youth" and "old Italian" suggests that innocence is preserved only by dwelling in Utopia, that is, in no place, because all of the social world is an Italy-a den of craft and corruption' (p. 505). Norbrook, on the other hand, argues that the 'last line makes its moral point by a political analogy with the process by which the old republican culture of the Italian city-states had become extinguished by an absolute court culture' (p. 11). But Donne's Utopia, is both a no place, and a disillusioned acknowledgement of the vast gulf between reality and the idealistic ambitions of the 'youthful'. If identity is shaped by institutions, then the division and inoperability of these bodies can only serve to disorientate the individual. These four lines, in which the word 'themselves' is repeated three times, register the extent to which, in the absence of community, the individual is thrust back upon him/herself only to be met by a 'stranger'. Donne's solution, then, is to exist in a state of internal self-sufficiency, which would have echoes of Stoicism were it not for the overriding images of motion:

> Be then thine owne home, and in thyself dwell;
> Inne any where, continuance maketh hell.
> And seeing the snaile, which every where doth rome,
> Carrying his owne house still, still is at home,
> Follow (for he is easie pac'd) this snaile,
> Be thine owne Palace, or the world's thy Gaole (47-52).

Advising Wotton to be his own ‘home’, to ‘dwell’ within himself, sounds Stoic in its appeal to social and political abandonment. But Donne complicates such an interpretation by combining this renunciation of the world with the idea that ‘continuance’ in one place is ‘hell’, along with the recommendation to ‘rome’ everywhere like the itinerant snail. This mobile simile is developed further with a return to maritime imagery:

> And in the worlds sea, do not like corke sleepe
> Upon the waters face; nor in the deepe
> Sinke like a lead without a line: but as
> Fishes glide, leaving no print where they passe,
> Nor making sound, so, closely thy course goe;
> Let men dispute, whether thou breathe, or no (53-8).

Again, these lines recall Seneca in their appeal for a prudent silence and distance to be maintained in worldly dealings. To be carried passively, like ‘corke’ on the waves, according to the whims of others, or to become immersed, and ultimately lost, in the business of societies, like a ‘lead without a line’, is to be avoided. Instead, Donne advises Wotton to ‘glide’ like a fish, whose movements leave ‘no print’, are untraceable. Fish also have volition and self-motion which distinguishes them from floating cork and sinking lead.

Seneca, like Cicero, although committed to the contemplative life as the most virtuous, nevertheless acknowledged the necessity of a public duty towards the state. Moreover, by adhering to the Aristotelian mean, Seneca believed that both activity and rest should occupy an equal place in life. ‘You should rebuke these two kinds of men’, he wrote, ‘both those who always lack repose, and those who are always in repose’:

> For love of bustle is not industry, – it is only the restlessness of a hunted mind. And true repose does not consist in condemning all motion as merely vexation; that kind of repose is slackness and inertia. Therefore, you should note the following saying, taken from my reading in Pomponius: “Some men shrink into dark corners, to such a degree that they see darkly by day”. No, men should combine these tendencies, and he who

> reposes should act and he who acts should take repose. Discuss the problem with Nature; she will tell you that she has created both day and night.[52]

In the epistle to Wotton, however, instead of balancing public engagement with private thought, Donne abandons all three spheres of political life. He warns Wotton of the futility of such balance, to be ‘no Galenist’ and ‘adde Correctives’, a ‘dramme of Countries dulnesse’, to negate the effects of ‘Courts hot ambitions’ (59-61). Instead of attaining humoral equilibrium, Donne prefers a complete Paracelsian chemical ‘purge’ (62) to cure the individual of the ill effects of the community. In this way, action and repose are not figured as equally beneficial halves of a full existence, but rather contemplation appears to be bound up in the process of motion. As we have seen, in Aristotelian terms, motion implies an eventual destination or purpose and Donne, in his ‘city’ writing, relies on this process as the means of attaining fulfilment in his social life. When he advises Wotton, ‘closely thy course [to] goe’, the implication is that a course must have an end, a sentiment which he expresses more explicitly in a letter to Goodyer in 1611, before his departure for France with Sir Robert Drury:

> Am near the execution of that purpose for France; though I may have other ends, yet if it do but keep me awake, it recompenses me well. I am now in the afternoon of my life, and then it is unwholesome to sleep. It is ill to look back, or give over in a course; but worse never to set out (*Letters*, pp. 93-4).

For Donne, to be ‘awake’ and active is preferable to ‘unwholesome’, or unfulfilling sleep. To have never ‘set out’ is worst of all. Seneca also held that the purpose of a ‘course’ must be completed in terms very close to the imagery of Donne’s verse letter:

[52] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, Vol. IV, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London: William Heineman, [1917] 1979), III, iv. 13.

> For men who leap from one purpose to another, or do not even leap but are carried over by a sort of hazard, — how can such wavering and unstable persons possess any good that is fixed and lasting? There are only a few who control themselves and their affairs by a guiding purpose; the rest do not proceed; they are merely swept along, like objects afloat in a river.[53]

For Seneca, movement without a cause is a symptom of a sick and restless mind, a trait of the melancholic who cannot abide the thoughts of solitude:

> Do you suppose that you alone have had this experience? Are you surprised, as if it were a novelty, that after such long travel and so many changes of scene you have not been able to shake off the gloom and heaviness of your mind? You need a change of soul rather than a change of climate. Though you may cross vast spaces of sea… your faults will follow you whithersoever you travel… What pleasure is there in seeing new lands? Or in surveying cities and spots of interest? All your bustle is useless. Do you ask why such flight does not help you? It is because you flee along with yourself. You must lay aside the burdens of the mind; until you do this, no place will satisfy you (XXVIII, p. 199).

Motion has no curative effect, Seneca suggests, when the 'burdens of the mind' are carried along with the body. Since Donne has rejected the traditional end points of social fulfilment, perpetual motion now appears to be the only available option. But for fear of falling into a crisis of personal identity, this motion must have a purpose. The stability of Aristotelian final causes thus supplies the rationale of a social impulse towards order. After all, as Aquinas notes, 'human acts, whether they be considered as actions, or as passions, receive their species from the end' (I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2). The poem concludes with the following lines:

> But, Sir, I'advise not you, I rather doe
> Say o'er those lessons, which I learn'd of you:
> Whom, free from German schismes, and lightnesse

[53] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, Vol. V, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London: William Heineman, [1920] 1970), XXIII, 163.

Of France, and faire Italies faithlesnesse,
Having from these suck'd all they had of worth,
And brought home that faith which you carried forth,
I thoroughly love. But if my selfe I'have wonne
To know my rules, I have, and you have (63-70).
DONNE

Wotton's continental travels as ambassador have exposed him to countries which, Donne suggests, embody the fractured nature of religious and social society against which he has been protesting: German 'schismes', French 'lightnesse', or changeability, and Italian 'faithlesnesse', or unreliability in matters of social and political contracts.[54] The resolution and end point of the poem's motion, like that of the other verse letters, is bound to the relationship between writer and correspondent. As Donne notes at the beginning, a metaphysical bonding of souls is realised through the act of writing, which orders and 'controls' his life. In spite of his own implied inactivity and Wotton's wandering, each of which can lead to a lack of purpose, the exchange of letters has replaced both public activity and private sloth as the true end of social life. By punning on his own name, Donne simultaneously points to the mingling of souls and the traces of himself Wotton now possesses in writing: 'I have, and you have DONNE'. But he also stresses that the letter and the friendship have always been the actual end of these speculations on society; without them he could 'ideate nothing which could please'. Again, this line can be read in two ways, given Donne's propensity towards punning on the word nothing. On the one hand, he suggests that without Wotton's letters the 'idea' or form of his own writing would cease to exist. On the other, the paradox of 'ideating nothing', since it is impossible to form an idea of nothing,

[54] Scodel explains the religious connotations of these lines as follows: 'the conjunction of German "schisms" and Italy's "faithlesnesse"… suggests the extremes of too much and too little faith, a rebellious German Protestantism that advocates *sola fideism* and a Roman Catholicism that supposedly repudiates faith altogether. The "lightnesse" ascribed to France refers on one level to the notorious fashion-mongering of the French, whom Donne calls "changeable Camelions" in "On his Mistris." In the context of continental religious divisions, however, "lightnesse" also suggests the mutability of France's religious commitments from the religious wars through the conversion of Henri of Navarre in 1593' (507).

might again be taken as a reference to Utopia, a ‘no place’, which could indeed ‘please’ in its provision of an ideal, yet unreal, state. If both writer and recipient are now familiar with these ‘rules’ (70) then the end has been attained, they have avoided the possibility of a disturbing isolation and can each claim that they are ‘Donne’.

In Donne’s ‘city’ poems, then, we can see that there exists a tension between received knowledge and reality, between ideal and actual. By subtly incorporating Aristotle’s model of processes and ends into his tropes of letter writing and friendship, whilst, at the same time, acknowledging the emergence of political individualism in civil society, Donne’s selective application of classical maxims reveals the extent to which Aristotelian teachings are not beyond scrutiny. Indeed, as the new philosophy gains ground and astronomy and physics are reconceived, the link between social life and natural order becomes even more difficult to maintain. This tension can be seen, for example, in another letter Donne wrote to Goodyer around 1609.[55] The letter is concerned with the relationship between Donne and Goodyer, with Donne’s life of retirement at Mitcham compared to his friend’s diverse movements at court. Like the verse letters, and his other poems, Donne uses images of distance and borrows from the new philosophy to represent his feelings. The metaphors he uses are almost identical to the ones from his verse epistle to Wotton, but this time the new astronomy is conspicuously present in his thinking. The letter begins as follows:

> I often compare not you and me, but the sphear in which your resolutions are, and my wheel; both I hope concentrique to God: for methinks the new Astronomie is thus appliable well, that we which are a little earth, should rather move towards God, then that he which is fulfilling, and can come no whither, should move towards us (*Letters*, p. 61).

[55] Based on the internal evidence, which suggests that Donne was suffering from the effects of social exile at Mitcham, the date of this letter has been suggested as 1609. Carey, *John Donne, The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 189.

Both new astronomy and old Aristotelian cosmology are joined together in this metaphor of friendship. The movements of Donne and Goodyer are figured as orbital motions which are concentric to God. Donne's restricted motions, his 'wheel', are compared to the more expansive rotations of Goodyer's 'sphear'. This is an expression of the order and perfection of the spherical universe, a comforting metaphor of connection. By equating God with the post-Copernican immovable sun, and man as a 'little earth' which is perpetually in motion towards the sun, he also appears to abide by the new developments in astronomy. At the same time, the notion that the 'little earth' should move towards the 'fulfilling' sun echoes the Aristotelian notion of causality. As in the epistle to Wotton, Donne figures his correspondent's active life as the antithesis of his own idle condition:

> To your life, nothing is old, nor new to mine; and as to that life, all stickings and hesitations seem stupid and stony, so to this, all fluid slipperinesses, and transitory migrations seem giddie and featherie. In that life one is ever in the porch or postern, going in or out, never within his house himself: It is a garment made of remnants, a life raveld out into ends, a line discontinued, and a number of small wretched points, uselesse, because they concurre not (pp. 61-2).

The dangers of passivity or activity without structure are again stressed here, with Donne lamenting 'stupid and stony' hesitations, whilst simultaneously warning against a transitory life 'raveld out into ends' and disconnected 'points'. In contrast to the earlier image of the geometrical perfection of concentric circles, Goodyer's motions are now transformed into the basic figures of geometry, 'wretched points' and 'a line discontinued', which must be joined in order to take on dimensions and represent forms. In the context of a newly uprooted earth, sharing a universe altered in shape with new planets and stars, 'transitory migration', rather than geometrical concurrence, serves as a topical analogy for Goodyer's travels. As we have seen, Galileo published his *Siderius Nuncius* in 1609, and Donne was quick to respond in this letter and in *Ignatius his Conclave* the following year. Donne's resolution of the problems of

passivity and ‘transitory migration’ is similar to that of the verse letter. ‘But truly wheresoever we are’, he writes, ‘if we can but tell our selves truly what and where we would be, we may make any state and place such’ (p. 63). Whereas the letter to Wotton fixed upon friendship as the only achievable social end, here Donne suggests that purpose can be attained by knowing ‘what and where we would be’. Given the new reality of a moving earth and its implications for individual identity, Donne’s metaphor suggests that knowing ‘what and where we would be’ remains problematic. Indeed, his solution adapts the earlier external image of earth and sun and instead compacts it within the confines of the human body:

> we are so composed, that if abundance, or glory scorch and melt us, we have an earthly cave, our bodies, to go into by consideration, and cool our selves: and if we be frozen, and contracted with lower and dark fortunes, we have within us a torch, a soul, lighter and warmer then any without: we are therefore our own umbrellas, and our own suns. (p. 63)

By relying upon inward retreat and illumination, these lines suggest that the fulfilment of an external end in society is unreachable. Donne’s concluding remark, therefore, registers a final sense of isolation and detachment from the world which departs from the redeeming bonds of friendship evident in the letter to Wotton.

By the time of *The First Anniversary*’s composition in 1611, the new philosophy had been explicitly aligned with the social community in Donne’s thinking:

> And new Philosophy cals all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sunne is lost, and th’earth, and no mans wit
> Can well direct him, where to looke for it (205-8).

A few lines later Donne suggests that if the hierarchy of the cosmos can be broken down, then so too can that of the state:

> Prince, Subiect, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
> For euery man alone thinkes he hath got
> To be a Phoenix, and that there can bee
> None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee. (215-218)

The mutual dependency and duty of sovereign and subject, father and son, is now threatened by a form of self-interested individualism, analogically connected to the collapse of correspondence and co-operation in both the heavens and the state. If each individual considers himself 'Phoenix'-like, then the idea that the preservation of the commonwealth depends upon a natural impulse towards self-effacement for the sake of the whole becomes unsustainable. Without natural order, Natural Law cannot hope to provide the authority which guides man's reason towards community. In this respect, Donne's imagination goes some way towards anticipating the position Thomas Hobbes will take towards Natural Law and the individual. At the beginning of the *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes stresses the artificiality of the state, describing it as being formed deliberately 'by Art' as an 'Artificial Man' with an 'Artificial Soul':

> For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which, the Soveraignty is an Artificiall Soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body.[56]

The individual in this state, Hobbes goes on to argue, does not follow a teleological impulse towards the greatest good, but rather human nature is defined by ceaseless motion: 'For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers…Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the

[56] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (London, 1651), 1.

later' (p. 47). Contrary to the classical republics, in this commonwealth, man is governed by a restless self-interest, 'to assure for ever, the way of his future desire' (p. 47). Like Donne before him, Hobbes conceptually links the movements of life with physics, albeit a reformulated one. Where Donne envisioned social movements according to the Aristotelian terms of potentiality and actuality, Hobbes' post-Galilean conception posits that movement no longer requires a final cause, and is generated from within individual bodies:

> because Going, Speaking, and the like Voluntary motions, depend alwayes upon a precedent thought of Whither, Which Way, and What; it is evident, that the Imagination is the first internall beginning of all Voluntary Motion…These small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR (p. 23).

Here, man's own 'Voluntary motions', his disparate 'endeavours' and desires now motivate his movements in tandem with the new mechanical philosophy; the efficient cause, or the self-willed actions of rational agents, replaces the predetermined final causality of Aristotle.[57] For Donne, however, the prospect of self-interest exists at the expense of the state, and is divisive rather than binding. This negative view of individualism is expounded at greater length in Donne's verse letter 'To the Countess of Salisbury' of August 1614:

> Since now, when all is wither'd, shrunke, and dri'd,
> All Vertue ebb'd out to a dead low tyde,
> All the worlds frame being crumbled into sand,
> Where every man thinks by himselfe to stand,
> Integritie, friendship, and confidence,
> (Ciments of greatnes) being vapor'd hence,
> And narrow man being fill'd with little shares,
> Court, Citie, Church, are all shops of small-wares,
> All having blowne to sparkes their noble fire,
> And drawne their sound gold-ingot into wyre;

[57] On the relationship between politics and science in Hobbes' writing see Thomas A. Spragens, *The Politics of Motion: the world of Thomas Hobbes* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1973); Lisa T. Sarasohn, 'Motion and Morality: Pierre Gassendi, Thomas Hobbes and the Mechanical World-View', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, No. 3 (1985): 363-79.

> All trying by a love of littlenesse
> To make abridgments, and to draw to lesse,
> Even that nothing, which at first we were (10-21)

Addressed to Catherine Howard (who had become the Countess of Salisbury through her marriage to William Cecil in 1608), this verse letter has attracted attention because of Donne's comment in lines 37-8 concerning his recycling of conceits that were intended to flatter female patrons. 'And if things like these have been said by me / Of others', Donne writes, 'call not that idolatry' (37-8). But the poem also uses images which mirror those he used to describe the world in the Anniversaries. In the same vein as the Anniversary poems, the world, in this epistle, is undergoing a process of material decay. Positive images of firmness, largeness, wholeness and unity are contrasted with fragmentation, smallness, dissipation and isolation. The world is 'wither'd, shrunke, and dri'd', its 'frame' is 'crumbled into sand', and all virtues have suffered a similar fate. These former virtues may be taken as 'Integritie, friendship, and confidence', the building blocks of community, the 'Ciments of greatness' which bind many parts into one whole. The traditional relationship between citizen and community is reconceived as a movement beginning with civil cohabitation and ending in self-interest, where 'every man thinks by himselfe to stand'. Such a static image of self-sufficiency is, for Donne, an illusion of stability.

Again, city, court and church are marked by their inability to unite. The mercantile metaphor of 'shops of small wares' locates each within the context of contemporary London, and as sellers of 'small wares' their 'goods' tend towards the eclectic, and serve no single purpose. A shop of small-wares in this period was equivalent to a haberdasher, in its provision of various items. Philip Massinger, in his play, *The Renegado*, wrote, for example, of a 'great Lady's' attraction to 'A Haberdasher of small wares'.[58] Having 'blowne to sparkes their noble fire' the unifying souls, or spirits of city, court and church, Donne suggests, have

[58] Philip Massinger, *The Renegado* (London, 1630), D3r.

been reduced to particles. According to the OED, to be possessed of a ‘spark’ of life, in this period, could mean ‘the vital or animating principle in man; a trace *of* life or vitality’. The expansive ‘fire’ of court, city and church has, therefore, been separated into ‘sparkes’ of individuality. Moreover, the ‘sound gold-ingot’, or solid bars of gold, which once represented the strength of these institutions has been subject to a gradual process of reduction, ‘drawne’ into ‘wyre’. The act of wire-drawing, as the OED notes, involved ‘drawing a piece of ductile metal through a series of holes of successively smaller diameter’; however it could also be used proverbially in the sense of forcing or stretching words or meaning ‘by subtle argument, often so as to distort the original intention; to reshape to suit one’s purpose’.[59] Here, then, there is the sense that language has been manipulated in the service of schismatic church, duplicitous court and fickle city. In this verse letter to a wealthy patron, friendship is no longer a means of stability, being, as Donne puts it, ‘vapor’d hence’. But to employ Aristotle’s teleology to account for a sense of social concord is also unworkable in the context of an altered physical universe. Instead of moving forward, the predominating conceit is one of retreat, ending with an image of man returned to a state of nothingness which, paradoxically, surpasses the nothing from which God first created life: ‘All trying by a love of littlenesse / To make abridgments, and to draw to lesse, / Even that nothing, which at first we were’.

This chapter has traced the way Donne’s early confidence in the final cause as the barometer of social life was challenged by a growing individualism which he describes in his writing through similes and metaphors that reflect contemporary changes in natural philosophy. But, as we will see in the next chapter, in the face of continuing developments towards a mechanical/atomistic view of nature, Donne does not entirely give way to pessimistic expressions of the world’s decay in his writing. Instead, his work retains the final

[59] See, for example, Ben Jonson in *The Alchemist:* ‘And shorten so your ears, against the hearing Of the next wire-drawn grace’. G.A. Wilkes, ed. *Ben Jonson: Five Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1981] 1999) II. iii. 87-8, 414.

cause as a symbol of order, and combines old knowledge with new, in pursuit of a plausible understanding of the universe which might reconcile with his own material and spiritual needs.

3. ‘The Compound Good’: Atomic Theory in ‘Obsequies to the Lord Harrington’ (1614)

Donne’s literary interest in the material world was particularly acute in 1614. ‘To the Countess of Salisbury’, with its emphasis upon the ‘world’s frame’ crumbling ‘into sand’, was written in this year, as was his ‘Obsequies to the Lord Harrington’. As we saw at the end of Chapter 2, Donne was aware of the imperfections of the Aristotelian tradition in the letter to Salisbury and in *The First Anniversary,* and he expressed this awareness through images of order and wholeness which give way to atomic fragmentation, decay and individualism in civil society. In this chapter, I suggest that, in his ‘Obsequies’, Donne’s attitude towards atomic theory is not quite so negative. Indeed, I argue that, from as early as his songs and sonnets, he developed an interest in this alternative model of the world which persisted well into his mature years, and supplied material for similes, metaphors and conceits concerned with various poetic objects. In his letter to Salisbury, Donne laments what he describes as a current ‘love of littlenesse’ and dreads the prospect of becoming ‘lesse’ than ‘that nothing, which at first we were’ (10-21). In the ‘Obsequies’, however, ideas of ‘littlenesse’ and of ‘nothing’ are not treated with the same degree of suspicion, but rather put to use in the service of a discourse on Harrington’s virtue. Given Donne’s predisposition towards order in his writing, and particularly towards final causality, how might atomism, which famously introduced an idea of unceasing change in the universe, reconcile with the desire for stability which consistently troubled him in ‘The Storme’, ‘The Calme’, and in his city works? In spite of the seeming incongruity of Aristotelian order and atomic flux, this chapter suggests that such a resolution is achieved in the ‘Obsequies’. By tracing Donne’s allusions to atomism, I suggest that his writing incorporates and reflects contemporary debates concerning the physical theories of the Aristotelian tradition and classical atomic theory.

I.

The first principle of ancient atomic theory is that all things in the universe are composed of minute and indivisible atoms, infinitely extended in empty space. Because of the atom's random, self-generated movements there is no place in this formulation for any kind of final causality. Originally proposed by the pre-Socratic philosophers Leucippius and Democritus, the theory was transmitted to Renaissance thinkers through Epicurus, and more broadly through the rediscovery and translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.[1] As an early mechanical philosophy, atomism relied upon motion as a means of theorising about the physical existence of matter, a position also held by Aristotle. However, although each theory acknowledged the inseparability of motion and material substance, they differed fundamentally in the causes they assigned to motion and its operations in the material world. For the Atomists, a vacuum was deemed 'a necessary component in the universe, but only insofar as it was the necessary condition that enabled bodies to move – without the void, they believed, there could be no motion'.[2] Travelling through the void at considerable speed, atoms were thought to form bodies through collision and coalescence. According to Epicurus, regardless of differences in weight, atoms moved downwards at an equal velocity, 'their trajectories being modified by impacts' which enabled the constitution of bodies.[3] Lucretius adapted this view and suggested that if atoms merely fell downwards owing to their weight, then everything in nature would do the same, 'like drops of rain, / Through utter void',

[1] Lucretius' book was rediscovered in a monastery in Southern Germany by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417. Stephen Greenblatt gives an account of the significance of this discovery in his most recent book, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (New York: Random House, 2011). Greenblatt's somewhat unconvincing assertion that the rediscovery of the *De Rerum Natura* effectively lit the spark of modernity has been vociferously disputed in a number of reviews. See for example, John Monfasani, review of *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began*, by Stephen Greenblatt, *Reviews in History*, review no. 1283 (July 2012); Jim Hinch, 'Why Stephen Greenblatt is Wrong — and Why It Matters', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (December 1st, 2012).
[2] Paul Harris, 'Nothing: A Users Manual', *Substance* 110 35, No. 2 (2006): 4.
[3] Pierre-Marie Morel, 'Epicureanism', in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Mary Louise Gill & Pierre Pellegrin (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 489.

meaning ‘no birth-shock would emerge / Out of collision, nothing be created’.[4] His solution to this problem was to theorise that atoms in motion, ‘at times / No one knows when or where… swerve a little’ (II, 219-220), creating the necessary collisions to form clusters of matter.

In Aristotle’s closed system, as noted in Chapter 1, objects required continuous contact in order to move, and causal movement accounted for all things in the universe. The fluctuating motion of atomic particles was, therefore, completely antithetical to his conception of physical reality. A vacuum was also contrary to his laws of nature, in which spaces were always filled with material substance. Aristotle objected to the notion of a three-dimensional void on the grounds that to have three dimensions constituted a body, and what was body could not be void. ‘It is generally assumed that whatever exists’, Aristotle writes, ‘exists “somewhere” (that is to say, “in some place”), in contrast to things which “are nowhere” because they are non-existent’.[5] He also used his laws of motion to disprove the possibility of a vacuum and argued that if a void were to suddenly appear it would be filled instantaneously with matter, eliminating the process of motion which was apparent and visible in nature. If motion in a vacuum was impossible, then it followed that a vacuum itself could not exist. These two opposing positions which figure the void as both the prerequisite and negation of motion acknowledge, nevertheless, that movement is fundamental to life – a life of natural order, according to Aristotle, and, for the Atomists, immeasurable flux. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Aristotle’s model of the universe was finite, fixed and adhered to strict hierarchical principles. All things in this system were comprised of the four elements, whose movements were predetermined according to the eventual realisation of their natural place (e.g. earth and water fall and air and fire rise towards their spheres). These natural laws coincided with his principles of matter and form, which held that matter existed physically

[4] Lucretius, *The Way Things are: The De Rerum Natura of Titus Lucretius* Carus, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968), Book II, 223-5, 58. Subsequent citations refer to this edition.
[5] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. P. H. Wicksteed & F. M. Cornford (London: William Heinemann, 1957), IV. I. 277.

and was synonymous with the process of 'becoming', whilst form remained the ideal to which matter aspired, and was equated with the state of 'being'. All things (matter) were thus believed to move towards a final natural end or purpose (form). Movement, moreover, had a definite point of origin at the limits of the universe, derived from the *primum mobile* (or first mover), and imparted from the heavens down to the earth. In this respect, a twofold motion of pushing (from the *primum mobile*) and pulling (towards a natural end) accounted for all movement within Aristotle's cosmology. The self-contained, prescribed nature of the Aristotelian universe differed greatly from atomic theory, whose primary characteristics of infinity, flux and void represented an unsettling irregularity in the face of the orderly, rational system inherited by Christian Europe.

The controversy which surrounded atomism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which made the name of Epicurus synonymous with atheism and immorality, was rooted primarily in two assumptions of atomic theory.[6] Firstly, the notion that nothing can come out of nothing (*ex nihilo nihil fit*) presupposed that the physical universe had always existed and would continue to do so, directly contravening both Genesis and the doctrine, widely accepted in Christian countries, of the last judgement. For the Atomists, as we have seen, generation and dissolution were caused by the arbitrary movement, collision and separation of atoms. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the Atomists argued that since all things were composed of matter, the soul, just like the body, would dissolve into atoms after death and re-join the universal flux. Man should, therefore, relinquish the fear of his own mortality, since there was no judgement to be had after death. 'This heresy of "mortalism", David A. Hedrich Hirsch argues, 'taken together with Lucretius's fervent attack

[6] Christophe Gellard and Aurelien Robert note that 'despite the fact that many indirect sources were present during the Middle Ages, there were no new atomist theories of matter, nor detailed exegesis of ancient ideas, until the 12th century. One of the main reasons for this absence was the assimilation of Epicureanism with heresy'. Epicurus' 'heresy' stemmed, in large part, from unfavourable and misrepresentative accounts of his philosophical commitment to pleasure. Gellard & Robert, *Atomism in Late Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 4.

on conventional religion, caused later generations to view the Atomists (often unjustly) as atheistic rebels'.[7] Atomic theory, nevertheless, enjoyed a resurgence in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, as Robert Kargon suggests,

> was a mechanical philosophy which along with Cartesianism, captured the imaginations of natural philosophers of the XVIIth century, and replaced the moribund Aristotelian world view. The history of atomism, therefore, provides a case study in the rise of a new world picture, so different from the view of the previous centuries.[8]

Before the wider dissemination of mechanical explanations of nature, which originated with Descartes, Hobbes and Gassendi in the seventeenth century, atomic theory was shared by an earlier group of scientifically minded individuals who gathered around Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. This group were contemporaries of Donne and the bulk of its members were acknowledged adherents of atomism. Aside from Northumberland, popularly dubbed the 'wizard Earl' because of his experimental activities, they included Sir Walter Raleigh, the mathematician and scientist Thomas Hariot, George Chapman, Christopher Marlowe, the physicist Walter Warner, and Nicholas Hill, who published a treatise on atomism entitled *Philosophia Epicurea, Democritiana, Theophrastica* (Paris, 1601).[9]

Following Epicurus, Hariot believed that the 'physical qualities of gross bodies are the result of the magnitude, shape, and motion of the constituent atoms or corpuscles compounded of them' (p. 130). Motion, for Hariot, is the key to physical reality, and he states that 'Nothing is done without motion' and that 'there is no motion without a cause. Out of

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[7] David A. Hedrich Hirsch, 'Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory', *Studies in English Literature*, *1500-1900* 31, No. 1 *The English Renaissance* (Winter, 1991): 71.

[8] Robert Kargon, 'Thomas Hariot, the Northumberland Circle and Early Atomism in England', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1966): 128. See also, Christoph Meinel, 'Early Seventeenth-Century Atomism: Theory, Epistemology, and the Insufficiency of Experiment', *Isis* 79, No. 1 (Mar., 1988): 85.

[9] For an account of this group, sometimes referred to as 'The School of Night' see Robert Kargon, *Atomism in England from Hariot to Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), Chapters 2-4.

nothing comes nothing'.[10] Similarly, Northumberland foregrounds motion as central to all things, and in the *Advice to his Son* (1609), he stresses the importance of a body's internal movement:

> The Doctrine of Motion delivereth elements certainly demonstrative, for all other parts of natural philosophy, . . . as such that layeth open the structure of all organical engines artificial, whether they be by weight, springs, fire, air, wind, water, vacuity, rariety, density, upon what grounds soever they be caused or for what use soever invented, either civil, nautical or military.[11]

Dissatisfaction with Aristotelian concepts of motion can be detected in the thoughts of both Hariot and Northumberland. The idea that 'nothing is done without motion' seeks to establish a first principle of movement. But rather than resort, with Aristotle, to a complex system of motions which move towards a predetermined purpose and trace their origins to a prime mover at the ends of the universe, motion is now autonomous, local and generated from within. The problem of precisely how atoms were invested with a local motive force, however, remained a point of contention which concerned not only natural philosophers, but also, as I will argue, Donne. Hariot, like Epicurus and Lucretius, located agency in the changing nature and different forms of atoms themselves and their interactions with the void in creating bodies. As Kargon puts it,

> Homogeneous bodies were thought by Hariot to have atoms of similar shape and in uniform density. The denser bodies consist of atoms touching on all sides, whereas lighter bodies have relatively more void space inter-mixed. Chemical alterations resulting in weight changes are caused by the interposition of smaller atoms into the vacua between larger ones. Brittle and soft bodies differ primarily in the magnitude and shape of the component particles (p. 131).

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[10] Quoted in Kargon, 130.

[11] Henry Percy, *Advice to his Son*, ed. G. B. Harrison (Ernest Benn, 1930), 67.

Francis Bacon, who eventually rejected atomism, began from a similar place as Hariot and 'saw atoms as particles possessing "matter, form, dimension, place, resistance, appetite, motion and emanation"'.[12] Later, he 'moved toward a neo-Paracelsian position, where all material bodies are seen as containing "spirits or pneumaticalls" in dynamic interaction with the heterogeneous parts of tangible matter' (p. 258). Bacon's 'spirits', in the Neoplatonic tradition, are an immaterial solution to the problem of the material movement of atoms which keeps intact the principle of mechanical motion. The existence of an internal source of movement was, however, difficult to prove, and in the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon acknowledges the conceptual difficulty of imagining atomic motion without a first cause or 'mind':

> Democritus and Epicurus when they proclaimed their doctrine of atoms, were tolerated so far by some of the more subtle wits; but when they proceeded to assert that the fabric of the universe itself had come together through the fortuitous concourse of the atoms, without a mind, they were met with universal ridicule. Thus so far are physical causes from drawing men from God and Providence, that contrariwise, those philosophers who have been occupied in searching them out can find no issue but by resorting to God and Providence at the last.[13]

Bacon sought to disentangle natural philosophy from theology and his scientific methodology, in general, avoided 'resorting to God' in order to resolve questions of a material nature.

Nicholas Hill, however, had no such scruples and suggested that God's presence flowed through all points of matter. Kargon argues that Hill's *Philosophia Epicurea* (1601) is a 'confused self-contradictory melange' of a number of philosophical theories, blending 'the thought of the atomists, Aristotle, Nicholas of Cusa, the fabled Hermes Trismegistus, Bruno,

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[12] Quoted in Stephen Clucas, '"The Infinite Variety of Formes and Magnitudes": 16th- and 17th-Century English Corpuscular Philosophy and Aristotelian Theories of Matter and Form', *Early Science and Medicine* 2, No. 3 (1997): 257.

[13] Francis Bacon, *Collected Works of Francis Bacon*; *Literary Works*, eds. James Spedding & Robert Leslie Ellis (London: Routledge [1875] 1996), 365.

Gilbert, and Copernicus' (p. 135). Using these eclectic sources, Hill's work advocates the atomic composition of the universe, and claims that the motion and cohesion of particles is caused by *vis radiativa*, a force which flows through the empty space between atoms and whose properties resemble that of light.[14] For Hill, *vis* is analogous to the action of God in nature which sets all things in motion, and is

> the efficient, active, universal cause, and the simple absolute essence. The foundation and root of all material power is God, to whose name everything bends its knee, and to whom all power and energy returns, who binds the wandering planets together into a structure, and contains in himself the first principles of all species.[15]

Although initial reactions to Hill's book ranged from ridicule to indifference, with the publication of the reprint it began to attract much more attention. As Stuart Gillespie observes,

> following a 1619 reprint the book was taken somewhat more seriously, and condemned by the French monk Marin Mersenne in his attack on Bruno and the deists in the 1620s. Then, with Galileo and Gassendi's promotion of atomism, Hill's reputation staged a posthumous recovery.[16]

Kargon's dismissive valuation of Hill's work is perhaps a little unfair in projecting modern empirical scientific standards onto a treatise which did not have such methods at its heart. Indeed, the merging of old and new conceptions of natural philosophy was commonplace in this transitional period in the history of science. Theology, Aristotelian forms, Platonic 'souls' and mechanical philosophy could be regarded as complementary vehicles in the

[14] The concept of *vis radiativa*, light as an originating force of creation, was inherited from medieval philosophy. See Stephen Clucas, 'Corpuscular Matter Theory in the Northumberland Circle', in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, eds. Christoph Herbert Lüthy, John Emery Murdoch, William Royall Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 181-209.
[15] Quoted in Clucas, 266.
[16] Stuart Gillespie, 'Lucretius in the English Renaissance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, eds. Stuart Gillespie & Philip R. Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 244.

pursuit of the universe's true nature. Hill's eclectic theorisation of a first cause of motion, as I will go on to argue, is concomitant with Donne's own heterogeneous atomic speculations in the 'Obsequies'.

Donne's knowledge of both ancient atomic theory and its re-invigorated late sixteenth-century manifestation is without question. According to Geoffrey Keynes's record, Donne's library includes a considerable number of books on contemporary and classical science, many of which addressed atomic theory.[17] In his satirical Latin text *The Courtiers Library* (ca. 1603-11), Donne includes a mocking distortion of Hill's *Philosophia Epicurea*, a copy of which he owned, and onto which he inscribed his signature over that of the previous owner, Ben Jonson.[18] Piers Brown argues that 'the complete absence of notes on the blank interleaved pages [of Donne's copy of Hill's book] suggests… that its readers may have failed to transform that content into useful knowledge' (p. 838). Donne's treatment of Hill in *The Courtiers Library* suggests otherwise. While the context of this poem's reference to Hill is satirical, I would suggest that this does not necessarily preclude Donne's taking elements of the book seriously elsewhere. Indeed, it was somewhat fashionable to mock those works which dabbled in atomism, as evidenced by Ben Jonson's own comments on Hill in his poem 'On the Famous Voyage'.[19] Donne's personal association with members of the Northumberland circle also argues convincingly for his exposure to heterodox contemporary ideas. Northumberland himself was closely connected to Donne and famously delivered a

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[17] Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. Donne*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), appendix IV, 258-79. Hirsch argues that certain of the texts listed by Keynes most likely deal with atomism. He locates these works in Keynes' inventory as entries: L11, L19, L32, L39, L84, L102, and L113 (91).

[18] On the inclusion of this book in *The Courtier's Library* see Piers Brown, '"Hac ex consilio meo via progredieris": Courtly Reading and Secretarial Mediation in Donne's The Courtier's Library', *Renaissance Quarterly* 61, No. 3 (2008): 833-866. No firm date has been assigned to the text.

[19] Ben Jonson, *Poems*, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), lines 124-31, 82.

letter from him to Sir Henry More, following Donne's elopement with his daughter Ann.[20] Moreover, Marjorie Hope Nicolson suggests that Donne and Kepler's mutual acknowledgement of one another's work may have been mediated by Hariot.[21] Donne's receptivity to atomism as a literary device is certainly clear when we consider the scepticism of his early years. His songs and sonnets, as well as representing an irreverent departure from the Petrarchan style, engage directly with the specific scientific problems which underpinned contemporary understandings of physical reality.[22]

In 'Woman's Constancy', for example, Donne invokes natural change to affirm the inconstancy of human beings, and more particularly the poet and his lover.[23] The poem is framed as a series of questions which anticipate the inconstant woman's responses:

> Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day,
> To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?
> Wilt thou Antedate some new made vow?
>   Or say that now
> We are not just those persons, which we were?
> Or, that oathes made in reverentiall feare
> Of Love, and his wrath, any may forsweare?
> Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
> So lovers contracts, images of those,
> Binde but till sleep, deaths image, them unloose? (1-10)

Here, the speaker builds towards a picture of flux, of spiritual and bodily impermanence, when he imagines the woman saying, 'We are not just those persons which we were' (5). As Theodore Redpath notes, Donne 'imagines a preposterously sophistical argument based on

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[20] Bald, *John Donne, a Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 133-4.
[21] Donne referred to Kepler in *Ignatius his Conclave* and Kepler referred to Donne in the *Somnium*. See Marjorie Hope Nicolson, "Kepler, the *Somnium*, and John Donne," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940): 259-80.
[22] Louis Bredvold argues that scepticism is the 'most striking quality of Donne's earlier poems', that, at this point in his life, his 'conception of nature' departs from the accepted view, and 'he refers constantly to nature, not as a source of such universal and rational principles as should check or guide desires, but as the justification of individual desires, as the denial of all universal moral law'. Louis I. Bredvold, 'The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1923): 471.
[23] All references to the songs and sonnets are taken from *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert J. Grierson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912).

the philosophical view that flux excludes personal identity. The doctrine of total flux goes back of, of course, to Heraclitus, and probably beyond'.[24] The traditional enduring nature of a lovers' relationship suggested by 'feare', 'love', 'vows', and 'marriage' gives way to frequent change, to 'contracts' which last only a single night before 'sleep, deaths image, them unloose'. Donne's speaker, or his mistress', apparent rejection of moral laws in favour of an outlook in which vows and oaths to love may easily be broken, is justified by a far-fetched comparison to an altered physical universe, in which Aristotelian explanations of physics are now questionable. For, in the following lines, Donne wittily inverts Aristotle's axiom that all things develop towards some definite purpose: 'Or, your owne end to Justifie, / For having purpos'd change and falsehood; you / Can have no way but falsehood to be true?' (11-13). Like Aristotle's rigid law of final causality the speaker 'can have no way' but change or 'falsehood' as a natural end. These lines paradoxically envision the end of change and motion in nature to be change itself, rather than the realisation of a fixed and final form. If the end of change is change, then the implication here is that such motions are infinite, a position to which Donne's speaker humorously assents by the poem's end:

> Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
> Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
> Which I abstaine to doe,
> For by to morrow I may thinke so too (14-17).

The language of rhetorical and legal argument, 'dispute', 'conquer', 'abstaine', is rendered ineffectual in a natural world without laws. The inconstant woman thus justifies her behaviour by applying distorted arguments about the natural world to questions of sex. By rejecting a facet of natural and moral philosophy which underpinned Aristotle's hierarchical

[24] Theodore Redpath, ed. *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983 [1956]), 132.

universal system, Donne's female addressee irreverently draws from a worldview which no longer seeks clarification in absolutes, but locates movement within individual bodies themselves.

In 'The Broken Heart' Donne goes further in his experiments with a mechanical imagery which, like Hariot and Northumberland's inquiries, probes the recesses within bodies to find their motive force. The poem's principal conceit, love breaking the speaker's heart, is repeatedly imagined through several metaphors of physical fragmentation: love 'decayes' (3), 'whole rankes' are divided and cut down by a love which is like 'chain'd shot' (15), and finally, the climactic image of the last stanza, love 'At one first blow did shiver' (24) his heart like glass. In this stanza Donne broaches a problem which resurfaces time and again in his work, the question of whether any thing can be reduced to nothing:

> Yet nothing can to nothing fall,
>   Nor any place be empty quite;
> Therefore I thinke my breast hath all
>   Those peeces still, though they be not unite;
> And now as broken glasses show
> A hundred lesser faces, so
>   My ragges of heart can like, wish, and adore,
>   But after one such love, can love no more (25-32).

Donne's initial statement here that 'nothing can to nothing fall, / Nor any place be empty quite' echoes the orthodox Scholastic maxim, adapted from Aristotle, that 'nature abhors a vacuum', and reinforces his often obsessive tendency to deny the possibility of a void.[25] Moreover, as Roy Booth observes, the allusion to 'the tag *de nihilo nihilum*' in line 25 is designed to stress 'that the annihilation of matter was impossible'.[26] In his religious writings,

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[25] On the origins of the phrase 'nature abhors a vacuum', see Edward Grant, *Much Ado About Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 67-95.

[26] Roy Booth, 'John Donne, Ideating Nothing', *The Journal of the English Association* 37, No. 159 (Autumn 1988): 203-15. On Donne's obsession with nothing Sean Ford argues that the riddling nature of 'negative theology', in which language is constrained to positively affirm things that have no material existence, appealed

Donne is often at pains to stress the impossibility of desiring or experiencing nothing. 'How invisible, how unintelligible a thing … is this nothing!' he exclaimed in a sermon preached at the Spital in 1622, 'It is a state (if a man may call it a state) that the devil himself in the midst his torments, cannot wish. No man can, the devil himself cannot, advisedly, deliberately, wish himself to be nothing'.[27] But in the following lines of 'The Broken Heart', in which he imagines his heart broken up into disunited particles, Donne complicates this Aristotelian formulation. The assertion that no place can 'be empty quite', or not completely empty, admits the possibility of a partial emptiness, since his collapsed and fragmented heart still occupies the same space as before, his 'breast hath all / those peeces still.' The implication, then, is that within the imagined cavity of the speaker's 'breast', there remains the scattered fragments of heart, but also empty space. As we have seen, Aristotle argued that should a vacuum theoretically come into being, then it would be filled immediately with material substance. Instead of becoming a continuous plenum (a space completely full and without void), remade from surrounding matter, it is significant that here Donne's pieces of heart are both disunited and observable as autonomous and self-moving shards of a mirror which can 'like, wish and adore'. Like Hariot's and Bacon's earlier formulations, agency resides in the fragments themselves. So, rather than concluding the poem with a metaphor of nature's indivisible unity in the Aristotelian tradition, Donne's witty conceit bears a much closer resemblance to atomic theory. Donne thus presents the seemingly conventional feelings of sexual rejection in 'The Broken Heart' in terms of atomic imagery, of moving particles and void. For readers of 'Woman's Constancy' and 'The Broken Heart', appreciation comes with unravelling Donne's far-fetched similes and metaphors. In this respect, reaching each poem's respective conclusion, concerning sexual promiscuity and rejection, requires an intellectual

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to his love of paradox and complex poetic conceits. Nothing, Ford observes, is 'a noun that is a thing that is no thing'. Sean Ford, 'Nothing's Paradox in Donne's "Negative Love" and "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day"', *Quidditas* 22 (2001): 104.

[27] George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds. *The Sermons of John Donne* (California: University of California Press, 1962), IV, 101.

engagement with Aristotelian and atomic physical systems and an understanding of their implications.

By 1609, however, during his years of inactivity and dependence, a body liberated from the old system of movement is, for Donne, no longer presented in such playful terms. In his verse letter 'To the Countess of Bedford' ('To have written then'), an end or a purpose, provided by a stable cosmological system, is something to be craved:

> As new Philosophy arrests the Sunne,
> And bids the passive earth about it runne,
> So wee have dull'd our minde, it hath no ends;
> Onely the bodie's busie… (37-40).

Donne's position here may be explained by the genre of the poem and the nature of the addressee. Writing a poem of patronage necessarily requires that more careful and orthodox opinions are expressed than those of the experimental and anonymous songs and sonnets, especially since Lady Bedford was known for her Puritan sympathies. In this passage, 'new Philosophy' has fixed the sun as the centre of the universe, and the earth, mirroring the 'dull'd' minds and active bodies of its occupants, runs, but remains 'passive' in its course, given over to a new circuitous movement ordained by nature. With the sun as an analogue of the mind and the earth as body, Donne here presents Bedford with a moralistic picture of bodily action and spiritual dearth. Moreover, the earth and the body lack the mediation of a soul and the teleological security of ethical and physical finality: 'the minde' 'hath no ends'. Indeed, the image of a 'body' remaining 'busie' although released from the Aristotelian system is highly suggestive of a free mechanical motion.

With Donne's completion of the *First Anniversary* two years later, the positive nature of his youthful scepticism had entirely given way to pessimistic expressions of the world's decay. Instead of representing a flawed model of physical reality, the possible unravelling of

the Aristotelian and Platonic cosmologies is portrayed in terms of a frightening loss of stability. The loss of a sense of purposeful motion in 'Woman's Constancy' is now lamented, since man's active 'commerce' and 'trafique' with the heavens, and the 'art' of sympathetic correspondence with the stars is lost:

> The art is lost, and correspondence too.
> For heauen giues little, and the earth takes lesse,
> And man least knowes their trade, and purposes.
> If this commerce twixt heauen and earth were not
> Embarr'd, and all this trafique quite forgot… (396-400)

The language of mercantilism and exchange – 'give', 'take', 'trade', 'commerce', 'Embarr'd', 'trafique' – reinforces a sense of mutual gain and also loss between the heavens and the earth.[28] No final profit can be achieved now that the motive 'push' and 'pull', 'give' and 'take', of traditional motions have ceased to guide the path of man. The wealth of new knowledge may promise riches, but Donne suggests here that it can only impoverish the earth. There is much to be risked in new philosophy as in commerce.

At an earlier point in the poem, atomic theory itself is identified with material decay as the world is reduced to indivisible particles, or 'Atomis':

> And freely men confesse, that this world's spent,
> When in the Planets, and the Firmament
> They seeke so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out againe to'his Atomis.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone (209-13).

Unlike the active atoms of 'The Broken Heart', the composite particles of the earth here 'crumble' passively into pieces and lose 'all cohaerance'. Significantly, since the world is 'spent', there is no sense that these atoms will recombine; they 'crumble out' but do not unite

[28] On the economic implications of this poem see Michelle Solomon, 'Trafique: A Consideration of John Donne's The First Anniversary an Anatomie of the World', *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 22 (2003): 59-75.

to create new bodies. Such sentiments suggest that Donne returns to orthodoxy in his representations of new philosophy and atomic theory. Stephen Clucas, for example, notes Donne's intellectual attachment to the Aristotelian tradition, and suggests that 'atomism functioned as part of a moral typology of the discontinuous and the continuous in nature: the separate, the divided, the multiple, are perceived as evil, and the homogeneous, united and complete are perceived as good'.[29] David Hirsch, however, finds in Donne's writing a fascination with the atom's irreducibility, which 'could, in part, allay his persistent materialistic anxieties surrounding death and resurrection' (p. 69). He argues that *The First Anniversary* 'is a search for the atomi of the world, physical relics which, as emaciated or skeletal remains or even immutable atomic elements, will survive with the soul despite death's disassembly' (p. 76). This dissection, Hirsch suggests, is carried out by Donne since 'the atom as the limit to the self's deconstruction might also serve as the origin of that self's reconstruction' (p. 71). Departing from Hirsch's argument, I suggest that it is not the atom's indivisibility that appeals to Donne's imagination, but its motion, since renewed interest in mechanical philosophies at this time were grounded upon an understanding that motion was the key to physical being. Like the members of the Northumberland circle, Donne was aware of the insufficiency of Aristotle's laws of physics and motion. As we have seen, he addressed this issue in his early poetry ('Woman's Constancy' and 'The Broken Heart') with a certain playfulness which gave way to more sombre reflections in his later verse ('To the Countess of Bedford' and *The First Anniversary*). Such a change can be seen as reflecting a growing unease, since atomic suggestions of void, libertinism and an atheistic rejection of the afterlife were difficult to reconcile with a Christian outlook. Still, atomism remained, for Donne, an attractive source of figurative inspiration.

[29] Clucas also notes the seventeenth-century philosophical and poetic impulse to locate God as the unifying force of an atomic universe. However, he sees Donne's atomic imagery as a negative 'typology', and thus discounts the idea that he might have participated in such intellectual experiments. Stephen Clucas, 'Poetic atomism in seventeenth century England: Henry More, Thomas Traherne' and "scientific imagination"', *Renaissance Studies* 5, No. 3 (1991): 329.

In what follows I suggest that the notion of finding a ‘law’, or a first principle of motion with which to control atomic flux, is reflected in Donne’s writing on atomic theory. In this, he was very much in tune with figures such as Bacon and Hill who grappled with the question at greater length. Hirsch notes that the ‘orthodox interpretation’ of the Anniversary poems is that they not only chart universal decay, but also ‘search for the immortal soul of the world’ (p. 76). I argue that in his later dedicatory poem, ‘Obsequies to the Lord Harrington’, Donne seeks to reconcile the imagery of atomic theory with a Neoplatonic ideal of the world’s soul, as a means of extravagant praise for the deceased. In this respect, Donne unites the imagery of philosophical materialism with his idealised subject in a much more successful way than in the Anniversary poems.

II.

Donne composed ‘Obsequies to the Lord Harrington’ in 1614 to commemorate the death of Sir John Harrington, younger brother of his frequent patron Lucy, Countess of Bedford. Harrington was a close friend of Prince Henry (who died in 1612) and he shared the Puritanism and pro-war leanings of the Prince’s court. Donne may have felt an obligation to write the obsequy, given his desire to maintain a relationship with the Countess of Bedford. But he also sought the patronage of the King, whose religious and political positions were opposed to those of the Prince. The need for political sensitivity in light of these conflicting interests and because of the public nature of funeral elegies may account for the obliquity with which Donne presents Harrington’s virtues throughout the poem. As Claude J. Summers notes, ‘Donne’s principal method of praise is by negative formulas and indirection, and this practice (coupled with the poem’s accusatory tone) subtly reveals the poet’s deep seated

ambivalence about Harrington's accomplishments'.[30] The poem has inspired little critical commentary and the attention it has received is most often disparaging of its apparent lack of sympathy or genuine feeling for its subject. Ted Larry Pebworth notes that

> The adverse remarks have centred on what critics have judged to be the strained nature of the poem's conceits and on its author's apparent lack of intimacy and personal involvement with its subject, causing Donne to write (as they suppose) a mechanical, sterilely intellectual and calculatedly mercenary exercise devoid of personal feeling.[31]

Pebworth concludes that, given Harrington's allegiance to the court of Prince Henry, and thus to political values which were the antithesis of Donne's own, the poem is concerned more with political subversion than outright praise for the departed. Among those critics who have responded positively to the poem, Barbara Lewalski observes that it is a 'very formal personal meditation' in which the poet seeks 'to understand more about virtue' through a contemplation of Harrington's qualities.[32] Philip Kolin has also pointed to the poem's meditative structure and its reconciliation of the imagery of measurement, space and perception with a devotional theme.[33] In terms of genre, Summers notes that in the traditional English elegy 'praise for the deceased is often the most important element of the poem and is usually accomplished by rehearsing biographical details, but Donne typically praises his subjects in such a way as to efface their individual qualities and rarely does more than allude

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[30] Claude J. Summers, 'The Epicede and Obsequy', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 296.

[31] Ted Larry Pebworth, '"Let Me Here Use That Freedome": Subversive Representation in John Donne's "Obsequies to the Lord Harington"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 91, No.1 (1992 Jan.): 18.

[32] Barbara Lewalski*, Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 67-8. Noting the poem's unpopularity, Ann Hurley argues that it must be read, not from the perspective of a single 'voice', but within its cultural and social contexts. Ann Hurley, 'Colliding Discourses: John Donne's "Obsequies to the Lord Harington" and the New Historicism', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renascence et Reforme* 18, No 3. (1994): 57. To this end, she also concludes that, 'the historical Donne functions in the poem not as an individual situated in a particular time period, but rather as a link between two areas of discourse, the socially sanctioned, ecclesiastical rhetoric of Bible, king, and court, and the daring radical world of exploration and risk'. Ann Hurley, *John Donne's Poetry and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 123-4.

[33] Philip Kolin, 'Donne's "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington": Theme, Structure, and Image', *Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South* 13 (1974): 70.

to biographical details' (p. 288). Instead, Donne's funeral poems 'find in the death of an individual an opportunity to explore questions of religious or philosophical truth, while also fulfilling the epideictic obligations of the elegiac mode' (p. 289). Considering the 'Obsequies'' themes of atomism, mortality, time and space, in what follows I suggest that Donne's elegy for Harrington experiments with the language and ideas of contemporary science as rhetorical devices for simulating grief and admiration for the deceased. The context of the poem's composition is not only social and political, but also philosophical.

On the poem's intellectual continuity, critics have been similarly unconvinced of its merits. For example, Terry Sherwood finds the speaker unable to 'follow his own epistemological implications fully', whilst Carey argues that the complexity of Donne's argument 'blew the poem apart', and that his inclusion of a 'modern theory about the streamy nature of consciousness and the extinction of human identity' was like inserting 'a jet engine inside a horse'.[34] Contrary to these opinions, I argue that 'Obsequies' is, in fact, unified in its drawing together of intellectual imagery concerning the relationship between a seemingly fragmented earth and distant heaven. As Dennis Kay argues, Donne created 'a new form of English elegy whose canons of decorum were based not on external, formal details but on an imaginative coherence whose purpose was consolatory and panegyric'.[35] Throughout the poem Donne employs metaphors and similes derived from a world composed of parts and absences and in which reality is a flux of motion and time, but this is a condition which he seeks to apprehend and bring to order through the example of Harrington. The discursive, questioning tone of the poem initially centres on the problem of numbering and defining the virtues of one who died so young, before finally resolving into a suitable form of panegyric which frames Harrington as a moral compass for those he has left behind in a corrupt world.

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[34] John Carey, *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), 188. Terry Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: a Study of John Donne's Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 113.
[35] Dennis Kay, *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 100-1.

In this respect, Harrington's fluid virtue is associated, throughout the first part of the poem, with the fluctuating matter of the world. The poem's far-fetched conceits can thus be read as an initial identification of nature and virtue as a flux of particles, followed by two extended metaphors concerning this problem of change and movement, namely a philosophical digression on angels and on the motion of clocks. In each case Donne's similes, metaphors and conceits are decidedly materialistic.

The poem begins with a meditation on the gradual ascension of Harrington's soul towards heaven. Donne apostrophises the departed soul as follows:

> If looking vp to heauen, or downe to vs
> Thou findst that any way is peruious
> Twixt heauen and earth, and that mens actions doe
> Come to your knowledge, and affections too,
> See, and with ioye, mee to that good degree
> Of goodnesse growne, that I can study thee
> And, by those Meditations refind
> Can vnapparrell and enlarge my mind
> And so can make by this soft Extasy
> This place a Mapp of heauen, my selfe of thee (5-14).

The imagery of this passage refers to both earthly and ethereal states. Donne's lines suggest that if looking 'vp to heauen, or downe' to Donne's position through the midpoint 'twixt heauen and earth', Harrington might gain 'knowledge' of 'mens actions', or moral progress, as his soul climbs upwards.[36] Specifically, it is 'knowledge' of himself which Donne hopes to transmit, so that he might share in the reflected 'goodnesse' of his idealised subject. This communication might be achieved if Donne can 'vnapparrell and enlarge' his mind through an 'Extasy' which will transcend the border between the world and the heavens. That Donne

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[36] Robbins substitutes 'God' for 'Heaven' in line 5, using as his copy-text for the 'Obsequies' the Harley Manuscript. 4955 (Newcastle) (*H49*). He argues that 'heaven' here is illogical, since 'being in Heaven already, Harington can hardly look "up to" it' (778). The *Variorum* choice of 'heaven' is based on the O'Flahertie MS (*O'F*). The use of 'heaven' is not inconsistent with the meaning of the poem, since Harrington's soul is on its way towards heaven and God, in the same way as Donne conceived of the passage of Elizabeth Drury's soul to heaven in the *Second Anniversary*.

refers to ‘Extasy’ suggests metaphysical transport, a movement out of his body to participate in a spiritual consciousness of heaven in imitation of Harrington. This ‘Extasy’ enables knowledge of those things that Harrington’s soul has witnessed; as Donne notes, he wishes to become a ‘Mapp’ of his subject and so the ecstasy is one in which they both participate. The cosmologically expansive catachrestic tropes of this opening are facilitated through Donne’s representation of rapture; his body remains on earth and his mind travels along with Harrington. This extravagant language is designed as praise for the deceased, a trope of the departed’s lasting influence on those he has left behind. But it also betrays an overriding preoccupation with reflection on physical, as well as immaterial things, and places the speaker at the centre of events in the poem, as he participates in a privileged metaphysical dialogue with the dead.

Communication with the soul of Harrington in order to gain knowledge, to ‘study’ and ‘enlarge’ his mind, is Donne’s object, and, to this end, the poem suggests orientation, ‘looking’ ‘vp’, ‘downe’ and between, in order to ‘see’. In creating a ‘Mapp’ of heaven on earth, a reproduction of the place in which Harrington’s soul resides, Donne represents this ‘peruious’ way between heaven and earth through the use of physical language.[37] To depict reality, Donne has to begin from a position of observation. Unlike the Anniversary poems, which bear witness to the dissolution of the world, here Donne’s tone (addressing Harrington directly) suggests measured observation rather than despair. In particular, this attitude represents a departure from the *Second Anniversary* (1612), which, although sharing many of the ‘Obsequies’’ themes, chooses to forsake the material world. In the *Second Anniversary*, Donne, in his pessimism, abandons sensory perception as a means of acquiring knowledge, when he asks, ‘When wilt thou shake of this Pedantry, / Of being taught by sense, and Fantasy?’ (291-2). The ‘Obsequies’, by contrast, continues to pursue the theme of

[37] Ann Hurley argues that images of measurement ‘dominate’ the poem which is concerned with ‘questions of spiritual and psychic location’ (122).

communication with Harrington through the language of physical investigation in a remarkable passage which experiments with ideas of temporal and spatial stasis.

Donne imagines that Harrington's soul 'sees' him at midnight, as it is poised between heaven and earth and night and day: 'Thou seest mee here at Midnight' (15) 'Thou at this Midnight seest mee' (25). Written in the present tense, these lines create the effect of temporal suspension, and framed between them Donne imagines a city in stasis, devoid of all activity, when 'all minds devest / To morrows businesse' (16-17). Midnight, as 'Times dead low water' (16), represents a transitional period in which time seems to stand still, allowing Donne to arrest the moment. This enables him to imagine labourers and 'Clyents' swapping the bustle of work and court for rest, and a condemned man 'practice dying by a little sleep' (24). Donne frequently associates midnight and sleep with death in his sermons and poems such as 'A Nocturnal upon St Lucy's Day'.[38] But midnight can also be a time for self-examination, free from the distractions illuminated by daylight.[39] In a sermon of 1629, preached at St. Paul's in the evening, for example, Donne issued a challenge to atheists to wake at midnight 'and then dark and alone, Hear God ask thee then, remember that I asked thee now, is there a God? And if thou darest, say No' (VIII, 333). In isolation and darkness, he suggests, self-knowledge may be achieved when exposed to the burden of one's own thoughts. By referring to 'Times dead low water', Donne also equates midnight with the 'lowest or stillest state of the tide' (OED). As we have seen in 'The Calme', still, immovable water can represent stagnation, or an existential nothingness. But, significantly, 'dead low water' carries the suggestion of immanent movement, because it is the point which immediately precedes the tide beginning to return to its fullest. In the 'Obsequies', Donne

[38] On 'A Nocturnal', see Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge, [1971] 2005), 130-2.
[39] See Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 76.

implies that time will similarly recommence, a suggestion which is fulfilled in the following lines as the sun, or Harrington's soul, rises:

> Thou at this Midnight seest mee, and as soone
> As that Sunne rises to mee (Midnights noone)
> All the world growes transparent, and I see
> Through all both Church and State in seeing thee,
> And I discerne, by fauour of this light,
> My selfe, the hardest object of the sight (25-30).

The 'Sunne' rises and brings a 'transparent' clarity and light to the 'world' and its institutions, to 'Church and State'. This light also enables Donne to see himself, 'the hardest object of the sight'. These lines stress the moralistic function of Harrington in the poem. His influence enables a clarity of vision which reveals the imperfections, not only of religion and politics, church and state, but also that of the individual 'selfe'.

Pebworth notes that 'in the curiously tentative opening' of the poem, Donne describes himself in terms 'reminiscent of the voyeur in "The Extasie"' (p. 31). But there are other contexts for the metaphysical voyage of Harrington's soul into this middle region. The liminal space between heaven and earth held a particular metaphorical appeal for Donne as an area in which the composition of matter was uncertain. According to contemporary meteorology, this region was conceived as a disordered mingling of fluids, vapours and solid material, deprived of their 'own essential natures' and proper ends.[40] In the rapturous flight of the 'Obsequies', as the sun rises, Donne finds himself 'the hardest object of the sight' because self-knowledge is more difficult to attain than knowledge of external things. But he also plays on the difficulty of discerning physical things in a 'transparent world'. Images of world, Church and state, which are now transparent, in the double sense of being both clearly

[40] Craig Martin, *Renaissance Meteorology: Pomponazzi to Descartes* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 43.

visible and translucent, are compared with his own likely permeable condition. His examination of self cannot be separated from that of the world. This fascination with states of being, inter-mixed in time, space and substance appears elsewhere in his work. As we have seen in 'The Calme', during an instance of existential doubt, cut off from all signifiers of civilisation, Donne imagines his ship as a 'meteor', hovering between mirror images of sea and sky. Similarly, in his poem 'To the Countess of Bedford on New Years Day' (1607), Donne's self-effacement is portrayed in terms of his own 'peruious', 'Meteor-like' body. Again, at a moment of transition in space and time, between two years and two atmospheric conditions, he writes:

> This twilight of two yeares, not past nor next,
> Some embleme is of mee, or I of this,
> Who Meteor-like, of stuffe and forme perplext,
> Whose what, and where, in disputation is,
> If I should call mee any thing, should misse (1-5).

Donne's suggestion here that he cannot be called 'any thing', and that his 'what' and 'where' is a subject of intellectual dispute, reflects the disordered, unfinished nature of meteorological phenomena. By employing imagery in the 'Obsequies' which stresses the insubstantiality of material things, political and religious institutions and the body, Donne sets up an imaginative situation of physical and moral decay so that Harrington may serve as an emblem of morality and virtue which might intervene on behalf of the world.

Although the flight of Elizabeth Drury's soul to heaven, in the *Second Anniversary*, plots the same path through the earth and up beyond the middle region, it differs notably in tone from Harrington's flight. Elizabeth's soul, in its 'long-short Progresse' (219), is completely indifferent to its surroundings, since it is concerned only with reaching its destination. It 'staies not in the Ayre, / To looke what Meteors there themselues prepare', and

'carries no desire to know, nor sense, / Whether th'Ayrs middle Region be intense' (189-92). Although both poems acknowledge the world's impermanency, it is significant that in the 'Obsequies', Donne catalogues the material landmarks that Harrington's soul leaves behind. In the 'Obsequies', Donne's privileged position as observer has a close precedent, namely the ecstatic lunar voyage of his narrator in the satire against the Jesuits, *Ignatius his Conclave* (1609). Marjorie Hope Nicolson suggests that *Ignatius*, in its references to Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler, is entrenched in the period's scientific discourses.[41] But she fails to address in any detail the fact that *Ignatius* also borrows from practitioners of Menippean satire, a genre which had grown in popularity during this period as a tool of religious controversy. As Eugene Korkowski notes, Donne places 'a considerable number of Menippean satires in the same family of writings as his own *Ignatius*'.[42] Science and Menippean satire are also important contexts for understanding the 'Obsequies', and, as I will go on to suggest, they are both embodied in the particular influence of the Roman satirist Lucian. As in the 'Obsequies', Donne's narrator in *Ignatius*, in travelling up beyond the limits of the earth, is admitted a prospect of all things below. At the beginning of *Ignatius*, the narrator is represented as being 'in an Extasie', which allows his soul the

> liberty to wander through all places, and to survey and reckon all the roomes, and all the volumes of the heavens, and to comprehend the situation, the dimensions, the nature, the people, and the policy, both of the swimming Ilands, the *Planets,* and of all those which are fixed in the firmament.[43]

Not only does the narrator have the ability to see the external, material nature of the universe, its people and their political organisation, as he does in the 'Obsequies', but his gaze can also penetrate below the surface of the earth and into men's souls:

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[41] Nicolson, (1940): 259-80.
[42] Eugene Korkowski, 'Donne's "*Ignatius*" and Menippean Satire', *Studies in Philology* 72, No. 4 (October, 1975): 434.
[43] Donne, *Ignatius his Conclave*, ed. Timothy Stafford Healy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 5-7.

> In the twinckling of an eye I saw all the roomes in Hell open to my sight. And by the benefit of certain spectacles, I know not of what making, but, I thinke, of the same, by which Gregory the great, and Beda did discerne so distinctly the soules of their friends, when they were discharged from their bodies, and sometimes the soules of such men as they knew not by sight, and of some that were never in the world, and yet they could distinguish them flying into Heaven, or conversing with living men, I saw all the channels in the bowels of the Earth; and all the inhabitants of all nations, and of all ages were suddenly made familiar to me (p. 7).

In the 'Obsequies', Donne provides an account of his view of the earth and of men's souls in terms almost identical to this passage from *Ignatius*:

> Though God be truly our Glasse through which wee see
> All, since the beeing of all things is hee:
> Yet ar the Trunks, which doe to vs deriue
> Things in proportion fitt by perspectiue,
> Deeds of good men. For by theyr beeing here
> Vertues, indeed remote, seeme to bee neere (35-40).

Ann Hurley argues that God, as the 'Glasse through which we see' alludes to the Pauline mirror (1 Corinthians 13, 12-13), in which heavenly and earthly perspectives are exchanged. The Pauline mirror, she maintains, 'is the locus classicus for the biblical statement of the theme of assessment of one's spiritual condition through divine refraction' (p. 122). The biblical passage in question reads: 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also am known'. Rather than suggesting that God is the 'Glasse through which we see' all things, St. Paul claims that we see through this glass 'darkly', or imperfectly. It will only be removed when we meet God face to face. Donne here acknowledges the distinction between the ability to see 'all things' through God, compared to the more proximate virtues or 'deeds of good men' who have died. The human 'Trunks', or telescopes, therefore, represent an inferior visual counterpart to the

'Glasse' of God.[44] 'Trunks' enable us to see distant virtues in proportion to a human perspective. In other words, knowledge of heaven can never truly be attained while we are alive, but study of Harrington's virtues and good deeds can serve as an example to the world.

As in *Ignatius,* Donne employs the catachrestic image of telescopic (spectacles in *Ignatius*), examination of men and their virtues, as a means of representing the extreme perspectives of earth and heaven, of the tangible and the unknown. Samuel Johnson famously criticised these lines, remarking, 'Who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope?'[45] Far from imagining man as a 'trunk', or telescope, Donne's conceit is merely based on its optical function. The 'Trunks' are 'deeds of good men' because of the immediacy with which they transmit virtues, or objects from earth, to the eye, and thus appear to embody, or contain these 'deeds' through their mediation; virtues 'indeed remote, seeme to bee neere'. According to the OED, the term 'trunk' refers to the 'main part of something as distinguished from its appendages'. For example, it might indicate 'the human body, or that of an animal, without the head, or esp. without the head and limbs, or considered apart from these'. In this respect, the word retains a double sense of being both connected and disconnected from a central object, or body. So, the telescope/trunk is an augmentation of the body which extends the user's sight; but it is also an object alien to the body itself, an external appendage. This might explain why the 'Obsequies'' positive 'trunk' image differs from its counterpart in the *Second Anniversary*, where Donne writes disparagingly of optical instruments: 'Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seem great, / Below; But vp vnto the watch-towre get, / And see al things despoyld of fallacies' (293-5). Here, Donne's 'spectacles' are not to be trusted because they are a mere extension of man's fallible faculties.

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[44] The OED notes that 'perspective-trunk' was a common term for the telescope during this period.
[45] Samuel Johnson *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*. Vol. 1. (London: J. Nichols, 1779), 62-3.

In the 'Obsequies', rather than seeing all things 'despoyld of fallacies' through a heavenly knowledge, Donne retains optical metaphors to represent transparency and the apprehension of virtues. Indeed, his probing into man's interior in order to discern his virtues evokes anatomical as much as astronomical investigation, an image paralleled in *Ignatius*, as he peers into the earth's 'bowels'. This might also go some way towards explaining the telescopic paradox of lines 39 and 40: virtues which are 'indeed remote, seeme to bee neere', because they have their 'beeing here'. In other words, they are remote, not because they are distant, but because they are too small to be seen, like the atoms to which Donne will compare Harrington's virtues in the lines that follow. Donne, the middle region, the earth, church, state and its occupants are, therefore, all bound in the simultaneity of their physical constitution. All things have a translucent quality because they are made up of matter shot through with varying degrees of empty space, and the world is in this condition, Donne suggests, because Harrington has died.

Later in the poem, Donne reflects again upon the reduced condition of human civilisation, and continues the poem's earlier rhetorical theme of moral judgement figured in terms of a heavenly standpoint:

> Mee thinkes all Cittyes now but Anthills bee
> Where when the severall Labourers I see
> For house, prouision, children, taking payne
> Th'are all but Ants, carrying Eggs straw or grayne (167-170).

Here, 'Cittyes' take on the aspect of 'anthills' and those who labour inside are 'Ants'. Given the thematic relationship between the 'Obsequies' and *Ignatius*, and the shifting of earthly and heavenly perspectives, Donne's aerial image of city as anthill and the specific reference to workers and labourers may have been borrowed from Lucian's *Icaromenippus*. This

Menippean satire, which was translated by Erasmus in 1514, follows the character of Menippus on his voyage to the moon, where he similarly surveys the city of Athens:

> I suppose you have often seen a swarm of ants, in which some are huddling together about the mouth of the hole and transacting affairs of state in public, some are going out and others are coming back again to the city; one is carrying out the dung, and another has caught up the skin of a bean or half a grain of wheat somewhere and is running off with it; and no doubt there are among them, in due proportion to the habits of ants, builders, politicians, aldermen, musicians, and philosophers. But however that may be, the cities with their population resembled nothing so much as ant-hills.[46]

David Marsh notes that *Icaromenippus* 'portrays the Cynic as a second Icarus who not only ascends into the heavens but manages to return unscathed'.[47] His voyage, Marsh suggests, is a quest for knowledge and truth, since 'he found himself in a state of perplexity (*aporia*) concerning the nature of the universe and the gods' (p. 77). Another continuity between the 'Obsequies' and *Icaromennipus* can be discerned in their references to atomic theory. Immediately before Menippus' account of the anthills, the dialogue is centred upon 'the discord that makes up the life of men' and the sense of universal disorder which the aerial perspective affords (pp. 297-8). Menippus then proceeds to compare the partition of land to atomic particles: 'As a matter of fact, since the whole of Greece as it looked to me then from on high was no bigger than four fingers, on that scale surely Attica was infinitesimal… it seemed to me that the widest-acred of them all had but a single Epicurean atom under cultivation' (p. 298).

[46] Lucian of Samosata, *Lucian II: The Downward Journey or The Tyrant. Zeus Catechized. Zeus Rants. The Dream or The Cock. Prometheus. Icaromenippus or The Sky-man. Timon or The Misanthrope. Charon or The Inspectors. Philosophies for Sale*, trans., A. M. Harmon (London: William Heineman, [1915] 1953), 300.
[47] David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 77.

In his 'anatomy' of Harrington's virtues, Donne draws on Heraclitus's atomic maxim that 'one cannot step twice into the same river', to suggest that during the course of a man's life he changes and accumulates a variety of qualities which are difficult to describe:[48]

> But where can I affirm, or where arrest
> My thoughts on his deeds? Which shall I call best?
> For fluid vertue cannot be lookt on
> Nor can endure a contemplation.
> As Bodyes change, and as I doe not weare
> Those spirits, humours, bloud, I did last yeare
> And as if on a streame I fixe mine eye
> That drop on which I lookd is presently
> Pushd with more waters from my sight, and gon:
> So in this Sea of Vertues can no one
> Bee insited on.Vertues as riuers passe
> Yet still remaynes that virtuous man there was (41-52)

Donne creates a rhetorical situation in which fixing his thoughts, 'affirming' or 'arresting' Harrington's many 'deeds', is an almost impossible task. Harrington's 'fluidity' of virtue is compared to the ever changing materials of 'spirits, humours, blood' and 'streames'. Moreover, like the atomic system of universal flux, Harrington possesses a 'Sea of virtues' which are constantly shifting and so cannot be 'insisted on'. Just as he did in 'Woman's Constancy', Donne returns to the notion that 'Bodyes change', as virtues do, with every passing year. The difference here is that similes of ceaseless change are used to celebrate the immensity and diversity of Harrington's qualities. But in order to 'arrest' this 'fluid vertue' Donne turns to a Platonic ideal of virtue's wholeness to suggest that Harrington's virtue transcends this flux:

> Vertues as riuers passe
> Yet still remaynes that virtuous man there was.
> And, if a Man feeds on mans flesh, (and so

[48] Robin Waterfield, ed. *The First Philosophers: the Presocratics and Sophists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41. On Lucretius' atomic explication of rivers, see, for example, V, 247-71.

> Part of his body to another owe):
> Yet at the last two perfect bodyes rise
> Because God knows where every Atome lyes (51-6).

Virtues may pass on like the drops of a river but, Donne explains, there ‘still remaynes that virtuous man there was’. Moreover, if a ‘Man feeds on man’s flesh’ and thus combines part of his body with another, ‘two perfect bodies’ will be resurrected at the last day by God, who ‘knows where every Atome lyes’. Donne’s cannibalistic simile of a man feeding on another’s ‘flesh’, again inspired by atomism, is invoked in order to demonstrate the simplicity and singularity of Harrington’s virtue. But it also implicitly points to the atom’s homogenous migratory nature, belonging to all things, instead of just to the individual. For example, in the *De Rerum Natura,* Lucretius writes of the passing of an old man, entreating him to give up his atoms to make way for new life: ‘Let it all go, act as becomes your age, / Be a great man, composed; give in you must. / Such a rebuke from Nature would be right / For the old order yields before the new, / All things require refashioning from others’ (III, 962-6). This atomic scattering of man’s flesh, Donne continues, is not to be feared, because the biblical image of bodily resurrection and reunion, derived from 1 Corinthians 15.52 (‘God knows where every Atome lyes’), reminds of God’s ultimate control over the body of man: ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed’. In this passage, as Hirsch notes, ‘the twinckling of an eye’ is a translation of the Latin *atomus* which thus denotes ‘the miraculous speed with which God rejoins these points of matter’ (p. 83). In his devotional works, Donne consistently returned to the dispersal of man’s body parts after death. Hirsch observes that this ‘borderline-heretical (yet entirely human) yearning for bodily permanence is nevertheless repeated so often by Donne as to become a central trope in his poetic and prose works’ (p.

76). For example, in a sermon of 1627, preached at the wedding of the Earl of Bridgewater's daughter, Donne asked,

> Where be all the Atoms of that flesh which a Corrasive hath eat away, or a Consumption hath breath'd, and exhal'd away from our arms, and other Limbs? In what wrinkle, in what furrow, in what bowel of the earth, ly all the graines of the ashes of a body burnt a thousand years since? ... All dies, and all dries, and molders into dust, and that dust is blowen into the River, and that puddled water tumbled into the sea, and that ebs and flows in infinite revolutions (VIII, 98).

As with the 'Obsequies', he concludes that, 'Still, still God knows … in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lies' and 'in the twinckling of an eye, that body that was scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the right hand of God, in a glorious resurrection' (VIII, 98).

The question of the body's constitution at the last day was a subject of doctrinal dispute which originated with the Church Fathers. Christ was the paradigm of bodily resurrection, and his followers were expected to assume the same body after death, as he had done. But according to Gregory of Nyssa, who recognised that bodies change over time, it was the form of the body, rather than the original matter that remained important. Kallistos Ware explains Gregory's position as follows:

> the constituent elements making up our physical body are constantly changing; but the soul imposes upon these elements a particular "form" (*eidos*) and by virtue of the uninterrupted preservation of this "form" it may legitimately be asserted that we continue throughout our life to have the same body. At the resurrection the soul will reassemble the particles of matter from which its body was formed during this present life, and it will once more impress upon these particles the same "form" as before. Thus our resurrection body will be, in a genuinely recognisable way, the same body which we possess at present.[49]

[49] Kallistos Ware, 'The Soul in Greek Christianity', in *From Soul to Self*, ed. M. James C. Crabbe (London: Routledge, 1999), 53.

Since atoms are unchanging and homogenous, it doesn't matter which atoms make up the resurrected body as long as they conform to its original form. This Neoplatonic solution presupposes the integrity of an essential form to which the particles of matter will correspond. Since questions concerning the relationship between body and soul were a prevailing interest of Donne's, he would almost certainly have been aware of Gregory's position. Indeed, Felicia Wright McDuffie suggests that Donne was ambivalent in his preference for either soul or body, and notes that he 'often quoted the Church fathers who tended to argue for a unified view of the human person: Ireneus, Clement, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Tertullian'.[50]

As in the ecstatic voyage of *Ignatius,* Donne also alludes, in the 'Obsequies'' succeeding lines, to the secondary medieval Scholastic sense of 'the twinckling of an eye', or *atomus*, to suggest the smallest possible unit of time (15/94 of a second), and, therefore, unbelievable speed: 'So if one knowledge were made of all those / Who knewe his Minutes well, Hee might dispose / His Vertues into names and rankes' (57-9). As the OED notes, the word 'atom' in the medieval period, as well as referring to the irreducible particles of Greek philosophy, denoted 'the smallest unit of time, of which there are 376 in a minute and 22,560 in an hour, equal to 15/ 94 of a second'.[51] This measure was designed by Scholastic philosophers as a way of reckoning an instant, or the 'twinckling of an eye', to account for the speed of natural and supernatural phenomena. In this passage, Donne alights on the problem of defining virtue, which the poem will later seek to resolve. In order to capture and organise 'into names and rankes' these rapidly moving atomic virtues or 'Minutes', he theorises a perfect 'knowledge' enabled by instantaneous thought.

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[50] Felicia Wright McDuffie*, To Our Bodies Turn We Then: Body as Word and Sacrament in the Works of John Donne* (London: Continuum, 2005), 140-1. Donne refers to Gregory of Nyssa for example in sermons IV, 215, and V, 284.

[51] With regard to ancient atomic theory the OED defines 'Atom' as the following: 'With reference to ancient Greek philosophy: a hypothetical particle, minute and indivisible, held to be one of the ultimate particles of matter'.

Based on the lines which follow, Clucas argues that ‘in his “Obsequies to the Lord Harrington”, Donne refuses to atomize the nobleman’s virtues’ (p. 329):

> but I
> Should iniure Nature Vertue destiny
> Should I diuide and discontinew so
> Vertue, which did in one entirenesse growe.
> For as hee that should say spirits ar framd
> Of all the purest parts that can be namd
> Honours not spirits halfe so much, as hee
> Who sayes they haue no parts but simple bee:
> So is’t of vertue; for a point, and one
> Ar much entirer than a Million. (59-68)

In other words, ‘Vertue’, or the soul, should in ‘one entirenesse growe’, an undivided, ‘simple’ and perfect whole. Hirsch also suggests that an ideal of spiritual wholeness supersedes that of a particulate soul, stating that ‘Donne scorns the dissective impulse to turn “a point and one” into “a million” “purest parts”’ (p. 86). As Hirsch and Clucas suggest, representing Harrington’s completeness of virtue is Donne’s object. But as the poem progresses Donne continues to use similes and metaphors which frame division and multiplicity as the antithesis of Harrington’s unifying presence. Indeed, Clucas and Hirsch seem to overlook the fact that he returns almost immediately to the metaphor, which he had discarded a few lines earlier, of colliding atoms, unable to move and develop into a measurable form of virtue because of a lack of time, ‘roome and space’: ‘In good short liues, vertues are fayne to thrust / And to bee sure betime to get a place / When they would exercise want roome and space’ (74-6). By employing the verb ‘thrust’, together with words which evoke spatial location (‘place’, ‘roome’ and ‘space’), Donne continues to represent Harrington’s virtues through material similes and metaphors.

Donne notes that Harrington did not live long enough for his many virtues to be recognised and enumerated: ‘And had fate ment t’have his vertues told / It would haue let

him liue to haue bin old' (69-70). In this respect, the idea of Platonic wholeness might be taken as an expedient compliment, designed for one who was too young to have impacted on the world as an older public figure could have.[52] At this point in the poem, Harrington's virtues are vaguely defined, and in a state of tension between the numerous and the singular. But Donne's similes and metaphors continue to build towards an image of Harrington as a unifying principle and example to the world. To this end, between lines 81 and 104 Donne introduces an extended passage on angels, whose physiognomy and movement provide analogies for understanding Harrington's virtues. These similes are also underwritten by philosophical questions on the nature of earthly matter and ethereal substance. Donne's imagined solution to the problem of disunity, which he initially presents in line 57, is that of a perfect instantaneous knowledge which can apprehend and bring together the disparate movements of fluctuating matter. By invoking angels, who were believed to possess this ability, his analogy seeks to represent Harrington's goodness as a composite of virtues, and employs the terms and ideas of theological/philosophical discourse to achieve this.

III.

Several critics have noted Donne's fascination with the material and intellectual constitution of angels, a popular subject of Scholastic enquiry throughout the medieval period.[53] Robert Ellrodt, for example, notes that 'Donne's interest in Scholastic angelology was singular in an

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[52] Written at a time of political controversy, Pebworth finds that the silences and omissions in the poem reveal a reluctance on Donne's part to praise the public qualities of Harrington: 'Donne was reticent in enumerating the individual virtues of Harrington because they were virtues that had been put to the service of extreme Puritanism and of the anti-Spanish war party. The champion of a religious position and a political program that were both counter to official court policy and personally repugnant to Donne, Harington was hardly the poet's ideal of the true courtier' (34).

[53] Carey, 262-3. Helen Gardner, *John Donne The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 77. Robert Ellrodt, 'Angels and the Poetic Imagination from Donne to Traherne', in *English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in Honour of Her Seventieth Birthday*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 164-79.

age when Calvinists, Platonists and the "new philosophers" agreed to reject it' (p. 174). But according to John Salkeld, in his *A Treatise of Angels* (1613), angelology was 'most facill and pleasant: and [had] most connexion with natural Philosophy and Philosophical Principles'.[54] In the 'Obsequies', Donne's invocation of physical matter and the movement and thought of angels as similes and metaphors for death and virtue conforms to this intellectual tradition, in which theology was fused with natural philosophy. The two most prominent schools of thought concerning the physical properties of angels were those of Aquinas and Scotus. According to the Scotists, angels were composed of matter, although, as Carey notes, this was believed to be 'spiritual matter', bodies, but not flesh (p. 263). As a follower of Aristotle's physics, Scotus denied the possibility of atoms and void, so the airy quality of angels could not be attributed to atomic composition. Aquinas, on the other hand, completely denied that angels were corporeal. Both Ellrodt and Carey suggest that Donne's view accorded with that of Aquinas; however, in the 'Obsequies' Donne's materialistic imagery and its association with the discourse of atomism complicates this conception.

In a reversal of Harrington's flight into the 'peruious' region of the heavens, Donne charts the descent of an angel through the cosmos towards the earth:

> As when an Angell downe from heauen doth flye
> Our quick thought cannot keep him company
> Wee cannot thinke, now hee is at the Sunne
> Now through the Moone now through the Ayre doth runn
> Yet, when hee's come, wee knowe hee did repayre
> To all twixt heauen and earth, sunne, moone and ayre (81-6).

Just as the movement of angels cannot be seen by mortals, and yet we 'knowe hee did repayre' through heaven, earth, sun, moon and air, so we also know that Harrington is a good man, in spite of the difficulties in enumerating his virtues. When Donne acknowledges that

[54] John Salkeld, *A Treatise of Angels, Of the Nature, Essence, Place, Power…* (London, 1613), Sig. A2r.

the 'quick thought' of mortals cannot keep 'company' with the angel's movement, he appears to accept the Thomist position that angels are composed of ethereal substance and that their movement is instantaneous. As Ellrodt notes, 'unlike Scotus and his followers, the poet never describes the motions of angels, however swift, as continuous in time' (p. 169). However, the succeeding lines, in which Donne writes that 'wee knowe hee did repayre / To all twixt heauen and earth, sunne, moone and ayre', suggest not only a physical presence, which occupies all of these locations, but also a temporal succession, beginning at the sun, passing through the moon and then the air. To pass between requires the meeting of material things. As Donne argued in *The Essays in Divinity* (1614), 'God denyed even to Angells the ability of arriving from one Extreame to another without passing the mean way between'.[55] In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas, in fact, described angelic form in meteorological terms:

> Although air, as long as it is in a state of rarefaction has neither shape nor colour, when condensed it can both be shaped and coloured, as appears in the clouds. Just so the angels assume bodies of air, condensing it by divine power in so far as is needful for forming the assumed body (I, Q. 51, Art. 2).

Given the 'Obsequies'' preoccupation with the separation and reunion of particles, the conceptual leap from the condensation of water droplets into clouds to the atomic principle is not a difficult one to make, since Lucretius devotes considerable space in *De Rerum Natura* to the dispersal and reunion of the atoms in clouds and vapours.[56] Donne was at least aware of the conceptual association when he argued in a wedding sermon that angels 'are Creatures, that have not so much of a Body as flesh is, as froth is, as a vapour is, as a sigh is, and yet with a touch they shall moulder a rocke into lesse Atomes, than the sand that it stands upon; and a milstone into smaller flower, then it grinds' (VIII, 106). In 'Aire and Angels', Donne treats the airy physiognomy of angels as a simile for transcendent love in lines which accord

[55] John Donne, *Essays in Divinity: Being Several Disquisitions Interwoven with Meditations and Prayers,* ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 44.
[56] On clouds/vapours etc. see Lucretius, VI, 448-511.

with this Thomist conception: ‘Then as an Angell, face, and wings / Of aire, not pure as it, yet pure doth weare, / So thy love may be my loves spheare…’ (23-5). Here, the angel’s transformation into physical form is achieved by condensing the surrounding air which is ‘not pure as it’.

Donne frequently speculated on the similarities between men and angels in his work. In the sermons, he voiced the opinion that ‘Man and Angels have one thing in common to them both… that is, Reason, understanding, knowledge, discourse’ (X, 45). He also noted that angels possessed a ‘certain fleshlinesse’ in their nature which presaged their rebellion and fall (VIII, 361). Moreover, in the *Second Anniversary*, Donne goes as far as to argue that bodies resurrected at the last day will surpass the celestial nature of angels: ‘When earthly bodies more celestiall / Shalbe, then angels were, for they could fall’ (493-4). If angels, so similar, and in some ways inferior to man, can discern all material things in an instant, then so might man himself. According to Aquinas, angels ‘do not apprehend by means of images, nor do they need to reason from inferences; they know by immediate intuition’ (p. 77). Donne appears to modify this notion in the ‘Obsequies’ with the suggestion that angelic knowledge is achieved through a speedy accumulation of observed details:

> And as this Angel in an instant knows
> And yet wee knowe this suddayne knowledge growes
> By quick amassing several shapes of things
> Which hee successiuely to order brings
> When they whose slow-paced lame thoughts cannot goe
> So fast as hee, thinke that hee doth not so (81-92).

An angel’s apparently ‘suddayne knowledge’, Donne suggests, actually accumulates through time, through its ‘quick amassing’ of ‘several shapes of things’.[57] The ideal, then, and the

[57] Robbins argues that the *H49* variant of ‘forms’ in line 83 ‘is more appropriate to abstract ideas of’ Harrington’s virtues than *O’F’s* ‘shapes’ (784). But ‘shapes’ better expresses the angel’s apprehension of

solution to the problem of Harrington's fluctuating virtue, is expressed through the analogy of angelic comprehension which can amass and bring 'several shapes of things' to order, something which might be achieved by man, whose thought processes, although much inferior in speed and understanding, are similarly constituted. Here, Donne is careful to distinguish between 'wee', who understand angelic 'suddayne knowledge', and a 'slow-paced lame' 'they', who cannot. For the act of quickly comprehending parts of a whole is attainable only by those who can read:

> Iust as a perfect Reader doth not dwell
> On every sillable, nor stay to spell
> Yet without doubt hee doth distinctly see
> And lay together every A and B (93-6)

The 'perfect Reader' does not 'dwell' upon every letter and 'sillable', but derives the meaning of words almost instantaneously. Again, this simile, in tandem with the swift understanding of the angel, represents how quickly we can comprehend Harrington's general goodness. But Donne also includes a subtle allusion to atomism in this passage. The act of creation through writing (and also speaking) is, in effect, the perfect corollary of an atomic universe, in which individual letters and sounds (sillables) are comparable to the atomic building blocks of matter. Again, this association may have been borrowed from Lucretius who made the following connection between atomism and the formation of his poem's language:

> Look – in my lines here you can see the letters
> Common to many of the words, but you know
> Perfectly well that resonance and meaning,
> Sense, sound, are changed by changing the arrangement.
> How much more true of atoms than letters! (I, 824-828)

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material things through sight, as analogues for Harrington's virtue, and conforms to Donne's practice of using images of 'matter' to represent abstract things throughout the poem.

Joseph Farrell argues that the *De Rerum Natura* 'is to be read not merely as an exposition of the physical universe, but in some sense as its image as well'.[58] This is perhaps also true of Donne's work, which similarly experimented with the idea that there existed a mutuality between matter and language. In a sermon of 1624 on Christmas Day, Donne drew on the Lucretian notion that speech itself is material, composed of atoms and transmitted through the air, as a simile for the ways in which his congregation listened and prayed:[59]

> The air is not so full of Moats, of Atomes, as the church is of Mercies; and we can suck in no part of air but we take in those Moats, those Atomes; so here in the Congregation, we cannot suck in a word from the preacher, we cannot speak, we cannot sigh a prayer to God, but that that whole breath and air is made of mercy (VI, 170-1).

Here, Donne creates a striking image of an atomic dispersal of words from congregation and preacher, which, rather than suggesting chaos, or a mass of incoherent speech, becomes condensed in the single concept of mercy. The sense of language creating a positive union of atomic parts is also apparent in a letter Donne wrote to Henry Goodyer during his travels on the continent in 1612:

> In letters that I received from Sir H. *Wotton* yesterday from *Amyens*, I had one of the 8 of *March* from you, and with it one from Mrs. *Danterey*, of the 28th of *January*, which is a strange disproportion… if our Letters come not in due order, and so make not a certain and concurrent chain, yet if they come as Atomes, and so meet at last, by any crooked, and casuall application, they make up, and they nourish bodies of friendship.[60]

Donne's simile suggests that the letters may arrive out of their proper sequence and by chance, by a disordered and 'crooked' path, but when they do meet, they manage,

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[58] Joseph Farrell, 'Lucretian Architecture: the Structure and Argument of the *De rerum natura',* in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, eds. Stuart Gillespie and Phillip R. Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91.
[59] Lucretius elaborates on the atomic spread of voices and sounds, for example, in IV, 532-571.
[60] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr. (London, 1651), 73-4.

nevertheless, to ‘nourish bodies of friendship’, as atoms create bodies when they combine. Like the disparate combinations which make up words and ‘nourish’ with a sense of meaning, Harrington’s virtues, represented by a series of similes concerning confused and chaotic matter, will cease to be problematic if man can understand both parts and whole:

> So in short liu’d good men’s not vnderstood
> Each severall virtue, but the compound good
> For they all vertues paths in that pace tread
> (97-100).

Contrary to Hirsch’s and Clucas’ readings of the poem, in these lines Donne completely retracts his earlier metaphor of an indivisible oneness of Harrington’s virtue and resolves upon the image of a ‘compound good’, achieved through quickly gathering and organising, ‘As angels goe and knowe, and as men read’. The ‘compound good’ reconciles the ideal of Harrington’s singular goodness with a multiplicity of virtues which need not be defined because they collaborate in the creation of the whole as atoms do.

In the following lines Donne writes:

> O why should then these men, these lumps of balme
> Sent hither this worlds tempest to becalme
> Before by deeds they are diffusd and spredd
> And so make vs aliue, themselues bee dead? (101-104)

Here, Donne laments that men such as Harrington, who were sent to ‘becalme’ the metaphorical ‘tempests’ of the world, die before their virtues can be ‘diffusd and spredd’ to give spiritual instruction to the living. But these lines, in their return to an idea of virtues dispersed rather than condensed, also employ terms which hint at atomic theory. In imagining the virtue of the dead ‘diffusd and spredd’ to infuse life into those who remain, Donne mimics the controversial language of atomic doctrine that the particles of body and soul

dissolve and recombine to create new life. This was not the first time that Donne employed such an image. Earlier, in 'The Extasie', he played explicitly with atomism as a metaphor for the union of lovers' souls: 'Wee then, who are this new soule, know, / Of what we are compos'd, and made, / For, th' Atomies of which we grow, / Are soules, whom no change can invade' (45-8). Donne's love conceit posits that 'a new soule' shared by both lovers has been formed because of the transcendent nature of their relationship. Each individual soul, he suggests, is an indivisible atom which combines to create a compound soul. The complex nature of this conceit and an appreciation of its wit requires that the reader have some knowledge of the workings of atomic fusion. Donne's reference to changeless 'Atomies' has inescapable material connotations, so the application of this image to immaterial souls represents an irreverent distortion of traditional love lyrics. Like his earlier conceit, imagining Harrington's virtues as fluctuating particles, Donne again concludes this passage on angels with an image of dispersal. But the poem continues to press for a resolution, for the animating principle which binds atoms into compounds and gives order to the world and its institutions. The mechanical nature of Donne's thought, looking within bodies in order to discern the cause of motion, similarly inflects the argument of the poem's next extended metaphor, in which he imagines man as a clock.

Although seemingly distinct areas of intellectual inquiry, there existed a close relationship between atomism and the Renaissance obsession with mechanical or clockwork devices. As Wendy Beth Hyman notes, a 'little-recognised but crucial context for understanding the early modern interest in automata was the controversial Renaissance revival and development of ancient theories of matter: the rediscovery, that is, of atomism and philosophical

materialism'.[61] Since questions about the nature of mechanical motion were often considered along with immaterial causes, the properties of the soul were also examined in tandem with mechanical and atomic theory, as a way of accounting for the motive force and the influence of God over matter. As we have seen, both Bacon and Hill experimented with Neoplatonic notions of spirits interacting with atomic particles to take on forms. 'This issue' Hyman suggests 'was at the heart of other mysteries of the church, not least Incarnation itself; the materialisation of the immaterial, the arrival of divinity into corporeality. This was a question of faith, but also physics, and it impacted all levels of early modern religious turmoil' (p. 10). By the end of the 'Obsequies'' passage on angels, Donne's attempts to represent Harrington's 'fluid virtue' in terms of atomic cohesion appear to be halting or incomplete; but, like Bacon and Hill, he turns to immaterial causes, in the succeeding lines, in order to account for the animation of the different parts of composite bodies.

In lines which liken a sick body to a faulty clock, Donne writes:

> Though, as small pocket clocks whose every wheele
> Doth each mis-motion and distemper feele
> Whose hands get shaking palsyes, and whose string
> (His sinnews) slackens, and whose soule, the spring,
> Expires, or languishes, whose pulse, the fly,
> Either beates not, or beates vneuenly,
> Whose voice, the bell, doth rattle, or grow dombe
> Or idle, as mens who to theyr last hower come.
> If these clocks bee not wound, or bee wound still
> Or bee not set, or set at every will:
> So youth bee easyest to destruction
> If, then, wee follow all, or follow none: (131-142)

Here, he compares the young to 'small pocket clocks' who, without guidance, lack virtue and wisdom and are 'easyest to destruction'. This passage establishes the metaphorical situation,

[61] Wendy Beth Hyman, *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 9.

concluded in the following lines, in which Donne asks why Harrington could not remain on earth as a 'true Clock, or 'Sunn-dyall' who would have 'sett vs all' (150-4). The comparison of natural organisms to clockwork was a commonplace method of arguing for the existence of a creator, or 'watchmaker'. Cicero was an early proponent of this position in his treatise *On the Nature of the Gods*:

> when you look at a sun-dial or a water-clock, you infer that it tells the time by art and not by chance; how then can it be consistent to suppose that the world, which includes both the works of art in question, the craftsmen who made them, and everything else besides, can be devoid of purpose.[62]

In his figuring of 'small pocket clocks' as sick, Donne suggests that the guiding hand of the creator has been removed. Donne's conceit, in some respects, anticipates Descartes' clockwork analogy in the *Meditations* (1641):

> Now a clock, an assembly of wheels and weights, obeys all the laws of nature just as strictly when it has been badly manufactured and does not tell the time accurately as when it fulfils the clockmaker's wishes in every respect. And I can likewise consider the body of a human being as a kind of machine made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood, and skin so fitted together that, even if there were no mind within it, it would still have all the movements it currently has that do not result from the command of the will (and hence the mind).[63]

Where Descartes visualises a mechanical body completely distinct from the mind, Donne's object is to merge the mechanism with the soul through Harrington and thus with God.

In keeping with the poem's thematic pattern, Donne's clockwork conceit continues to seek a sense of order for a multitude of parts. Here, small pocket clocks, because of their personal and mobile nature, as opposed to the large town clocks referred to later, represent a

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[62] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De natura deorum*, trans. H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1933) II, xxxiv, 207.

[63] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59-60.

disunited 'autonomous' mankind. They are fragmented within, and subject to 'distempers', both a humoral imbalance in the body of man, and an uneven mixture of internal pieces. The OED notes that in this period 'Distemper' could refer to 'A disproportionate mixture of parts; want of a due temper of ingredients', and 'Derangement or disturbance of the "humour" or "temper" (according to medieval physiology regarded as due to disturbance in the bodily "humours"'). With 'shaking palsys' these machines tremble under the strain of their malfunctioning components, as if afflicted with paralysis.[64] The 'strings' of the clock are likened to slack 'sinnews', and the 'spring', as the internal source of its motion, is a 'soule' which tends, significantly, towards 'expiration' rather than life. The 'fly', which was the mechanism designed to control the clock's speed, is figured as an uneven pulse, and the 'bell' as a stunted voice. What these automatons lack, Donne suggests, is a clear motive force, a source of movement, since a variety of actions taken to enable the 'clocks' to move of their own accord leads to eventual 'destruction'. If they are not 'wound' or wound too much, or not set, or set according to a variety of opinions, they will prove defective. Given that Donne was so attuned to the possibility that forms of motion could be held up to scrutiny, or somehow considered wrong, it is significant that his use of the term 'mis-motion' here is recorded by the OED as the first.

In the following lines, Donne expands on this 'mis-motion' by distinguishing between pocket clocks and town clocks: 'Yet, as in great Clocks which in steeples chime / Plac'd to informe whole Townes t'employ theyr time / An Error doth more harme beeing general / When small Clocks faults only on the wearers fall' (143-6). Here, he suggests that both individuals and the political units, or 'Townes', in which they dwell, are subject to misguidedness. The 'errors' of those in power will, however, do 'more harme' than the pocket clocks 'beeing general', and again, Donne explicitly links the movements of nature to

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[64] 'Palsy', as a medical term, referred to a 'Paralysis or paresis (weakness) of all or part of the body, sometimes with tremor' (OED).

that of the political/social community. This political community, the ‘towne’ or court, Donne implies, is in error because it has lost the virtuous and exemplary leadership of Harrington. Unlike Northumberland’s confident expressions on the internal motions and causes of ‘organical engines artificial’, Donne suggests that, left to govern their own movements, these human ‘engines’ will eventually cease to operate. His appeal to Harrington to provide ‘medicines’ for these sick, disjointed bodies ‘And by thy doing sett vs what to doe?’ (129-30) acknowledges the need for a unifying principle, whilst returning to the poem’s dedicatee a suitable metaphor of praise.

In Robbins’s edition of Donne’s poems, he chooses to read line 130 as ‘tell us what to do’, following the Harley MS. 4955 (*H49*). Although he retains the word ‘set’ at line 154, Robbins acknowledges that in some manuscripts this has also been interpreted as ‘tell’, and so surmises that this variation may be down to confusion over ‘some handwriting of the time’ (p. 788). As we have seen, the *Variorum* edition takes the O’Flahertie MS (*O’F*) as copy-text, and retains ‘sett’ in lines 130 and 154. This is a more accurate reading given the repeated use of clock similes in these lines. The desire to be ‘sett’ by Harrington is repeated at the close of the clock metaphor:

> Why wouldst not thou then which hadst such a Soule
> A Clock so true, as might the sunne controule
> And dayly hadst from him who gaue it thee
> Instructions, such as never yet could bee
> Disordred, stay here, as a Generall
> And great Sunn-dyall to have sett vs all? (149-154)

Donne imagines that Harrington’s ‘Soule’ could have acted, if he had not died young, as a ‘true Clock’ and general ‘Sunn-dyall’ to guide the lives of those he has left behind. It is significant that Donne compares Harrington to a sundial, as well as to a clock. The former is controlled directly by the constant movements of the sun, and is thus not subject to the

inaccuracies of man-made devices, but the latter also has 'dayly' instructions from God. In other words, the 'true' clock functions correctly because it is regularly wound up. Punning twice on 'sun' in lines 150 and 154 to suggest Christ, Donne represents Harrington's soul as an agent of God, who receives 'Instructions, such as never yet could bee / Disordred' as a means of guiding and binding previously misguided and fragmented bodies. Donne's solution, then, is to theorise a 'general soul' which 'controls' the 'sunne' and flows through the disparate parts of physical matter, a force which, like Nicholas Hill's *vis*, resembles 'the efficient, active, universal cause, and the simple absolute essence' derived from God. This conclusion, in fact, returns us to the opening lines of the poem and sheds light on Donne's purpose, as he addresses Harrington with the words:

> Fayre Soule, which wast not onely, as all Soules bee,
> Then when thou wert infused, harmony,
> But didst continew so, and now dost beare
> A part in Gods greate Organ, this whole spheare (1-4).

According to the Neo-Platonists, 'all Soules', before they are 'infused' into the body and corrupted by corporeality, participate in the universal 'harmony' and knowledge of the 'world-soul'. Here, Donne suggests that Harrington continued in this perfection even after his soul's infusion into his body.[65] Moreover, Harrington's 'soule' was not only more perfect than all other 'Soules' during life, but now expands beyond the confines of corporeal form after death to become a part of 'Gods greate Organ', a moral force which is represented as a controlling element of the mechanical universe.[66] The word 'Organ' here has not only musical connotations, but also carries the additional sense of an artificial mechanism, and so

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[65] A. J. Smith points to this Neoplatonic understanding, noting that Harrington's soul was 'harmony not only when it was first infused into his body, as all souls are then, but throughout his life'. Smith ed. *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 585.
[66] Kaichi Matsura argues that this 'harmony' is an allusion to the term (well known in the Renaissance) that Aristoxenus applies to the rational soul, and thus is common to all human bodies. Kaichi Matsura, 'A Study of Donne's Imagery', *Studies in English Literature* 26 (1949): 125-84.

hints at the theme of composite bodies which is central to the rest of the poem.[67] Aligning this 'general soul' with the action of the sun in lines 150 and 154, Donne also associates its infusion with the spread of light, in the same way that *vis* is conceptualised by Hill and his medieval predecessors.[68] Indeed, Harrington, as the rising sun at line 26, is what first enables the world, 'Church and State' to become 'transparent', allowing for Donne's visual assessment of physical matter, 'to discern by fauour of this light' as it flows through all things.

The image of faltering clockwork as a malfunctioning body with a sick soul was also employed by Donne in 'Expostulation I' of the *Devotions*:

> Will *God* pretend to make a *Watch*, and leave out the spring? To make so many various wheels in the faculties of the Soule, and in the organs of the body, and leave out *Grace*, that should move them? Or wil God make a *springe*, and not *wind* it up? Infuse his first grace, & not second it with more, without which we can no more use his first grace when we have it, than we could dispose ourselves by nature to have it?[69]

Here too, God's grace is the force with which the mechanism of man is first set in motion. The problem of a sustained momentum, Donne suggests, is resolved because God will continue to 'Infuse' his grace into the soul (or spring) of man. Donne's experimentation with atomism throughout the 'Obsequies' resembles both Bacon's, in its notion of active spirits, and Hill's in its suggestions of God as the motive force. In this eclecticism, his sensitivity to the problems of motion and the physical constitution of matter was very much in tune with

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[67] The OED defines 'organ' in this period as: 'A mental or spiritual faculty regarded as an instrument of the mind or soul', or 'A means of action or operation, an instrument', or 'Any of various mechanical devices' or 'A part of an animal or plant body that serves a particular physiological function'.

[68] The association of light with God and creation is a common one, since, in Genesis, light was created on the first day. In his analysis of Genesis, St Augustine devotes a great deal of time to the creation of light and its different forms. Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 157-64. Plato also aligned his idea of the Good with the diffusion of light from the sun. Plato, *Plato's Republic*, trans. I. A Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) Book VI, 118.

[69] Anthony Raspa, ed. *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasion*s (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1975), 9.

his contemporaries'. Moreover, in comparing Harrington's virtue to an immaterial 'general soul' rather than a dispersed multitude of material parts, he manages to avoid atomism's most controversial implication, that the soul was physical, and thus appears to reconcile his panegyric to a more acceptable vision of the physical, moral and spiritual world.

Following the logical progression of the poem and the conventions of the funeral elegy, Donne turns, necessarily, to Harrington's journey from death to the afterlife. From line 177 to the end of the poem (line 258), he compares the arrival of Harrington's soul into heaven to a Roman Triumph, and thus leaves the question of atomism and earthly matter. But before this extended passage on heaven, the moment of death itself, the passage between material and immaterial worlds, is conceived in atomistic terms:

> And Churchyards are our Cittyes, vnto which
> The most repayre which are in goodnesse rich.
> There is the best concurse and confluence
> There ar the holy Suburbs, and from thence
> Beginns Gods Citty new Ierusalem. (171-5)

Following on from his aerial perspective of the 'anthill' city, Donne imagines 'Churchyards' as the 'best concurse and confluence', the final resting place for a multitude of bodies in a bustling city of the dead. His use of the phrase 'best concurse' is in keeping with the atomic theme in its suggestions of colliding and combining parts of matter. But it also draws from Cicero's famous and ironic epithet for atomic theory, 'the fortuitous concourse of atoms', which was frequently reproduced in the Renaissance and can be seen, for example, in the quotation from Bacon on page 146. In his criticism of the Atomists, Cicero asked: 'How, therefore, can these people assert that the world was made by the fortuitous concourse of

atoms, which have no color, no quality—which the Greeks call… no sense? Or that there are innumerable worlds, some rising and some perishing, in every moment of time?'[70]

Donne hints at the notion of the grave as the 'best concurse' for bodies and souls near the beginning of the poem, when he writes that 'labourers haue / Such rest in bed, that theyr last Churchyard graue / Subject to change, will scarse bee a Tipe of this… (17-19). On the one hand, these graves are 'subject to change' because it was common practice in this period for bodies to be disinterred and graves reused. The most famous literary example of this is, of course, the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet* (1603). As the gravedigger throws skulls up from the earth, Hamlet notes the indifference of death to both the highborn and the low: 'Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em?'[71] Hamlet's 'revolution' here denotes both social and material change. Donne was also conscious of the 'revolutions' of the grave in 'The Relique'. In this love poem, he hopes that when his 'grave is broke up againe / Some second ghest to entertaine' (1-2), the sight of a 'bracelet of bright haire about the bone' (6) might induce those who have unearthed it to suppose that 'there a loving couple lies' (8) and thus leave them undisturbed.

On the other hand, in the 'Obsequies', Donne also suggests that the labourers' rest will be interrupted by the final resurrection, the 'change' of 1 Corinthians 15.52, in which the atoms of all bodies will be reunited, since 'God knows where every Atome lyes' (56). In this respect, the disinterment of the dead ceases to matter, since whatever their resting place, God will find the means to reconstitute them at the last day. Indeed, a 'concourse and confluence' of bodies in a churchyard 'city' is suggestive of continual motion, of clashing and mixing parts. The poem's treatment of atomic theory and the matter of the universe is thus framed between two images of bodily reunion and resurrection from the grave. Interestingly, in 'A

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[70] Marcus Tullius Cicero*, Cicero's Tusculan Disputations, also treatises on The Nature of the Gods and on the Commonwealth*, trans. C. D. Yonge (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1877), 290. In the OED, entries for both 'fortuitous' and 'concourse' make reference to Cicero's original phrase, '*concursus fortuitus*'.

[71] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare The Complete Works: 2nd Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor & Stanley Wells (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2005), Act V, Scene I, 711.

Funerall Elegie', Donne seems to align the resurrection of Elizabeth Drury's body after death with that of the scattered pieces of a clock: 'But must we say shee's dead? May't not be said / That as a sundered Clocke is peece-meale laid, / Not to be lost, but by the makers hand / Repolish'd, without error then to stand' (37-40). Similes and metaphors concerning atoms and mechanical parts could equally be applied to the final resurrection in Donne's writing. For Donne, the speed with which God enables matter to re-compact preserves the physical integrity of the body's form. The swift movement by which the compound whole is constituted is as important in death as it is in life, and is indeed but a continuation of the unifying force with which God animates and dissolves living matter. In this respect, God is the efficient cause, the beginning and the end.

The last lines of the poem have often been taken as a statement of Donne's retirement from poetry, or more specifically from verse directed at wealthy patrons, as he inters his muse in Harrington's grave:[72]

> Doe not, fayre Soule, this sacrifice refuse
> That in thy Graue, I do interre my Muse
> Which by my greefe, greate as thy worth, being cast
> Behind hand; yet hath spoke, and spoke her last (255-8).

Given Donne's earlier assessment of the grave as the place where particles will decay and spread to the far reaches of the earth, together with his thoughts on the atomic dispersal of words and ideas, there remains the suggestion that his muse may survive, albeit in a different form. The poem's central idea of an atomic diffusion of instructive qualities or virtues may

[72] Pebworth writes that 'These lines are usually interpreted as Donne's farewell to secular poetry on the eve of his ordination'. He also suggests that 'the muse that Donne inters with Harington is… not the muse of poetry in general or even the muse of secular poetry, but the muse of the poetry of patronage' (42).

even have been picked up by Henry Valentine in his dedicatory verse upon Donne's death, 'An Elegy upon the Incomparable Dr Donne' (1633):[73]

> If that philosopher, which did avow
> The world to be but motes, were living now,
> He would affirm that th'atoms of his mould,
> Were they in several bodies blended, would
> Produce new worlds of travellers, divines,
> Of linguists, poets; sith these several lines
> In him concentrated were, and flowing thence
> Might fill again the world's circumference (33-40).

Valentine speculates that should 'that philosopher', Epicurus, be 'living now', he would bear witness to, and 'affirm' the atomic fragmentation of the deceased Donne, his qualities now 'blending' in 'several bodies'. Clucas suggests that Valentine's elegy is 'ironically appropriate' in its memorialisation of Donne in Lucretian terms (p. 340). But it is perhaps not so surprising that Donne's influence on 'travellers, divines', linguists and poets, should be commemorated through a metaphor of atomic diffusion, since his elegy to Harrington developed the same trope with so much attention to the different motions of atoms. By figuring God as the motive force in this atomic universe, Donne manages to relocate causality within an acceptably Christian, God-centred context; God is both the beginning and the end. In the following chapter I continue to trace Donne's treatment of the notion of the final cause in his devotional writing, particularly in his pursuit of the proper ends of a true Christian life. With God as the first and final cause of man's being, the moral ends of daily existence remain to be seen.

[73] Henry Valentine in *Poems by J. D., With Elegies on the Author's Death* (London, 1633), 380.

4. Action, Contemplation and the End of Devotion in *Satyre III* and 'Goodfriday 1613: Riding Westward'

In the 'Obsequies', perhaps Donne's most telling expression comes with his appeal to Harrington to be like a clock, or a sundial, and to issue 'Instructions' from God to the world 'such as never yet could bee / Disordred' (152-3). This desire for a guiding principle, or final cause, with which to order both the physical universe and the moral life of man goes some way towards resolving some of the issues he grappled with in 'The Storme', 'The Calme' and his city works. In 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' we saw that Donne's natural moral impulse towards fulfilment was dealt a serious blow by the unpredictable and uncontrollable movements of the ocean. In his city works, his attraction to the ideal classical commonwealth as the final cause of social life was similarly in tension with the new realities of individualism in nature and society. But in the 'Obsequies', the apparent problems of a 'disordered' universe, state and individual are remedied, Donne suggests, by the fact that God is the creator and motive force of human souls and bodies. God is the 'efficient cause', the beginning and the end of creation, and the final purpose of the Christian is, of course, fulfilled at the moment of death, when the virtuous soul begins its ascent to heaven. But how does one measure the everyday ends of the Christian life? As we have seen in Chapter 2, in Donne's letters to Goodyer and in his verse epistle to Wotton, he consistently envisioned human activity as being ethically divided between action and contemplation. Given his negative experience of seclusion and inactivity during the Mitcham years, his own feelings towards the active and contemplative lives were invariably complex. What this final chapter suggests is that the concepts of action and contemplation were of central importance to Donne's moral outlook in a period in which the need to choose between these two modes of living was reinvigorated by theological and philosophical controversy. By examining *Satyre*

III (ca. 1594-6) and 'Goodfriday 1613: Riding Westward' as texts which mark two significant turning points in his religious life, the chapter traces the development of Donne's writing as it contends with the themes of action and contemplation.

I.

The philosophical debate on the benefits of an active or contemplative life, as we saw in Chapter 2, originated with the Greek philosophers and found expression in the worldly retirement of the Stoics. Enshrined in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is the notion that the act of contemplation is the true end of human happiness, since it is 'loved for its own sake' and, unlike 'practical pursuits' in which 'we look to secure some advantage', it 'produces no result beyond the actual act of contemplation'.[1] This stress upon the happiness of self-sufficiency and the exercise of disinterested thought, as distinguished from lesser physical activities, later appealed to the devotional practices of the Church Fathers. However, a simple adherence to contemplation of the divine was complicated by the Christian insistence on the activity of good works and the duty of ministration of the faithful. According to St. Augustine, whose influence on Donne's religious thought has been well documented, contemplation provided the means by which man could bring his soul into communion with God, and was, therefore, analogous to wisdom.[2] There 'is a difference', Augustine wrote, 'between the contemplation of eternal things and the action by which we use temporal things

[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann, [1934] 1968), X. vii, 615.
[2] See for example, Katrin Ettenhuber, *Donne's Augustine*: *Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Mary Arshagouni Papazian, 'The Augustinian Donne: How a "Second S. Augustine"?' in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Papazian (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 66-89; Gillian R. Evans, 'John Donne and the Augustinian Paradox of Sin', *Review of English Studies* 33, No. 129 (1982 Feb.): 1-22; Helen B. Brooks, 'Donne's "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward" and Augustine's Psychology of Time,' in *John Donne's Religious Imagination*, eds. Raymond-Jean Frontain & Francis M. Malpezzi (Arkansas: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1995), 284-305.

well; the former is called wisdom, the latter knowledge'.[3] For Augustine, although temporal knowledge (*scientia*) was well suited to the world of action, contemplation or transcendental wisdom (*sapientia*), as John Peter Kenney observes, could deliver 'the soul to the Good that is ever at rest', and give 'the soul hope to rest in the greater sanctification that is the eternal communion of the saints in God'.[4] Pope Gregory the Great was more ambivalent in his partition of life into two spheres of activity and contemplation.[5] The act of contemplation, according to Gregory, could be a transitory experience, difficult to attain for lack of concentration or peace, and the inevitable demands of the active life. Moreover, for those with a developed intellect, it could also often lead to despair through the realisation of one's imperfections compared to the divine:

> The horror of a vision of the night is the shuddering of secret contemplation. For the higher the elevation, whereat the mind… contemplates the things that are eternal, so much the more, terror-struck at her temporal deeds, she shrinks with dread, in that she thoroughly discovers herself guilty, in proportion as she sees herself to have been out of harmony with that light, which shines in the midst of darkness [*intermicat*] above her, and then it happens that the mind being enlightened entertains the greater fear, as it more clearly sees by how much it is at variance with the rule of truth.[6]

As a way of alleviating the strains of meditation, Gregory recommends performing the external duties of an active life which will then prepare for a return to contemplation: 'for when the minds of the Elect, through the grace of an active life being vouchsafed them, abandon the paths of error, they never return to the evil courses of the world which they have

[3] Saint Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Books 8-15, eds. Gareth B. Matthews & Stephen McKenna (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12, 14, 98.
[4] John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism Of Saint Augustine: Rereading The Confessions* (London: Routledge, 2005), 126.
[5] Donne draws on Gregory frequently in his religious writings, and John Stubbs notes that a 'poignant memento' of the friendship between Donne and Isaak Walton can be found in 'a copy of Pope Gregory the Great's *De Cura Pastorale* (Concerning Pastoral Care), the front page of which bears both their signatures, Donne's "failing powers being shewn by the shaky writing"'. Stubbs, *John Donne, the Reformed Soul* (London: Penguin, 2006), 463.
[6] Saint Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, trans. John Henry Parker (London: J.G.F & J. Rivington, 1844), V. 53. Subsequent citations are from this edition.

forsaken' (X. 31). 'By busying themselves in such things as are immediately near them', Gregory continues, 'they may recruit their strength, and may be enabled by contemplation again to soar above themselves' (X. 31). This twofold approach towards spiritual perfection is conceived as a continuous succession of action and contemplation, epitomised in Gregory's axiom: 'Let all then that strive to lay hold of the summit of perfection, when they desire to occupy the citadel of contemplation, first try themselves, by exercising, in the field of practice' (VI. 59). Robert Austin Markus argues that 'Gregory's concern with the contemplative life was swallowed up in his thought about the Church and his own pastoral ministry within it'.[7] Alternating between teaching and meditation, he reconciled both modes of life as mutually beneficial elements 'in the individual person, as well as in the community' (p. 24).

In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas treats the question extensively, incorporating the thoughts of Augustine, Gregory and other early Christian theologians in his analysis. But his assessment is also strongly marked by the framework of Aristotle's ethics, in particular, the notion that all human activities are directed towards some purpose. Following Aristotle, Aquinas writes that

> It is evident… that contemplation is sought principally for its own sake. But the act of the practical intellect is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of action: and these very actions are ordained to some end. Consequently it is evident that the last end cannot consist in the active life, which pertains to the practical intellect.[8]

Here, the 'practical intellect' is conceived as the initial point of a process towards an achievable material end. Contemplation, on the other hand, is an end in itself, in this case, the happiness which attends the operation of the speculative intellect, 'whose highest object is the Divine Good' (I-II, Q. 3, Art. 5). While the 'last end cannot consist in the active life', this is

[7] Robert Austin Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22.
[8] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, Q. 3, Art. 5.

not to say that it has no place in Aquinas' formulation. After citing Gregory's notion of the twofold life, Aquinas draws again from Aristotle in acknowledging man's participation in both:

> Every living thing gives proof of its life by that operation which is most proper to it, and to which it is most inclined. Thus the life of plants is said to consist in nourishment and generation; the life of animals in sensation and movement; and the life of men in their understanding and acting according to reason. Wherefore also in men the life of every man would seem to be that wherein he delights most, and on which he is most intent… Accordingly since certain men are especially intent on the contemplation of truth, while others are especially intent on external actions, it follows that man's life is fittingly divided into active and contemplative. (II-II, Q. 179, Art. 1).

On the question of teaching, Aquinas argues that there exists a relationship between action and contemplation, manifested in spiritual meditations which are then expressed through speech. The 'object of teaching', he maintains, 'is on the part of the speech heard, and thus the object of teaching is the hearer. As to this object all doctrine belongs to the active life to which external actions pertain' (II-II, Q. 811, Art. 3). If all doctrine can only be communicated by speech, then activity is essential to the Christian life. Teaching also 'belongs to the active life, when a man conceives a truth inwardly, so as to be directed thereby in his outward action', but it 'belongs to the contemplative life when a man conceives an intelligible truth, in the consideration and love whereof he delights' (II-II, Q. 811, Art. 3). Throughout his discussion in the *Summa*, Aquinas incorporates the arguments that dignify an active life, but, like Aristotle and Augustine, he places man's greatest end in this life in a mystic contemplation of divine, yet inexpressible 'truth'.

During the early modern period the argument was invested with a renewed vigour by both the humanist movement and the Reformation. Paul Oskar Kristeller observes that the 'ideal of the theoretical or contemplative life became dissociated during the Renaissance from

the specific ideal of monasticism, and rather identified with the private existence of the scholar, writer, and scientist, no doubt under the influence of ancient philosophy'.[9] But, following the examples of Cicero and Seneca, an active public duty was also perceived by humanist thinkers as a virtuous path towards individual and common good.[10] The impulse towards retirement led, for example, to Michel de Montaigne's Stoical expression in his essay 'Of Practice': 'What I chiefly portray is my cogitations, a shapeless subject that does not lend itself to expression in actions… My actions would tell more about fortune than about me… it is not my deeds that I write down; it is myself, it is my essence'.[11] Here, Montaigne explicitly separates the tangibility of actions from the shapelessness of contemplation, associating his own sense of self with the indefinable 'essence' of his thought. However, in spite of his preference for secluded study, Montaigne's own political obligations in the service of the French state meant that he was a practitioner of both the active and contemplative lives.

While the humanist dimension of the debate was influenced by classical literature, Reformation thinkers combined the study of ancient moral philosophy with the scriptures. Phillip Melanchthon, like Aquinas, considered the question within the Aristotelian framework of purposeful ends.[12] As Antti Raunio suggests, he believed it the task of 'moral philosophy to show this end and the way which leads to it' (p. 57). The true end of human conduct, for Melanchthon, was encoded within an individual's soul, but because of an inherent sinfulness, the proper means of attaining this end remained uncertain; and it is for this reason that the

[9] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 55.
[10] As Kristeller notes of Italian humanism, 'we hear again several voices in praise of the active life, such as those of Salutati, Bruni, Alberti, and Palmieri…' (54). On the notion of civic humanism see Hans Baron, *Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).
[11] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, trans. Donald Frame (California: Stanford University Press, 1957), Book II, Essay 6, 274. It should be noted that Montaigne often proves the exception to many Renaissance 'rules', and at different points in his *Essais*, he incorporates and transcends the tenets of Stoicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism.
[12] Antti Raunio observes that Melanchthon 'treats the question of the natural knowledge of the human being's final end… in his commentary on Aristotle's ethics, written in the middle of the 1530s, like the Commentary on *De anima'*. Raunio, 'Divine and Natural law in Luther and Melanchthon' in *Lutheran Reformation and the Law,* ed. Virpi Mäkinen (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 57.

argument over active and contemplative life exists. Rather than adhere to any single type of life, Melanchthon subordinates the terms to the human being's pursuit of the Good 'which is not only his or her own particular good, but also a common good for human nature or for the human community' (p. 59). It is with John Calvin's Biblical exegesis that we see a firm departure from the exaltation of the contemplative life exercised by earlier theologians. For example, in his Biblical commentary on Luke 10:38-42, Calvin sought to redress what he considered a historical distortion of the story of Martha and Mary. Martha's bustling activity upon Jesus' arrival at her home was traditionally held as an indictment of action compared to Mary's silent contemplation of Christ's words. But as Calvin notes,

> Luke relates that, having been hospitably received by Martha, as soon as he entered the house, he began to teach and exhort. As this passage has been basely distorted into the commendation of what is called a Contemplative life, we must inquire into its true meaning, from which it will appear, that nothing was farther from the design of Christ, than to encourage his disciples to indulge in indolence, or in useless speculations.[13]

Here, Calvin suggests that the focus of the passage should, in fact, be on the teaching of Christ, rather than the supposed contemplation of Mary, that it is in the twin acts of teaching and listening that the story's true moral resides. Moreover, unlike Aquinas, Calvin explicitly rejects Aristotle's conception of contemplation as the highest good. 'It is, no doubt, an old error', he writes, 'that those who withdraw from business, and devote themselves entirely to a contemplative life, lead an Angelical life':

> For the absurdities which the Sorbonnists utter on this subject they appear to have been indebted to Aristotle, who places the highest good, and ultimate end, of human life in contemplation, which, according to him, is the enjoyment of virtue. When some men were drawn by ambition to withdraw from the ordinary intercourse of life… the

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[13] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Volume 2*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 142.

> resolution to adopt that course was followed by such pride, that they imagined themselves to be like the angels, because they did nothing (p. 142).

The negative associations of monasticism and the idleness which prevailed in many quarters undoubtedly shaped Calvin's attitude towards the problems of a contemplative life. But he was also convinced of the necessity of activity, of a calling in which every man could exercise his true purpose. 'We know that men were created for the express purpose of being employed in labour of various kinds', Calvin writes, 'and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God, than when every man applies diligently to his own calling, and endeavours to live in such a manner as to contribute to the general advantage' (p. 143).

Various echoes of this debate are discernible in Donne's religious thought. As we have seen, Donne was raised a Catholic and was ordained as a priest in the Church of England in 1615. There is no precise indication of when Donne 'converted' and, as Achsah Guibbory notes, when he wrote about religious issues, his own beliefs were never explicitly stated.[14] Following his ordination, however, Donne's sermons frequently demonstrate conformity with the doctrines of the English Church. For example, in a sermon preached at Spital on Easter Monday 22 April 1622 he launches an attack upon the laziness and ignorance of monasticism as an affront to both the active and contemplative lives:

> That knowledge was a help to salvation, the ancients thought: but that is a new doctrine, that men should make a title to God, by being ignorant: that whereas all the life of man, is either an active life, or a contemplative, they should in the Roman church make one Order, and call them *nullanos*, men that did nothing, in contempt of the active life; another Order called *ignorantes*, men that know nothing.[15]

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[14] Achsah Guibbory, 'Donne and Apostasy', in the *Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn & M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 665.
[15] George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds. *The Sermons of John Donne* (California: University of California Press, 1962), IV, 120.

This sermon was delivered at the Spital Cross in the churchyard of St Mary's without Bishopsgate on 2 Corinthians 4.6 'For, God Who Commanded Light to Shine out of Darkness, Hath Shined in our Hearts, to Give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ'. 1622 was a year of particular political sensitivity for preachers and Jeanne Shami argues that 'Donne's activities in 1620-2 after his return from the continent with the Doncaster embassy need to be reassessed in light of circumstances affecting preaching and controversial expression of any kind in the months leading up to the *Directions*'.[16] King James drew up the *Directions to Preachers* in August 1622 in order to curtail inflammatory preaching on controversial doctrine and matters of state during the period and he chose Donne to defend his position in a sermon at St Paul's Cross on 15 September 1622. As Shami has observed, Donne's religious conformity in his sermons is without question, but within 'the limits of allowable discourse, many preachers found room to speak their minds freely and yet obediently' (p. 18). In this respect, his Easter Monday sermon at Spital is uncontroversial in its criticisms of monasticism and promotion of knowledge (the 'Light of Knowledge') as the first step towards salvation. Indeed, Donne even pauses to praise a congregation 'of such spiritual and circumcised Ears, as come not to hear that Wisdom of Words, which may make the Cross of Christ to none effect; much less such itching Ears, as come to hear popular and seditious Calumnies and Scandals, and Reproaches, cast upon the present State and Government' (IV, 91). Donne's imaginative satirical representation of monastic orders, as *nullanos* and *ignorantes*, is followed by a serious reflection upon the consequences of the sins of idleness and ignorance:

> There is an annihilation in sin… Then when by sin, I depart from the Lord my God, in whom only I live, and move, and have my being, I am nothing; and truly in this sinful

[16] Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 75.

> profession of thine, of doing nothing, of knowing nothing, they come too near being nothing (IV, 120).

'Doing', 'knowing', 'living' and 'moving' in God are the prerequisites of being. To indulge in complete rest without exercising body or mind is to court annihilation, the nothingness that Donne consistently invokes as a thing to be feared.

Like Calvin, Donne repeatedly suggests in the sermons that the antidote to a life of fruitless retirement can be found through the fulfilment of a calling.[17] In a sermon preached at St Paul's in the evening on Easter Day 12 April 1626, Donne pursues this line of argument by stressing the importance of the body as an instrument of worship and service to God. This sermon is on 1 Corinthians 15.29 'Else What Shall they do that are Baptized for Dead? If the Dead Rise not at all, why are they then Baptized for Dead?', and is the first of three sermons on this text. From the beginning of the sermon, Donne primarily takes issue with Roman Catholic interpretations of the chosen text as evidence of purgatory. As Jeffrey Johnson observes, in the opening paragraph Donne 'states explicitly that although the Roman Catholic Church has used this text "to the maintenance of their Purgatory," he adds, "yet all agree, that these words are an argument for the Resurrection, and therefore proper to this day"' (VII, 94).[18] Later in the sermon Donne turns again to the question of a calling as the antithesis of a monastic life:

> As long as we are in our dwelling upon earth, though we must love God with all our soul yet it is not with our soul alone; our body also must testify and express our love, not only in a reverential humiliation thereof, in the dispositions, and postures, and motions, and actions of the body, when we present ourselves at God's service, in his house, but in the discharge of our bodily duties, and the sociable offices of our

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[17] On Calvin's influence on Donne, John Stachniewski notes that he 'regarded Augustine and Calvin jointly as the greatest Bible exegetes, and Calvin, the more immediate figure, is independently influential in his poetry'. Stachniewski, 'The Despair of the "Holy Sonnets"', *English Literary History* 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1981): 683-4.

[18] Jeffrey Johnson, 'John Donne and Paolo Sarpi; Rendering the Council of Trent', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 101.

> callings, towards one another: not to run away from that service of God, by hiding ourselves in a superstitious monastery, or in a secular monastery, in our own house, by an unprofitable retiredness, and absenting ourselves from the necessary businesses of this world: not to avoid a calling, by taking none: not to make void a calling, by neglecting the due offices thereof (VII, 104).

The 'motions' and 'actions' of the body should be positively employed both at 'God's service' and in God's service, not hidden away in religious or secular retirement, or in 'running away' from 'bodily duties'. 'Virtually all of Donne's sermons in these controversial times', Shami writes, 'articulate a doctrine of callings focusing primarily on their spiritual as well as social necessity' (p. 91). Here, the spiritual and 'sociable offices' of a calling are conceived as being 'towards one another', or as Calvin puts it, towards the 'general advantage'.

As several critics have argued, at this transitional moment in the development of the English Church, Donne's sermons reveal an inclination towards moderate predestinarianism, and this may explain his attitude towards the fulfilment of a worldly purpose. As Guibbory notes, after 1624 the English Church 'became more sharply divided between those clergy who favoured ceremony and were anti-Calvinist, and "Puritans" who believed that the English Church was becoming too much like that of Rome' (p. 667). Daniel W. Doerksen argues that 'Donne nowhere in the sermons rejects or even objects to the doctrine of predestination as such, which as he knows is clearly affirmed in positive form in the seventeenth of the church's Thirty-nine Articles'.[19] 'Far from eschewing the doctrine of election in his sermons', Doerksen maintains, 'he often refers in positive terms to the elect or election' (p. 17). Since God alone presides over an individual's election, attempting to anticipate God's will regarding the fulfilment of spiritual retirement or activity was beginning to be viewed as futile. Luther's emphasis on grace and justification by faith alone was a key

[19] Doerksen, 'Polemist or Pastor?', Donne and Moderate Calvinist Conformity', in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 17. Shami also notes Donne's moderate attitude.

point of doctrinal disagreement between Reformers and the Roman church, which continued to stress good works as a means of salvation. The introduction of predestination complicated this debate because it removed the possibility that individuals might have any influence over their own salvation; so an adherence to faith or good works might be equally valid. Moreover, as Max Weber argues, predestination actually encouraged work because success in a particular calling might be taken as a sign of one's election.[20]

Donne engaged with this argument in a sermon, preached at the 'Churching of the Countesse of Bridgewater' (1621/1623?), on the words of Micah 2.10: 'Arise and Depart, for this is not your Rest'.[21] The occasion of Donne's sermon, the churching of the Countess of Bridgewater following the birth of her child, is one for which he was most likely commissioned, and his choice of text, Micah 2.10, concerns a warning to the Israelites of the impending Babylonian captivity. Elizabeth M. A. Hodgson notes that throughout the sermon Donne 'connects the Countess's rising from her childbed with the Israelites' and his auditor's rising from sin'.[22] 'The central analogy driving' the sermon 'thus connects the idolatry of the children of Abraham to the Countess's lying-in' (p. 47). But Donne is also concerned at various points throughout the sermon with the topical doctrinal question of faith and works, as well as with callings. On the question of faith and works, he writes:

> now, if the Apostle make it all one, whether want of faith, or want of works, exclude us from the Land of Rest, let not us be too curious enquirers, whether faith or works bring us thither; for neither faith, nor works bring us thither, as a full cause; but if we consider mediate causes, so they may be both causes; faith, instrumentall, works, declaratory; faith may be as evidence, works as the scale of it; but the cause is onely, the free election of God. Nor ever shall we come thither, if we leave out either; we shall meet as many Men in heaven, that have lived without faith, as without works (V, 195).

[20] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (London: Routlege, 2012), 68.
[21] The date of this sermon has not been positively affirmed.
[22] Elizabeth M. A. Hodgson, *Gender and the Sacred Self in John Donne* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 47.

Here, Donne appeals to his listeners not to be 'too curious enquirers' into the 'cause' by which they may reach heaven, and he suggests that there is a certain futility in the argument, since only 'the free election of God' can determine whether an individual will be delivered to the 'Land of Rest'. However, he also warns that it would be unwise to 'leave out either' faith or works, since they are 'mediate causes', living 'evidence' of a Christian life. Rather than conceiving of the acts of faith and good works in the traditional way, as a means of calculating one's own salvation, Donne's sermons, following Calvin, appear to readjust the meaning of the words to emphasise a common good on earth.

Shami has noted that at the time of Donne's ministry there existed a great deal of controversy over the correct method of teaching the doctrine of predestination, so as to avoid the possibility of despair. She suggests that for Donne, although it 'may proceed from what is good in itself ("feare of God and the hate of sin") (II, 332), this state of "inordinate dejection" (III, 303), aggravated by calamities, is deemed far more crippling, spiritually, than presumption, its antithesis'.[23] While Donne sought to offer comfort to his congregation over the inflexible aspects of rigid predestination, he also suggested that the state of retired contemplation was a precondition of despair. For example, in a sermon preached before the King at Whitehall in April 15 1628, Donne paints a vivid picture of the despairing, isolated Christian, oppressed by the weight of his own thoughts:

> To find a languishing wretch in a sordid corner, not onely in a penurious fortune, but in an oppressed conscience, his eyes under a diverse suffocation, smothered with smoke, and smothered with teares, his eares estranged from all salutations, and visits, and all sounds, but his own sighes, and the stormes and thunders and earthquakes of his own despaire, To enable this man to open his eyes, and see that Christ Jesus stands before him, and says, *Behold and see, if ever there were any sorrow, like my sorrow,* and my sorrow is overcome, why is not thine? (VIII, 246)

[23] Shami argues that Donne locates despair 'in extreme or partial responses to scripture', and 'reiterates that the full impact and application of the scriptures requires an awareness, first, that they offer a contractual view of the human relationship with God, and, second, that that contract is conditional'. She concludes that for Donne, 'there is no condemnation without sin' (96).

Donne takes as his text Isiah 32.8 ‘But the Liberall Deviseth Liberall Things, and by Liberall Things he shall Stand’, and provides guidance and instruction to the King on the theme of ‘Liberality’. As Shami argues, preachers like Donne, ‘though not enthusiastic about all royal policies or their implementation, offered advice through authorized pulpit discourses’ (pp. 17-8). This could be achieved through ‘choice of text’ or ‘application of biblical example to present circumstances’ (p. 18). In this example, Donne moves from questions concerning the ‘Liberality’ of Kingship to the liberal nature of the Holy Ghost as a ‘comforter’. Cut off from all sights, sounds, ‘salutations’ and ‘visits’, the condition of this ‘languishing wretch’ is exacerbated by his rejection of society for a ‘sordid corner’. But, Donne continues, to ‘enrich this poore soule, to comfort this sad soule so, as that he shall Beleave, and by believing finde all Christ to be his, this is that Liberality which we speake of now’ (VIII, 247).

With the contemporary fixation upon predestination, the troubling nature of contemplation, earlier identified by Church Fathers such as Gregory, became even more acute. As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, Donne’s own experience of painful contemplation, during the Mitcham years, was enhanced by inactivity, and this may account for his familiarity here with the marks of despair. John Stachniewski has written of the sense of Calvinist despair in Donne’s *Holy Sonnets*, which are believed to have been composed during this period. He writes that Donne had ‘an imaginative comprehension of what it was in Calvinism that spoke to the condition of so many in this transitional period of social and economic history and especially, of course, to his own predicament’ (p. 698). At one point, in a letter to Goodyer, Donne attempted to diagnose and prescribe the cure for his melancholy state, which in this case, he suggests, might be remedied through activity. ‘When sadnesse dejects me’, he writes, ‘either I countermine it with another sadnesse, or I kindle squibs about

me again, and flie into sportfulnesse and company'.[24] By referring to the 'countermining' of sadness, Donne draws from images of siege warfare, from the active drive towards what the OED defines as mining 'or subterranean excavation made by the defenders of a fortress, to intercept a mine made by the besiegers'. Countermine may also mean 'A secret device or plot designed to frustrate another; a counter-plot', and this sense is also implicit in Donne's use of the term. In the same way, the kindling of 'squibs' (or lighting of fireworks) creates a strikingly dynamic image of being propelled back into 'sportfulnesse and company' by virtue of an explosion.[25] Perhaps significantly, to be 'exploded' back into company implies a reticence, or lack of will on the part of the subject to return to society. The battle imagery employed here might then be taken as a variation on Gregory's militant advice, to prepare to 'occupy the citadel' of contemplation by 'exercising in the field of practice'. If Donne's 'countermining' of sadness proves ineffective and the 'citadel of contemplation' threatens to fall, then an active, explosive assault is preferable to surrender.

In 'Meditation XII' of the *Devotions* (1624), Donne also sounds a note of defiance as he questions why his own thoughts and study should be the cause of his melancholy, and ultimately physical illness.[26] 'But what have I done', he writes, 'either to breed or to breathe these vapours? They tell me it is my melancholy; did I infuse, did I drink in melancholy into myself? It is my thoughtfulness; was I not made to think? It is my study; doth not my calling call for that? I have done nothing wilfully, perversely toward it, yet must suffer in it, die by it'.[27] Elsewhere, he writes of 'alacrity', a lively cheerfulness, as being paramount in the defence against melancholy. 'This balme, of our lives', he suggested to Goodyer, 'this

[24] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr. (London, 1651), 71. No date has been discovered for this letter.
[25] The OED defines 'squibs' in this period as 'A common species of firework, in which the burning of the composition is usually terminated by a slight explosion', or 'An explosive device used as a missile or means of attack'.
[26] On Donne's adherence to the type of the melancholy scholar see Douglas Trevor 'John Donne and Scholarly Melancholy', *Studies in English Literature*, *1500-1900* 40, No. 1 (2000), 81-102.
[27] Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasion*s, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1975), 62-4.

alacrity which dignifies even our service to God, this gallant enemy of dejection and sadnesse…. must be sought and preserved diligently'.[28] In the same letter, Donne attends explicitly to questions of action and contemplation, combining his current distaste for inactivity with a condemnation of the monastic life:

> Our nature is Meteorique, we respect (because we partake so) both earth and heaven, for as our bodies glorified shall be capable of spirituall joy, so our souls demerged into those bodies, are allowed to partake earthly pleasure. Our soul is not sent hither, only to go back again: we have some errand to do here: nor is it sent into prison, because it comes innocent: and he which sent it, is just. As we may not kill our selves, so we may not bury our selves: which is done or endangered in a dull Monastique sadnesse, which is so much worse then jollity… And certainly despair is infinitely worse, then presumption: both because this is an excesse of love, that of fear; and because this is up, that down the hill; easier, and more stumbling (p. 46).

By referring to man's nature as 'Meteorique', Donne initially suggests that the purpose of contemplation ('spiritual joy') and the exercise of activity ('earthly pleasure') enjoy an equal, or 'mixed' share in life. Moreover, his aversion to 'burying' oneself in 'dull Monastique sadness' and appeal to activity ('we have some errand to do here') again aligns his thought with Calvin's emphasis upon a calling. As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 3, to be 'Meteorique' can suggest stasis, but also dynamism. Here, this 'Meteorique' dynamism is clearly opposed to 'Monastique' inertia. The concluding part of this passage returns to an image of thoughtfulness, in particular the contemplation of election and damnation, in which the experience of despair is, once more, considered much worse than that of 'presumption' about one's election. Because of an excess of 'fear', the despairing Christian goes down the 'hill', an act which is 'easier' and involves more error, a 'stumbling' from the true path. To 'presume' a place in heaven is to struggle up the 'hill', more difficult for a sinner to envision

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[28] *Letters*, 45. This letter, because of its reference to Donne being in Paris, is supposed to have been written during his continental travels with Sir Robert Drury around 1611.

but preferable to despair. In this metaphor, to climb the hill, regardless of the difficulties of thoughtful reflection, is the inquiring individual's final object. Contemplation, then, in spite of the attendant risk of despair, remains an essential part of the Christian's understanding of the divine.

For Donne, this need for contemplation can be seen in both his secular and spiritual pursuits. As R. C. Bald notes, a 'symptom' of the apparent conflict between his active and contemplative lives 'can be found in the motto which Donne chose to inscribe, along with his name, on the title-pages of the books he owned: "*Per Rachel ho servito, e non per Lea*", which translates as 'Rachel I have served and not Leah' (p. 123). This motto refers to the Old Testament story in which Rachel is associated with the contemplative life and Leah with the active. According to Genesis 29, Leah and Rachel were the daughters of Laban and wives of Jacob. As with the story of Martha and Mary, Christian interpreters portrayed Leah as a symbol of the active life because of her household labouring, whilst Rachel's beauty was understood as being emblematic of the soul's contemplative life. Geoffrey Keynes suggests that Donne uses the motto to imply 'that circumstances had forced on him a life of action although his inclination was for a life of study and contemplation'.[29] It is perhaps unsurprising that a motto referring to the virtues of quiet study should be found in Donne's books, since the process of reading and annotating necessarily involves contemplation; but, despite Keynes's interpretation, this does not mean it can be read as evidence that he spurned, or was 'forced' into the active life. On the other hand, the restful end of spiritual life was something towards which Donne consistently strove. In the sermon on Micah 2.10., for example, the attainment of a sense of earthly rest, as an antecedent of eternal rest, forms a unifying theme in his argument. This rest is not contemplation, but rather a sense of peace derived from the Christian's performance of right action. He writes that 'the Joyes of heaven

[29] Geoffrey Keynes, 'Books from Donne's Library', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1, No. 1 (1949): 65.

are express'd unto us, in that name of Rest' and that this 'blessing of Rest was more pretious, more acceptable to the Jewes, then to any other Nation… For as Gods first promise, and the often ratification of it, had ever accustom'd them to a longing for that promis'd rest, as their long, and laborious peregrinations, had made them ambitious…' (V, 193). For Donne, the wanderings of the Israelites and the guarantee of rest is a type, not only for the Countess of Bridgewater and the congregation, but for all mankind: 'it is the mark of all men, even naturall men, Rest' even if this is something the Israelites themselves were eventually denied. As he goes on to note, 'this was the rest, which the Jewes were to lose in this place, the testimony of their consciences' (V, 193).

Within this discussion, Donne, once again, refuses to elevate contemplation and retiredness above worldly duties. We 'must not decline the businesses of this life, and the offices of society', he maintains, 'out of an aëry, and imaginary affection of rest: our principall rest is, in the testimony of our *Conscience*, and in doing that which we were sent to doe; And to have a Rest, and peace, in a Conscience of having done that religiously, and acceptably to God, is our true Rest' (V, 193-4). Here, Donne makes 'doing that which we were sent to doe' the 'testimony' of an individual's conscience, and thus chooses activity which leads to rest. This resolution is also discernible in his sermon 'Rejoyce Evermore' preached at St. Dunstans on 1 Thessalonians 5.16, in which he concludes that 'Joy is peace for having done that which we ought to have done' (X, 215). The final end of joy, through the peacefulness of conscience, is expressed through an Aristotelian simile: 'As Rest is the end of motion, every thing moves therefore that it may rest, so Joy is the end of our desires, whatsoever we place our desires, our affections upon, it is therefore, that we may enjoy it' (X, 214). Donne provides extensive examples of the ways in which all things, including human actions, must move towards their particular place. Drawing from Aristotle's cosmology and employing the familiar pun on the sun as Christ, he suggests that joy in a good conscience 'is

not such a Rest, as the Rest of the Earth, that never mov'd; but as the Sunne rejoyceth to runne his race, and his circuit is unto the end of heaven' (X, 214). Here he distinguishes between earthly and spiritual ends. If a preacher, Donne continues, whose 'function' is to attend to God's service, prefers to reside in the world, if a soldier 'delights' himself in agriculture, or if a 'Counsellor of State' writes books for posterity, rather than serve for 'present emergencies', then 'all this occasions not this joy' (X, 215). The reason, he concludes, is because although 'there have been motion, and though there be Rest, yet that is not Rest after the Motion proper to them' (X, 215).

Here, then, is the germ of Donne's mature opinion regarding action and contemplation. Because action and contemplation each have their merits, like Aquinas and Melanchthon, he subordinates both to an ethical idea of fulfilment. Action and contemplation may play a part in man's pursuit of final joy, but they must be properly carried out in such a way as to ease the conscience and enable a final sense of 'rest'. Aquinas and Melanchthon, as we have seen, incorporated the moral philosophy of Aristotle as a framework for treating theological questions. For Aquinas in particular moral questions are often rationalised in terms of ends and goals. In what follows I suggest that Donne similarly treats the question of active and contemplative lives with an eye towards ethical ends, and that this concern can be traced through the arguments of *Satyre III* and 'Goodfriday 1613'. Where the younger Donne's satire seeks to come to terms with a sense of religious truth and the best means of living a Christian life, the later poem, written on the cusp of his entering holy orders, demonstrates a much more meditative and mystical approach to the prospect of achieving salvation.

II.

Satyre III forms the centre point of Donne's sequence of poems in this genre and, like the other satires, attends to the ethical questions of living in contemporary London.[30] While the rest of the satires are concerned with the follies of secular life, however, this poem is conspicuous in its treatment of religion. Written between 1594 and 1596, well before Donne had shown any positive inclination towards the English Church and thus at a time when his religious loyalties were far from certain, *Satyre III* appears to abandon the orthodoxies of Rome, Geneva and London, and this has led critics to concentrate upon the satirist's pursuit of 'truth' as a way of getting to the heart of the poem's meaning. Richard Strier sees the poem as evidence of Donne's inherent radicalism, but he also argues that to 'be "wise" in a strongly classical, distinctively Stoic sense is more important to this speaker than sorting out, expressing, or tempering his emotions'.[31] Similarly, Joshua Scodel suggests that the satire's moral impulse resides in an Aristotelian expression of the mean, which replaces the intemperate choices offered by organised religion.[32] M. Thomas Hester acknowledges the existence of the active and contemplative lives in the poem and argues that the 'speaker's own successful integration of his mental faculties and of his contemplative and active lives exemplifies… that healthy integrity which is the "cure" for both the private and public failures in "devotion [to] our Mistress faire Religion"'.[33] On the contrary, I would suggest that the poem's persistent restlessness precludes a retired Stoic wisdom, and that balance, whether an Aristotelian expression of the mean, or in the merging of active and contemplative lives, is precisely what it struggles, and ultimately fails, to achieve. Donne's

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[30] References to *Satyre III* are from *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. Wesley Milgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[31] Richard Strier, 'Radical Donne: "Satire III"'. *English Literary History* 60, No. 2 (1993): 287.
[32] Joshua Scodel, 'The Medium Is the Message: Donne's "Satire 3", "To Sir Henry Wotton" (Sir, More Than Kisses), and the Ideologies of the Mean', *Modern Philology* 90, No. 4 (May, 1993): 479-511.
[33] Thomas M. Hester, '"All Our Soules Devotion": Satire as Religion in Donne's Satyre III', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 18, No. 1 (1978): 54.

object is the pursuit of a final end, of spiritual truth attained through right action. But the satire's discursive sceptical tone suggests that such a resolution will be difficult to effect. Indeed Donne's 'truth' in the poem is never defined.

From the beginning, the poem is fraught, with the satirist questioning the very suitability of the genre as a means of instruction or condemnation:

> Kinde pitty chokes my spleene; brave scorn forbids
> Those teares to issue which swell my eye-lids;
> I must not laugh, nor weepe sinnes, and be wise;
> Can railing, then, cure these worne maladies? (1-4)

This is an early signal that a sense of balance or equilibrium in actions will be difficult to achieve, that the role of the satirist is confused as his vituperous 'spleene' is restrained by 'kinde pitty' and tearful pity itself 'forbidden' by 'brave scorn'. The genre, it seems, is at odds with what the satirist wishes to portray, and, as is suggested by the irreconcilable dualisms of the opening lines, will struggle to contain a subject of considerable weight. Indeed, given Donne's propensity for imaging worldly and literary forms of stasis (As in, the references to 'midnight', 'dead low water' and meteors in 'The Calme' and 'Obsequies'), these opposing forces of the opening lines, in themselves, represent an uneasy balance which cannot last as the poem progresses. Donne's question in line 4 raises the possibility that 'railing' might then serve as a 'cure' for these 'maladies'. Railing, as Scodel notes, 'recalls Juvenal's most familiar stance, the angry abuse that stems from *indignatio*' (p. 483). But as several commentators have observed, such a tone is not consistent with the rest of the satire.[34] Hester suggests that, for Donne, railing might mean 'the combination of *laus et vituperatio* – in this case, the Christian attitude of charity for sinners and hatred for their sins', which

[34] For example, Scodel argues that 'Donne does not simply vent his rage in a Juvenalian outburst; instead he weighs the propriety of giving expression to his anger. His sense that expressing rage might be the best response to sin runs counter to Stoic but not to Aristotelian norms' (483). Strier suggests that neither 'we nor the poet are sure that there is a satiric mode able both to "cure these worne maladies" and to enable the speaker to "be wise." It is not clear that "railing" should even be tried. Perhaps the moral essay would be the better genre' (288).

would then enable a "cure" for the present age' (p. 39). Such a position envisages the satirist as a teacher, a moral guardian, whose ridicule of follies and directions towards avoiding sin provide genuine spiritual and moral reformation. This view is problematic, however, since contemporary uses of the word 'rail', in the sense that Donne uses it, had a very particular designation. As the OED notes, to rail meant 'To utter abusive language; to complain persistently, to rant' as a means of bringing '(a person or thing) into (or out of, etc.), a certain state', and often denoted the impossibility of achieving such an end. In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), for example, Thersites mocks Ajax with the words 'I shall sooner rail thee into wit and holiness', the insinuation being that such an improvement is impossible.[35] Similarly, in *The Merchant of Venice* (ca. 1596-8), Shylock notes the futility of angry exhortations as a means of persuasion: 'Till thou canst raile the seal from off my bond, Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speake so loud'.[36] Donne himself would later equate satire with libel and again, in the Easter Monday sermon preached at Spital in 1622, contrasted this mode of 'teaching' with the much superior sermon:

> a man may make a Sermon, a Satyr; he may make a Prayer, a Libel, if upon colour of preaching, or praying, against toleration of Religion, or persecution for Religion, he would insinuate, that any such tolerations are prepared for us, or such persecutions threatened against us. But if for speaking the mysteries of your salvation, plainly, sincerely, inelegantly, inartificially; for the Gold, and not for the Fashion; for the Matter, and not for the Form… my service may be acceptable to Gods people, and available to their Edification (IV, 91).

Controversial preaching, Donne claims, is not only unedifying in terms of content, but the strained, artificial and often scurrilous form of satire is not conducive to the clear and simple expression of salvation which can be facilitated by the sermon (although, of course, the sermon itself is highly artificial). In *Satyre III*, the implication is that railing cannot 'cure'

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[35] William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare The Complete Works: 2nd Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor & Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Act II, Scene I, 752.
[36] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare The Complete Works: 2nd Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor & Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Act IV, Scene I, 472.

these ‘maladies’ of pity and scorn; but, unlike this sermon’s aversion to satirical preaching, Donne continues to push for a spiritual resolution which, rather than offering advice, reads like a personal exploration of his own spiritual condition. As Aquinas notes, teaching requires the realisation of an inward truth before it can be expressed in external actions, and this inward truth is one which Donne has yet to apprehend.

Indeed, in the following lines, Donne praises the unity of intellectual ‘truth’ and virtuous life achieved by classical philosophers compared to the fragmentary efforts of contemporary Christians:

> Is not our Mistresse, faire Religion
> As worthy’of all our Soules devotion
> As vertue was to the first blinded age?
> Are not heavens joyes as valiant to asswage
> Lusts, as earths honour was to them? Alas,
> As wee do them in meanes, shall they surpasse
> Us in the end, and shall thy fathers spirit
> Meete blinde Philosophers in heaven, whose merit
> Of strict life may be’imputed faith, and heare
> Thee, whom hee taught so easie wayes and neare
> To follow, damn’d? (5-15)

In this passage body and soul, earth and heaven, action and contemplation, and pagan and Christian are framed as contraries. Since the highest object of the ‘Soules devotion’ – ‘our Mistresse, faire Religion’ in the case of Christians, ‘vertue’, in the case of the ancients – is achieved through contemplation, Donne here praises the self-knowledge of the ‘first blinded age’ in contrast to the Christian neglect of ‘heavens joyes’ in favour of worldly ‘lusts’. The ‘blinde philosophers’ are considered blind because they are denied the ‘meanes’ of revelation possessed by Christians; however, because of their earthly virtue, Donne suggests this ‘merit of strict life may be imputed faith’, which would allow them access to the true ‘end’. The notion that ‘thy fathers spirit’ might meet ‘blinde philosophers in heaven’, establishes the

standard by which the satirist can condemn the current state of Christian devotion. Contemplation, then, appears to be the means by which 'heavens joyes' might be attained, an interpretation which is borne out by the succeeding lines: 'O if thou dar'st, feare this; / This feare great courage, and high valour is' (15-16). True fear, as Gregory notes, comes with the apprehension of one's sinfulness during the act of contemplation, and the satire goes on to recognise the gulf between worldly and spiritual fears.

To this end, Donne provides an extended list of earthly acts which might be considered courageous, according to the Elizabethan admiration for foreign adventures. Aiding 'mutinous Dutch', 'laying' in 'ships woodden Sepulchers, a prey / To leaders rage, to stormes, to shot' and to 'dearth' (17-19), and diving 'seas, and dungeons of the earth' (20), may appear courageous, but the diverse nature of these actions are a distortion of a truly ordered and purposeful existence. Similarly, to experience the extremes of 'frozen North discoveries' (22) or 'the fires of Spaine,' and 'the line' (equator) (24), might test the endurance of the body, but not the soul. As Donne notes, to abandon God's 'garrison' (31) of spiritual fortitude in this world, is to 'leave th' appointed field' for 'forbidden warres' (32). In other words, not only do such actions deviate from a sense of fulfilment in the Aristotelian tradition, they are also mere distractions from the contemplation which will bring the individual into communion with God. As Aquinas, paraphrasing Gregory, puts it: 'there be some so restless that when they are free from labor they labor all the more, because the more leisure they have for thought, the worse interior turmoil they have to bear' (II-II, Q. 182, Art. 4). It is for this reason that such actions demonstrate a false 'courage of straw' (28). Donne counsels against falling into such distractions with the recommendation, 'Know thy foes' (33), subsequently identified as the 'foule devil' (33), 'the worlds selfe' (37), and the 'Flesh' (40). On the problems of the flesh, Donne admonishes that the 'joyes which flesh can taste, / Thou lov'st; and thy faire goodly soule, which doth / Give this flesh power to taste joy, thou

dost loathe' (40-2). Strier argues that this 'plea is not to renounce "joyes which flesh can taste" but rather to have a proper philosophical understanding of them, to see them, in good Aristotelian fashion, as ontologically dependent on the "fair goodly soule"' (pp. 291-2). I would add that these lines amount to a lamentation of the disunity of body and soul, of the imperfect division of the body's action and the soul's contemplation, and the difficulties in achieving a purposeful and balanced life.

Having established action and contemplation as the framework by which the Christian can judge his/her life, Donne turns to the contemporary religious institutions in which these virtues might be exercised, with the command, 'Seeke true religion' (43). Like the foreign adventurers, whose pursuits are not only unstructured, but are devoid of serious thought, Donne's caricatures of the adherents of the Roman religion, Calvinism and Anglicanism (Mirreus, Crantz and Graius) are similarly bound to external and superficial considerations. Scodel observes that,

> While the name Mirrheus – that is, perfumed with myrrh – suggests an excessive concern for ceremonial, and Crants, a Dutch name, suggests the character's allegiance to Calvinism, Graius, the Latin for "a Greek", has puzzled commentators. This enigmatic name is probably intended to make the Englishman's allegiance to his national church seem literally alien (p. 487).

The extended metaphor, imagining each church as the female object of sexual desire, is linked explicitly to the domain of the flesh, of the transitory action and not of serious contemplation. Mirreus, for example, loves the 'ragges' (47) of Rome, and is in thrall to physical ornamentation, whereas Crantz prefers the 'plaine, simple, sullen' (51) attributes of the 'course country drudge' (54) that is Calvinism. Instead of rejecting images and emblems for the truth of scripture, Crantz is here ironically drawn as much as Mirreus to the material, and is thus a type of the Puritan hypocrite in his lechery. Graius, Donne writes, 'stayes still at home here' (55), thinking that the Church of England is the only perfect religion because the

laws of England say so. Moreover he accepts the English Church because his godfathers 'tender' it to him and because he is 'tender', in the sense of being young and inexperienced: 'he / Imbraceth her, whom his Godfathers will / Tender to him, being tender' (59-60).

'Carelesse Phrygius' and 'Graccus' represent the two extremes of flawed reasoning about religion.[37] Phrygius 'doth abhorre / All, because all cannot be good' (62-3) and so abandons every religion, like someone who, knowing that some women are 'whores', abandons them all. Strier argues that 'Phrygius is "careless" because he is free from care – *secura*', and that this 'is the *ataraxia* of the ancient skeptics', the 'state of "indifference", of happy "negligence"' (p. 297). Phrygius, for Strier, is not then a straightforwardly negative caricature, given Donne's own seeming desire for the '*ataraxia'* enjoyed by the Stoics. 'Happy negligence', however, cannot be Donne's object in a poem so fraught with 'care', with an almost frantic preoccupation with right religious conduct. In the same way, the seemingly liberal opinion of Graccus, who 'loves all as one', demonstrates a complete lack of consideration which 'breeds' 'too much light' (69). This represents a 'blindnesse' (68-9) on the part of Graccus, but unlike the earlier blindness of the philosophers, his is a wilful, and thus much more sinful, neglect of contemplative vision. In all these characters, the choice of religion is made because it is simple and appeals to external worldly comforts. Whether induced by custom, false piety, bribery, mental ease or trite reasoning, the actions of each, choosing 'easy wayes', represents spiritual error, the 'stumbling' path which leads down, rather than 'up the hill'.

But 'unmoved, thou' (69), Donne continues, 'Of force must one, and forc'd but one allow, / And the right' (70-1). 'Forc'd' by the pressures of Church or government or by the

[37] The names Phrygius and Graccus, as Scodel notes, are derived 'from an attack on Roman "effeminacy" in Juvenal's Satire 2. Juvenal ends a thirty-five-line section inveighing against men who shamefully participate in rituals traditionally restricted to women by comparing such ceremonies to the Phrygian rites of Cybele, at the climax of which men castrate themselves, and proceeds in the next twenty-six lines to mock the marriage of the once-virile transvestite Gracchus' (492). In *Satyre III*, this effeminacy springs from each character's indecision coupled with their sexual excess.

'force' of one's own conscience, there must be a single, final and 'right' decision. To remain 'unmoved', passive or undecided cannot be an option. Ask 'thy father which is shee', Donne suggests, 'Let him aske his' (71-2), before stating that 'though truth and falsehood bee / Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is' (72-3). By returning to the image of 'thy father', a conceptual link is established with the father of the opening lines, and, as a corollary, the philosophers he meets in heaven. The first father is marked by his lack of revelation concerning religious truth, but the second image appears to recommend a patrilineal regression backwards in time as means of attaining that 'truth' which 'a little elder is'. J. B. Leishman suggests that in these lines the 'saving truth is, in a sense, factual rather than doctrinal, and to be attained not in some beatific vision, but as the result of a long and laborious process of historical, or semi-historical, research'.[38] But given Donne's opening confidence in the wisdom of ancient philosophers, the notion that truth antedates a younger and perhaps contemporary 'falsehood', is expressed here in much simpler terms of moral conduct. Throughout the rest of the poem, the idea that truth might be embodied in a particular religious institution, as the 'right one', is subordinated to a more indefinable notion of truth. Indeed, Donne's comprehensive indictment of religious structures leaves little room for a satisfactory choice, since to 'adore, or scorne an image, or protest, / May all be bad' (76-7). The proper way of living, as the path towards spiritual truth, and as symbolised by the philosophers, can then be seen as the satire's real object.

Doubt 'wisely', Donne then advises because, 'in strange way / To stand inquiring right, is not to stray; / To sleepe, or runne wrong, is' (77-9). In these lines, he acknowledges the 'strange', paradoxical nature of his directions which appear to advocate activity and contemplation as simultaneous actions. 'To stand inquiring right', or 'stand Sentinell', is, ostensibly, the static ideal of contemplation, whilst to 'stray', 'sleepe' or 'runne wrong',

[38] J. B. Leishman, *The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne*, 5th ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1962), 116.

encompasses the physical distractions, apathy and error already identified in the poem as detrimental to a true spiritual end. But, as we have seen, Donne also directs the reader to be 'busie' and to 'seeke', rather than be 'unmoved'. Strier picks up on this contradiction, noting that the 'emphasis on truth keeps the focus intellectual, and the emphasis on seeking suggests a more active and unsettled position than does the image of the sentinel maintaining his post' (p. 292). More succinctly, this tension accounts for the poem's consistent uncertainty over the proper apportioning of action and contemplation. The process of seeking in the satire is an intellectual pursuit and thus associated with contemplation; but the restless nature of this task, figured in terms of physical activity, implies that the contemplative act is beset by difficulties. It is in the poem's central image of the 'hill of truth' that action and contemplation appear to cohere.[39] 'On a huge hill', Donne writes,

> Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe,
> And what th'hills suddenness resists, winne so.
> Yet strive so that before age, deaths twilight,
> Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night (80-4).

Like the metaphor in Donne's letter to Goodyer, reaching the summit of the hill of truth symbolises rest in contemplation ('thy Soule rest'), a task which is made difficult and perilous by its 'craggedness', 'steepness', 'suddenness', and the necessity of repetitive circling. Hester's interpretation of this image is compelling in its identification of the oblique movement which, according to Plato, pseudo-Dionysius and later Christian philosophers, was

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[39] Among the most recent critics to interpret the 'Hill' image is Brent Nelson, who reads the satire within the context of Donne's courtly career. He argues that the 'image enacts a ritual of purification, enabling the satirist and the audience whom he counsels to continue seeking a public career in precarious circumstances by subordinating this pursuit to the larger project of seeking truth'. Nelson, 'Courtship and the Hill of Truth: Religion, Career, and the Purification of Motives in Donne's Satyres and Sermons', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 27, No. 4 (2003): 8.

the action of the rational soul.[40] 'The circular progress up the hill', Hester explains, 'in combination with the gradual rectilinear ascent by the pilgrim images that spiral motion which ancient, medieval, and Renaissance philosophy alike delineated as the movement peculiar to the rational soul of man' (p. 48). While the image refers to the movement of the rational soul, I would suggest that it also stresses the activity of thought in a way which Hester overlooks. He suggests that 'the satirist's description of the movement up the "huge hill [of] Truth" as spiral motion focuses on what man's reason can and must do to achieve "true Religion"' (p. 49). The hill, for Hester 'can be won' by such inquiry (p. 49). This confident expression of religious fulfilment is, however, not consistent with the tone of the poem.

For Aquinas, the movement of thought is central to his discussion of the contemplative life, since 'to contemplate is itself a movement of the intellect, in so far as every operation is described as a movement; in which sense the Philosopher says (De Anima iii, 7) that sensation and understanding are movements of a kind' (II-II, Q. 179, Art. 1). 'Since… it is through sensible objects that we come to the knowledge of intelligible things', Aquinas continues, 'and since sensible operations do not take place without movement, the result is that even intelligible operations are described as movements' (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6). Following pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas goes on to delineate the different motions of intellectual operations:

> These movements are of three kinds; for there is the "circular" movement, by which a thing moves uniformly round one point as center, another is the "straight" movement, by which a thing goes from one point to another; the third is "oblique," being composed as it were of both the others. Consequently, in intelligible operations, that which is simply uniform is compared to circular movement; the intelligible operation

[40] Hester's interpretation is influenced by John Freccero's theory that the compass metaphor of 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' is derived from this Platonic notion of the combination of circle (soul) and straight line (body) to make a spiral. See also Hester, 'John Donne's "Hill of Truth"', *English Language Notes* 14 (1976): 100-05.

> by which one proceeds from one point to another is compared to the straight movement; while the intelligible operation which unites something of uniformity with progress to various points is compared to the oblique movement (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6).

The mind's discourse, Aquinas explains, 'if it be according to the order of natural reason, belongs to the straight movement; but if it be according to the Divine enlightenment, it will belong to the oblique movement...that alone which he [pseudo-Dionysius] describes as immobility belongs to the circular movement' (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6). In other words, certain kinds of thought are derived from material things and others from a mixture of divine inspiration and external objects. The highest intelligible operation, as defined by pseudo-Dionysius, consists in a mystic contemplation of God, unencumbered by thoughts pertaining to bodily things:

> The soul hath (1) a circular movement – viz. an introversion from things without and the unified concentration of its spiritual powers – which gives it a kind of fixed revolution, and, turning it from the multiplicity without, draws it together first into itself, and then (after it has reached this unified condition) unites it to those powers which are a perfect Unity and thus leads it on unto the Beautiful and Good which is beyond all things, and is One and is the Same, without beginning or end.[41]

The oblique movement is 'partly straight and partly circular' (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6), imperfect because, although it is concerned with thoughts of God (circular), it relies upon man's faculty of reasoning (straight). It is the circular movement, uniform and without beginning or end, which is held as the ideal contemplative state. To achieve it, the mind must withdraw from all external objects and the process of 'discoursing must be laid aside and the soul's gaze fixed on the contemplation of the one simple truth' (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6). As John Freccerro notes, 'the human soul can turn directly to God by divine intuition (*supra nos*, St. Bonaventure was

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[41] Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, ed. Clarence Edward Rolt (New York: Cosimo, [1920], 2007) IV, 9, 99.

later to say), or to the outside world (*extra nos*); but since the "unitive" way is given to few men, most must proceed to God with a combination of those two movements (*intra nos*)'.[42]

For Donne, progress up the hill towards 'one simple truth' acknowledges the difficulty of the 'unitive' way. Instead of achieving divine intuition, his pursuit of 'truth' is figured in terms of an oblique physical struggle, and so demonstrates the extent to which activity, the process of discursive seeking, will remain just that, a process without a discernible end unless divorced from earthly concerns. In this respect, his exhortations to 'strive so', 'win so' and to begin immediately because 'To will, implyes delay' (85), carry no assurances of eventual resolution. Strier notes that 'in a number of manuscripts (presumably reflecting earlier states of the poem), it is the mind rather than the soul that is to find rest before death approaches', and that 'in shifting from "mynde" to "Soule", Donne may very well have been trying to push toward the more absolutist conception' (p. 303). But this may also lend credence to the notion that during the creation of this metaphor Donne distinguished 'mynde' from 'soule' as the seat of human reason, rather than transcendental meditation. To exchange soul for mind is to acknowledge that the latter cannot be separated from sense or the rational intellect, its purpose is activity and, therefore, only the soul is capable of true rest. As Robbins notes, the 'soul's repose is the higher religious purpose' (p. 395).

In spite of this awareness of the pitfalls of physical action and discursive reason, Donne continues to seek a reconciliation between action, contemplation, body and soul, as in the following lines: 'Hard deeds, the bodies paines; hard knowledge too / The mindes indeavours reach, and mysteries / Are like the Sunne, dazling, yet plaine to'all eyes' (86-8). Unwilling to abandon the operation of the intellect and activity of the body in pursuit of the good, he maintains that 'Hard deeds' and knowledge, can be achieved by both. The final 'mysteries' which might be understood by the soul, however, are like the sun, in that they are

[42] John Freccero, 'Donne's "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"', *English Literary History* 30, No. 4 (Dec., 1963): 345.

visible to all, yet too 'dazling' to apprehend directly. Donne again puns on the sun as Christ and thus identifies Jesus as the particular embodiment of the satire's central theme. He is the fulfilment of the contemplative act, simultaneously a 'mystery' which is difficult to grasp by the rational intellect, and 'plaine to'all eyes', accessible through the incarnation, God made flesh. Since Christ can combine both physicality and spirituality in his person, Donne is reluctant to leave activity, but contemplation of the final 'truth', he suggests, can only be partially understood. In this respect, the union of action and contemplation, which the poem has been striving to effect, has not been achieved. Advising the reader to 'Keepe the truth which thou'hast found' (89) sounds a distinctly personal note which seems to imply that truth is subjective, and lies within the realm of an individual's conscience.

The last twenty lines of the poem return to the theme of the temporal power of Churches and states. Donne warns against tying the soul 'to mans lawes' (94) which have no bearing upon God's judgement, and says that reliance on 'a Philip, or a Gregory, / A Harry, or a Martin' (96-7) will not serve as an excuse for sinful transgressions. Given the poem's critique of contemporary religious factionalism, Milgate understands these lines as referring to Phillip II of Spain, Pope Gregory XIII, or Gregory XIV, Henry VIII, and Martin Luther, reformers and counter-reformers bound up in the controversies of the sixteenth century (p. 148). Again, Donne points to the problem of balance by asking, 'Is not this excuse for mere contraries, / Equally strong? cannot both sides say so?' (98-99). If both 'sides' can make 'equal' claims to 'truth', then it follows that the authorities claimed for this truth cannot exist in the physical world and must be sought by contemplation. But in the next line, Donne once more complicates this stance with the acknowledgement that 'thou may'st rightly'obey power, her bounds know' (100). In other words, the limits of political and religious power must be understood in order to be obeyed. The debate over the origins of political and religious legitimacy was particularly acute at the time of this satire's composition in the

1590s. According to Romans 13.1, temporal power was derived from God: ‘Let every soule bee subject unto the higher powers: For there is no power but of God. The powers that be, are ordained of God’. Following the Reformation, the power claimed by the Pope was contested by Protestant Princes who claimed that authority as their own. In England, at the time of Donne’s writing, Elizabeth I was initially hailed as a Godly Prince, but she presided over a period of factional discord between the interests of the ‘moderates’ – who were shaping the Church – and ‘Puritans’ – who were disappointed that reforms to the Church did not go far enough. Such arguments over authority, in turn, raised the possibility that subjects may not have to obey tyrannical rulers. Indeed, with regard to rulers being described as ‘hangmen to Fate’ (92) in *Satyre III*, Milgate quotes Luther’s 1523 treatise *On Temporal Authority*: ‘where the temporal authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God’s government, and only misleads souls and destroys them’; bad princes ‘are God’s executioners and hangmen’ (p. 147).

In the following lines, Donne draws from contemporary debates on the legitimacy of religious and political power and attempts to advise the reader on the proper means of adhering to an authority which may be ‘unjust’ (109). This advice assumes that engagement with worldly pursuits is unavoidable, and so a concession to activity informs the satire’s closing extended metaphor:

> As streames are, Power is; those blest flowers that dwell
> At the rough streames calme head, thrive and prove well,
> But having left their roots, and themselves given
> To the streames tyrannous rage, alas, are driven
> Through mills, and rockes, and woods,’and at last, almost
> Consum’d in going, in the sea are lost.
> So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
> Power from God claym’d, then God himselfe to trust (103-10).

The image of political power as a 'stream' evokes the unstable and 'fluid' nature of living under those who claim authority and who turn easily towards 'tyrannous rage'. But the image also expresses action and contemplation, turmoil and calm. A 'blest' individual can 'thrive and prove well' in the temporal world by 'dwelling' close to the centre of power, at 'the rough streames calm head'. But in leaving his 'roots', he might find himself 'driven' roughly down towards the sea to be 'consum'd' and 'lost'. Significantly, a stream's calm source is not devoid of motion, but rather *moves* calmly. The proper measure of active life is thus suggested by this image. To become subject to the stream's 'tyrannous rage' is an expression, not only of poor political judgement, but also of uncontrolled action. In keeping with this theme, 'roots' here suggests a *principium motus*, a first cause or purpose, and so, to deviate from an Aristotelian sense of a final end might lead the soul to 'perish'.

Strier suggests that 'the deepest positive image in the poem is not of motion but of stasis', but according to the final two lines the conflict between the two remains unresolved (p. 310). If a Christian chooses to follow the 'power' of Churches or Kings, which is unjustly claimed from God, rather than recognise 'God himself' as the final end and source of power, then his soul is damned. However, the modifying, comparative adverb 'more', along with the conjunction 'then', again hints at the possibility that a sense of balance in worldly conduct is what is needed. In other words, to 'dwell' close to 'power' at the 'streames calme head' is a prerequisite of living, and if enacted properly, by retaining one's 'roots', and not at the expense of seeking God, might provide the basis for the pursuit of 'True religion'. *Satyre III* never quite articulates the precise measure of activity and contemplation which would be required to reach a final rest in God. In this respect, the poem's conclusion remains inconclusive. In what follows I suggest that in his later religious poem 'Goodfriday: 1613' these themes are embedded within a poetic discourse which draws from a variety of Christian traditions.

III.

'Goodfriday: 1613' was written two years before Donne entered Holy Orders in 1615, and its content represents a much more confident expression of a spiritual end than that of *Satyre III*.[43] Critics have focussed on various aspects of the poem, from its opening metaphor of man's soul as a sphere and its self-consciously symmetrical pattern, to its devotional or meditative aims and traditions; but they have generally failed to account for the disparity between Donne's apparent physical journeying and his desired meditative state. As Richard Strier argues, the poem was likely 'performed or begun while Donne was actually "riding westward," possibly to Sir Edward Herbert's' or from Sir Henry Goodyer's in 1613.[44] A. K. Chamber's identification of the 'tradition' of east to west motion, as the historical model of correct or moral movement, provided the impetus for investigations of the poem's cosmological and geographical similes and metaphors.[45] In terms of the poem's Christian sources and influences, William Halewood sees Donne's journey as an example of a particularly Protestant response to sin and salvation, whilst Louis Martz argues that the poem participates in the meditative tradition of spiritual exercises popularised by Ignatius Loyola.[46] For Jonathan Goldberg, the poem's metaphors follow several Renaissance and classical commonplaces which are ultimately subsumed in Donne's overall purpose to imitate Christ.[47]

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[43] References to 'Goodfriday' are taken from *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 30-31.

[44] Strier, 'Going in the Wrong Direction: Lyric Criticism and Donne's "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward"', *George Herbert Journal* 29, No's. 1 & 2 (2005/2006): 19. Piers Brown devotes the most space to the physical movement of Donne. He argues that the 'physical journey westward provides Donne's speaker with a metaphor to discipline and condition his mental movement'. Brown sees this process as integral to the act of poetic composition, whereas my reading focuses on the moral problem and difficult reconciliation of action and contemplation. Brown, 'Donne's Hawkings', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 49, No.1 (2009): 76.

[45] Chambers, '"Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward" the Poem and the Tradition', *English Literary History* 28, No. 1 (1961): 31-53.

[46] Halewood, 'The Predicament of the Westward Rider', *Studies in Philology* 93, No. 2 (1996): 218-228. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study In English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, [1952] 1962), 54-6. Donald M. Friedman focuses on Augustine's conception of memory as a devotional tool, and applies this to Donne's thinking in 'Goodfriday'. Friedman, 'Memory and the Art of Salvation in Donne's Good Friday Poem', *English Literary Renaissance* 3, No. 3 (1973): 418–442.

[47] Goldberg, 'Donne's Journey East: Aspects of a Seventeenth-Century Trope', *Studies in Philology* 68, No. 4 (Oct., 1971): 470-483.

I would suggest that images of spheres, of east and west, the crucifixion, and the question of Donne's actual westward movement, all of which have preoccupied critics, are drawn not only from contemporary religious sources, but also from the complex contemplative tradition passed down from the Church Fathers and practiced by medieval and Renaissance theologians. Moreover, I suggest that these images in 'Goodfriday' are bound up with the morality of action and contemplation. In this respect, I am in agreement with Arthur L. Clements, who argues that

> Much of the poetry of Donne… may best be understood and appreciated through the perspective and within the context of Christian contemplative tradition, including of course the effect of the Bible, Plato, Neoplatonism, and Aristotelianism on that tradition.[48]

'The numerous strands of this complex contemplative tradition', Clements suggests, 'are more variously and closely interwoven than might at first glance appear' (p. 1-2). In 'Goodfriday', Donne establishes a sense of conflict between the active and contemplative states, as he does in *Satyre III*, but, this time, it is the theme of struggle which is at odds with the control established by the structure. The poem, then, acts as a demonstration, or proof of the proper ways and ends of the Christian life.

The first eight lines, in which Donne compares man's soul to the heavenly spheres, have been taken as a straightforward indication of macro/microcosmic correspondence. But they also offer a clear exposition of the dual nature of the soul's faculties, drawn to either transcendental contemplation or worldly activity:

> Let man's Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
> Th' intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as the other Spheares, by being growne

[48] Arthur L. Clements, *Poetry of Contemplation: John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, and the Modern Period* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1.

> Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
> Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
> For their first mover, and are whirled by it (1-8).

Like the 'other spheres' of the planets and fixed stars, which struggle against the direction ordained by the *primum mobile*, man's soul is subject to the 'forraigne motions' of 'pleasure or business' as an unnatural 'first mover'. Chambers explains that the *primum mobile* 'whirls all things westward, and since the *primum mobile* is moved by God, such movement is "natural, uniform and direct"; the eighth sphere [of the fixed stars] and the planets struggle to move from west to east, contrary to heaven's will, and this motion is "accidental, divided and oblique"' (p. 32). Devotion is the 'intelligence that moves' the soul, a supernatural agent, or first cause of motion. As Joan Bennet notes, Donne here invokes the Scholastic 'doctrine of the spheres, each governed by an intelligence or angel' derived from Aquinas.[49] The object of the soul, as Donne notes, is devotion and, like the ideal orbital path of the spheres, the natural 'direct' motion which should enable communication with God is circular. Donne was frequently drawn to the pseudo-Dionysian notion of the soul's tripartite movement, as a source for similes and metaphors. As pseudo-Dionysius puts it, the 'soul hath a circular movement…which gives it a kind of fixed revolution' and 'unites it to those powers which are a perfect Unity' (IV, 9, 99). In this respect, the 'intelligence that moves', or the intelligible operation, as Aquinas would say, moves circularly, and is thus equated with direct spiritual communion with God. Similarly, man's 'whirling', oblique movement, caused by the intrusion of 'pleasure or business' (straight) upon meditation (circular), mimics the retrograde spiralling of the planets. The first words 'Let man's soul be a sphere' are, therefore, key to Donne's purpose. According to Donald Friedman 'one detects', in the

[49] Joan Bennet*, Five Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1934] 1964), 33.

opening lines, ‘first of all, an air of detachment, perhaps of pedantry, certainly the touch of the scholastic manipulator of schemes, tropes, figures’ (p. 421). On the contrary, I would suggest that it reads more like a prayer, and that Donne uses the word ‘Let’, in the sense of licence: ‘allow man’s soul to be like a sphere’.

In recognising that the natural ‘form’ of the soul’s contemplation, is led astray by the earthly pull of ‘pleasure or businesse’, Donne not only establishes the theme of the entire poem, but also frames this opposition as a genuine moral problem. Like the motion of the compass in ‘A Valediction Forbidding Mourning’, addressed in Chapter 1 (pp. 40-4), the oblique movement of the rational intellect is governed, to a greater extent, by the straight motion, harnessed to the physical world. However, while the straight motion towards ‘home’ in the ‘Valediction’ is enthusiastically adhered to, in ‘Goodfriday’ it moves Donne away from the contemplation of Christ, represented by the circular motion. This personal moral engagement belies Friedman’s claim that the ‘cool, competent tone and the exactitude with which he works out the relations of spheres, intelligences, and competing forces contribute to our sense of the speaker’s detachment and our appreciation of his cleverly managed self-exculpation’ (p. 423). Rather than creating a sense of detachment by this metaphor, Donne uses the opening to prepare the way for making himself the particular example of a universal problem.

That the soul should develop towards its proper ‘form’, in this case a devotional contemplative union with religious truth, also establishes the teleological impulse of the poem. The dialectic of body and soul, or action and contemplation, self-consciously presented at the beginning of ‘Goodfriday’, is established so that it might be brought to an eventual reconciliation. As Donne goes on to note in the following lines, ‘Hence is’t, that I am carryed towards the West / This day, when my Soules forme bends towards the East’ (9-10). Here, the west signifies not only the actual location of Donne’s temporal ‘business’ with

Herbert, but it is also, historically, the direction towards which voyagers and travellers would conduct their worldly activities.[50] As Chambers notes, 'Westward, too, the course of empire took its way… Indeed, Donne's early readers may well have remembered that the journey of Aeneas to Rome was a significant example of this *translatio imperii.* If they did, they may also have recalled Dante's use of the theme in the *Paradiso*' (p. 31). The east, on the other hand, represents Christ as *Oriens*, the occasion of the passion, the fulfilment of the soul's 'form', or natural course of penultimate contemplation, and also its ultimate eschatological end when joined with God. In England, moreover, all churches are orientated eastwards, so that to face the alter is to face the east.

According to Chambers, Donne's westward journey 'becomes not a rational movement but a departure from the Christian path, a turning from light to enter the ways of darkness' (p.48). Indeed the critical consensus has largely been that 'meditation-as-correction', as Piers Brown puts it, 'forms the backbone of the poem' (p. 77). By travelling westward, however, Donne's actions are not necessarily sinful, but rather part of the unavoidable medley of activities which are bound to life, even though proper conduct has a final and right object. 'A Hymn to God my God, in my sicknesse' (1623), shares with 'Goodfriday' both the interest in geographical location, East and West, and the meditative emphasis upon death and Christ: 'this is my South-west discoverie / Per *fretum febris*, by these streights to die' (9-10). In the hymn, Donne's expectations of death lead to his abandonment of material things. Worldly conduct is no longer his concern and he cites the disparate locations of the 'Pacifique' (16), 'Jerusalem' (17), 'Anyan' (18), Magellan and Gibraltar only to point to their immateriality when compared to a final sense of rest in heaven, 'that Holy roome' where he will take on the ethereal harmonious form of 'Musique' (1-3). But by punning on his own 'streights' and the 'streights' of physical action in the

[50] Frances Malpezzi also notes the metaphorical associations of the horse's physical westward movement. Malpezzi, '"As I Ride": The Beast and His Burden in Donne's "Goodfriday"', *Religion & Literature* 24, No. 1 (1992): 23-31.

‘Hymn to God’, Donne also reflects upon origins and destinations, and the often difficult processes or ‘journeys’ which are inseparable from human life: ‘All streights, and none but streights, are wayes to them’ (19).

Donne’s reference to ‘streights’ in the ‘Hymn to God’ as the only ‘wayes’ through which man can carry on with worldly activities carries the suggestion of temporal motion between geographical locations. By employing the plurals, ‘streights’ and ‘wayes’, and by citing the four points of the compass, Donne’s indifference to any particular direction stresses the extent to which the ‘strait’ movements of life must be enacted continuously. Donne’s ‘streight’ westward movement in ‘Goodfriday’ conforms to this notion. His ‘matter of fact’ tone in lines 9 and 10, for example, does not betray a sense of shame or contrition: ‘Hence is’t, that I am carryed towards the West / This day, when my Soules forme bends towards the East’. In this respect, the poem not only anticipates the attitude of the ‘Hymn to God’, but also the words of his St Dunstan’s sermon: ‘everything moves so that it may rest’ (X, 214). As in the sermon, Donne suggests that there may be rest in the fulfilment of business or pleasure, but it is not the ‘proper’ rest in God, summoned here by the consideration of Good Friday.

Of course, the problem established in the opening passage is that the soul’s natural inclination towards God has been interrupted by worldly concerns. As he goes on to note in the following lines: ‘There I should see a Sunne, by rising set, / And by that setting endlesse day beget’ (11-2). Here, the sun as Christ risen on the cross is ‘set’ in an ‘endlesse day’, in other words, a fixed emblem of the eternal rest that Donne ‘should see’, were it not for his westward activity. Significantly, the timeless, and thus contemplative nature of ‘endlesse day’ is opposed to the linear passing of the temporal day represented by Donne’s movement west with the rising and setting of the sun. ‘Set’, as we have seen with the image of Harrington as the Son/Sunne in the ‘Obsequies’, also carries the suggestion of order and control, to be ‘set’

on the right path. Just as Harrington provides the spiritual force which governs movement in the 'Obsequies', Donne hints here that Christ might perform a similar mediating role. The rising of 'endlesse day' in 'Goodfriday' is also contrasted with the 'eternal night' of the following lines, the darkness of 'sin' and error which would have been the lot of mankind were it not for Christ's 'rise and fall': 'But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall, / Sinne had eternally benighted all' (13-4). The past subjunctive mood of line 13 gives to the rising sun/son a sense of conditionality which also recalls Donne's attitude to the sun and to night and day in the 'Obsequies'. If the sun/son were to neither rise nor fall then both the world and man would be afflicted with temporal and spiritual stasis. Unlike the short-lived timelessness of 'midnight' (15), as a mere simulation of death in the 'Obsequies', this stasis would be everlasting. This conditional statement is designed to represent the things that Donne fears; Christ, therefore, functions as a safeguard against a frightening infinitude.

As in *Satyre III*, perfect contemplation is established early in 'Goodfriday' as the ideal state, and, in the same way, competes with the duties of business and pleasure, calling and friendship. But unlike the satire, the pattern of opposites, of rising and falling, east and west, darkness and light, body and soul and action and contemplation, contained within Donne's couplets, suggest that this particular discourse on religious conduct is one over which he has complete control. Both poems are written in rhymed couplets of iambic pentameter, the form which will become the archetype of order and the rational mind in Enlightenment poetry. Donne's verse, in general, does not adhere to such rigid rules; however, the form of 'Goodfriday' exhibits more signs of structural unity than that of the satire. Although *Satyre III* is written in couplets, it contains only three closed couplets – those at the beginning and end, and lines 83-84:

> Kinde pitty chokes my spleene; brave scorn forbids
> Those teares to issue which swell my eye-lids; (1-2)

> So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
> Power from God claym'd, then God himselfe to trust. (109-10)
>
> Yet strive so that before age, deaths twilight,
> Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night'. (83-4)

It is fitting that the opening couplet should be closed, since, as we have seen, it retains the uneasy equilibrium which exists between irreconcilable terms: 'Kinde pitty' and 'brave scorn'. So, too, the final closed couplet balances a choice of worldly 'Power' against trust in the power of 'God'. In lines 83-4, the poem's only internal self-contained couplet, the ideal of contemplative 'rest', as opposed to 'striving', is clearly signalled. Part of the reason why the satire conveys such a persistent sense of restlessness can be attributed to the fact that most of its lines are enjambed, and that end-stopping occurs either after a sequence of several lines, or after a single line. Take, for example, lines 76-79: 'To adore, or scorne an image, or protest, / May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way / To stand inquiring right, is not to stray; / To sleepe or runne wrong is…' Here, the sentence beginning 'To adore' in line 76 runs on into line 77, and is followed by the imperative, 'doubt wisely'. The last clause, which begins, 'in strange way', covers three lines from 77-79. This arrangement is also discernible in lines 43-45: 'Seeke true religion. O Where? Mirreus, / Thinking her unhous'd here, and fled from us, / Seeks her at Rome; …' Again, line 43 contains both the imperative command 'Seeke', and the response 'O Where?' which is then succeeded by a longer sentence spanning three lines. The truncated, discursive nature of the poem is, therefore, reinforced by the unstable relation between syntax and lineation, by the commands and questions which intermingle with Donne's longer expressions, and which interrupt the rhythmic flow.[51] This frantic form is consistent with the satire's inability to resolve its central themes of action and contemplation.

[51] There are ten imperatives in the poem and sixteen questions. Of these sixteen, twelve occur within the first 43 lines, and of the ten imperatives, seven are contained within the last 40. This distribution accords with the satire's ostensible purpose of identifying specific problems and then resolving them with assertive commands.

In 'Goodfriday', by contrast, Donne employs closed couplets with more regularity and at moments of particular importance. The first 6 lines of the poem, in which Donne reflects on deviations from the soul's 'naturall form' of perfect contemplation, are, significantly, enjambed:

> Let man's Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
> Th' intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as the other Spheares, by being growne
> Subject to forraigne motion, lose their owne,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey: (1-6)

This passage stands in contrast to the regular closed couplets of lines 11 to 22, where Donne reflects upon the transcendent 'spectacle' of Christ's passion:

> There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
> And by that setting endlesse day beget;
> But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall,
> Sinne had eternally benighted all.
> Yet dare I'almost be glad, I do not see
> That spectacle of too much weight for mee.
> Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye;
> What a death were it then to see God dye?
> It made his owne Lieutenant Nature shrinke,
> It made his footstoole crack, and the Sunne winke.
> Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
> And tune all spheares at once peirc'd with those holes? (11-22)

The truth of the passion is mirrored in the regularity of the form; the facts of Christ's 'rise and fall' are uncontroversial and thus suited to the clear exposition of the closed couplets. This is a truth, moreover, which becomes all the more stark when compared to the sense of doubt elicited by the following lines, in which questions appear with an increasing frequency and intensity, as Donne hypothesises on his own troubled engagement with the spectacle of Christ's crucifixion:

> Could I behold that endlesse height, which is
> Zenith to us, and our Antipodes,
> Humbled below us? or that blood which is
> The seat of all our Soules, if not of his,
> Make durt of dust, or that flesh which was worne
> By God, for his apparell, rag'd and torne?
> If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
> Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
> Who was Gods partner here, and furnish'd thus
> Halfe of that Sacrifice which ransom'd us? (23-32)

Contrary to the previous passage, these couplets are no longer self-contained, the lines are enjambed and each question grows from two lines to three and four, and then another four lines with the final question. This variation in form, which reflects the troubled discursiveness of the tone, does not, however, detract from the symmetry of the theme that Donne maintains throughout, namely, materiality versus transcendence. Moreover, the questions are controlled according to an identical syntactical arrangement. In spite of their varying lengths, Donne begins each question with the demonstratives 'those' and 'that', deictic terms which require clarification from the relative clauses which follow, signalled by the word 'which': '*those* hands, *which* span the poles'; '*that* endlesse height, *which* is / Zenith to us'; '*that* blood, *which* is / the seat'; '*that* flesh, *which* was worne'; '*that* sacrifice, *which* ransom'd us'. When it comes to the question of facing Christ's mother, the pattern remains, but takes on a personal, human dimension: 'Upon *his* miserable mother cast mine eye, / *Who* was Gods partner here'. Significantly, the distance created by the relative clauses corresponds with the theme of spiritual immensity, represented by God, whilst the shift in lines 30-31 to the more proximate 'his' and 'who', is in keeping with the physicality of Christ, embodied by his mother. Donne writes that, not only was Mary 'Gods partner here' on earth, but that she 'furnish'd' 'halfe of that sacrifice', the implication being that, not only did she suffer by his death, but that she represents the human 'halfe' of Christ.

This whole passage on Donne's troubled engagement with the passion is concerned with 'sight', 'seeing', 'beholding', 'eyes' and 'looking', and is initiated with the lines: 'Yet dare I'almost be glad, I do not see / That spectacle of too much weight for mee / Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye; / What a death were it then to see God dye?' (15-8). Friedman sees in these lines a 'disjunction' or a failure on Donne's part to 'tie together a genuinely sequential argument', asking 'what cause in logic can explain the appearance of "Yet"…?' (p. 430). Contrary to Friedman's assessment, the appearance of 'Yet' is entirely consistent with the opening discourse on action and contemplation. Again, echoing Gregory's theory and his own concerns in *Satyre III*, Donne suggests that to 'see', or contemplate the 'spectacle' of the crucifixion is a subject of 'too much weight' for a sinful soul. Like his ironic challenge to the practitioners of worldly daring in the satire ('dars't thou') he questions his own courage ('dare I') and similarly appears to choose the world of distraction, riding westward, rather than face true fear. At this moment, then, he wishes neither to 'see God's face' and die, nor witness God's death, which would be so overwhelming a sight that it would be death to see. At the same time, Donne's questions about vision and 'seeing' involve both physicality and immateriality, the evidence of the senses and contemplative 'sight'.

Aristotle and Aquinas considered sight the most important of the senses. For Aristotle, sight could be applied when in motion or in thought – 'Not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated', since 'we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions'.[52] As we have seen, for example in 'The Calme', Donne's sense of sight, when it has no external objects to fix upon, becomes internalised: 'we have no will, no power, no sense' (55). In the *First Anniversary*, he appears to abandon this trust in vision when he acknowledges that although sight is the 'noblest sense' (353), the visible world is

[52] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (London: William Heinemann, 1933) I. 980a.

illusory because 'color is decay'd' (355). But in the 'Obsequies', sight is re-established as a means not only of rationally observing physical things, but also as an immaterial connection and form of communication between Donne and Harrington. In fact, 'looking' and 'seeing' perform identical roles in this poem and 'Goodfriday'. If Aristotle equates sight with 'knowing things', Donne's series of questions in 'Goodfriday' have a similar aim in mind, knowledge of Christ and knowledge of himself (30). In this respect, Donne's questioning implies that he requires evidence, assurance, or security of salvation. Strier argues that the poem, at this point, 'turns into a series of rhetorical questions to which the answer is supposed to be "no," but which seem to be partly enacting the visualization they assert to be impossible' (p. 21). I would argue that the reason for this is because these questions function as a rehearsal of what can and cannot be reached by man's contemplation, and as a discourse concerning trust in the internal or external nature of 'knowing'.

For example, the answer to the first question, in which Donne imagines Christ's hands 'spanning the poles', a geographically immeasurable Christ in contrast to his own east/west geographical progress, is, unequivocally, no, since such an image is beyond man's comprehension.[53] Indeed, the question's indebtedness to questions concerning the constitution of the Aristotelian cosmos proves that it is a product of the rational intellect, in spite of Donne's desire to visualise Christ tuning 'all spheares at once', to bring the celestial spheres and, more importantly, human souls to their correct devotional and rotational movements.[54] Neither material nor contemplative vision is achievable here. The next question continues the theme of Christ's geographical immensity: 'Could I behold that endlesse

[53] Chambers argues that the 'answer – implicitly – is that, pierced with those holes, he can scarcely do otherwise', and that in 'each case, the apparent answer is no, but in actual fact the answer must be yes', although he does not elaborate on this in any depth (50).
[54] Robbins takes as his copy text for 'Goodfriday' the Trinity College Dublin MS (*TCD*), and replaces 'tune' with 'turn' in line 22. Gardner, however, following the 1633 edition retains 'tune' because it suggests both musical harmony and the act of turning. She argues that the defence of the word can be found in 'Grierson's statement that "tune" includes "turne", since the music arises from the rate of turning. In his poem on the Sidneian Psalms Donne speaks of Christ as "tuning heaven and earth". He is not only the First Mover, but the Wisdom which "sweetly ordereth all things."' (99).

height, which is / Zenith to us, and our Antipodes, / Humbled below us?' Christ's 'endless height' is an echo of the 'endless day' of line 12, and thus he now reaches beyond the boundaries of the spatiotemporal world. But this time, the answer to the question is yes, Donne could physically behold Christ if 'humbled below us', in other words, as Christ humbled on the cross. It is the corporeality of Christ which might enable contemplation. The following question, therefore, goes on to dwell on Christ's physicality, his 'blood' mingling with 'dust' to become 'durt' and his 'rag'd and torn' flesh, things which can physically be 'seen', but which Donne would not wish to see for religious reasons.

Michael Schoenfeldt has examined 'Goodfriday' in light of the 'renewed emphasis in Reformed religion on the Davidic and Pauline notions that the only sacrifice God desires occurs neither in sanctified architectural space nor in explicit corporeal suffering but rather in the interior spaces of the believer'.[55] Sacrifice, instead of summoning the abrasive images of bodily torment, can, therefore, 'designate a ritual performance, an interior state, or a principle of self-regulation' (p. 565). Schoenfeldt suggests that Donne's inability to face Christ's physical suffering is indicative of this trend in Protestant devotion. But it also chimes with the poem's overarching purpose to reconcile the role of the body with that of the soul in a final state of devotion. Donne's observation that 'blood' is the 'seat of all our Soules, if not of' (25-6) Christ's only serves to reinforce the extent to which his own soul is bound to his body. In this respect, the body is something which cannot be completely subordinated to the notion of Protestant interiority. The last question in the poem, in which Donne once again 'dares' himself to look upon Christ's mother, has divided critics. Schoenfeldt suggests that the poem's 'fervent attention to Mary involves a proto Catholic mode of devotion that Protestant authorities discouraged', whilst Patrick O'Connell and Strier see the lines as 'somewhat

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[55] Michael Schoenfeldt, '"That spectacle of too much weight": The Poetics of Sacrifice in Donne, Herbert, and Milton', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, No. 3 (2001): 561.

digressive'.[56] But, as we have seen, Donne invokes the image of Mary as a final example of Christ's dual nature; she 'furnish'd' the human/mortal 'halfe of that sacrifice'.

Rather than being evidence of an explicitly Catholic or Protestant devotional practice, Christ's double status as God's son and hence beyond the powers of the discursive intellect, and as man, the child of a human mother and subject to physical suffering, functions to symbolise action and contemplation. More importantly, as with the image of Christ as the sun/son in *Satyre III*, he serves as an example to Donne of the perfect union of these opposites, positioned at the centre of his own narrative of westward journeying. Jonathan Goldberg writes that the 'experience of the poem is that of a man who believes first that his action indicates a falling away from, indeed a wilful perversion from, the true path of his humanity and his divinity, followed by the recognition that the path he treads is the very one his Saviour followed' (p. 473). But Donne's actions, as we have seen, are not necessarily a 'wilful perversion' of the true 'path of humanity', since the experience of humanity involves action; indeed, the life of Christ was one of actions. For example, on the question of whether Jesus should have 'associated with men', Aquinas wrote that:

> Christ's manner of life had to be in keeping with the end of His Incarnation, by reason of which He came into the world. Now He came into the world, first, that He might publish the truth. Thus He says Himself (John 18:37): "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth." Hence it was fitting not that He should hide Himself by leading a solitary life, but that He should appear openly and preach in public (III, Q. 40, Art. 1).

The fulfilment of the incarnation, according to Aquinas, could only be achieved if Christ became truly involved in mankind. To this end, he notes that Christ was not averse to joining socially with other men, in much the same way as Donne was drawn to visit Herbert for 'pleasure'. 'Now it is most fitting', Aquinas writes, 'that he who associates with others

[56] Schoenfeldt, 570; Strier, 21; Patrick O'Connell, "'Restore Thine Image': Structure and Theme in Donne's 'Goodfriday,'" *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne* 4 (1985): 23.

should conform to their manner of living; according to the words of the Apostle (1 Cor. 9:22): "I became all things to all men." And therefore it was most fitting that Christ should conform to others in the matter of eating and drinking' (III, Q. 40, Art. 2). Moreover, Aquinas considers Christ directly within the discourse of active and contemplative lives:

> The contemplative life is, absolutely speaking, more perfect than the active life, because the latter is taken up with bodily actions; yet that form of active life in which a man, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation, is more perfect than the life that stops at contemplation, because such a life is built on an abundance of contemplation, and consequently such was the life chosen by Christ (III, Q. 40, Art. 1).

Christ's choice of active life is merged with the contemplative, because 'built on an abundance of contemplation'. It is for this reason that his 'fasting and retiring into the desert' preceded his return to the 'publicity of active life' to deliver 'to others the fruits of his contemplation' (III, Q. 40, Art. 2).

The invocation of Christ as a model of the active and contemplative lives was a theological commonplace. Augustine, for example, sought to reconcile each mode of living through his doctrine of *totus Christus*. As Charlotte Radler observes,

> Augustine refracts the question of the relationship between action and contemplation through his doctrine of the whole Christ (*totus Christus)*, with Christ as head and the Church as body. According to the teaching of *totus Christus*, Christ unites with humanity in the incarnation in order to transfigure humanity in his body. Augustine conceptualises *totus Christus* in such a way that daily life becomes the format for the continuing conformation to Christ; consequently, human beings should not abandon everyday life.[57]

In the medieval English contemplative tradition, the Augustinian mystic Walter Hilton also wrote of the honour of the mixed life through the example of Christ's head and body:

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[57] Charlotte Radler, '*Actio et Contemplatio*/Action and Contemplation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 213.

> You are active to worship his head and face, and dress it fairly and marvellously, but you ignore his body, his arms and his feet, all ragged and torn, and take no care of them. And then you do not honour him: for it is an offence for a man to be wondrously dressed on his head with pearls and precious stones, while all his body is naked and bare as though he were a beggar. Just so it is, spiritually, no honour to God that his head be covered, and his body left bare.[58]

Like Augustine, Hilton employs the image of Christ's body 'all ragged and torn' as an emblem of earthly duties. Through the metaphor of 'dressing' Christ's head, but not his body, Hilton suggests that to reflect on the suffering of Christ and the hardships of his body is to reflect on the active life.

Although Christ is the model for the integration of action and contemplation in 'Goodfriday', the suggestion remains that Donne cannot hope to fulfil the perfection symbolised by his saviour; he must strive to attain this balance, but this does not mean it will be achieved. Following his series of questions on the infinite space and eternity of Christ and the passion, Donne returns to his own present in the following lines:

> Though these things as I ride be from mine eye,
> They'are present yet unto my memory,
> For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards me,
> O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree (33-6)

Friedman argues that, in these lines, Donne's 'memory' becomes his salvation and that, following Augustine's formulation, memory rather than reason 'lies much closer to man's spiritual essence' (p. 435). 'What the speaker now remembers', he suggests, 'is not what he has witnessed, or heard, or has been told, but what he knows to be true but has forgotten while being whirled about by the "forraigne motions" of daily existence' (p. 435). Although Donne has achieved a contemplative state here, the fact remains that his westward motion is still in progress, and activity has not been abandoned. 'These things', Donne writes, 'as I ride

[58] Robert Norman Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion, and Observance Before the Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 111.

be from mine eye'. Both the action of riding and the contemplative action of the memory exist in this 'present' moment, enabling a mutual gaze between Christ and Donne. As he hangs 'upon the tree' in the east, Christ looks towards Donne, whilst Donne reaches a clear contemplative vision of his saviour as he moves in the opposite direction. Moreover, line 35 is given a particular weight as the only one in the poem written in iambic hexameter, slowing the pace as Donne shares his contemplative vision with Christ: 'For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards me'. What is important in these lines is that Christ 'looks towards' him, acknowledges his spiritual condition, and that Donne uses these conceits as a way of trying to convince himself of spiritual truth.

The reason for this apparent union of activity and contemplation becomes clear in the final six lines of the poem, in which Donne suggests that his present state of perfect contemplation can only be maintained through Christ's violent 'corrections', 'burning off' his 'rusts' and 'deformities':

> I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
> Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
> O think mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
> Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
> Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,
> That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face (37-42).

Schoenfeldt argues that while we read these lines, 'we need to keep in mind the linkages that Donne would have felt acutely between Catholic religious practice and bodily punishment', and that the 'poem's final request to be thought worthy, moreover, nudges it into the realm of Catholic theology, which emphasized merit rather than grace as the avenue to salvation' (p. 570). But rather than seriously adhering to any particular devotional practice, Donne's seeming desire for physical punishment is more of a reflection upon the flawed activities of the mind, symbolised by the troubled questioning of the poem's middle section, as a barrier to a final sense of rest. It is not the physical act of riding westward then that needs correction,

since Christ himself shared in the activities of man through his incarnation. On the contrary, to prepare for the difficult contemplation of truth, as Gregory might put it, Donne must first purge the body and mind and their attendant activities in order to become 'worthy'; hence his momentary reconciliation of motion (riding) and rest (contemplation in memory) in lines 33 and 34.

'Goodfriday's' concluding resolution, touched upon in the hill image of *Satyre III*, suggests that searching and observation are antithetical to perfect contemplation. As Aquinas puts it, in order to achieve direct communication with the divine, the process of 'discoursing must be laid aside and the soul's gaze fixed on the contemplation of the one simple truth' (II-II, Q. 180, Art. 6). Donne's glimpse of 'present' truth in 'Goodfriday', derived from his memory, is then conditional upon the proper performance of worldly activity, divorced from the fruitless and torturous questioning of the rational intellect over subjects of 'too much weight'. This, in turn, may explain Donne's reference to 'thine image' (41), which is a more absolute representation of Christ now removed from the earlier descriptions of physical suffering. But Donne also hopes to become like Christ, so that Christ may come 'to know' Donne through their simultaneity. It is significant that at the poem's end there are no suggestions that this plea has been fulfilled, and that only once Christ's image has been 'restored', Donne suggests, will he 'turne his face'.

This conclusion has been the subject of differing interpretations. For Schoenfeldt, it 'pointedly juxtaposes the speaker's horrified refusal to look at God with a sense of the mortal subject's complete visibility before God. The speaker cannot return God's gaze, he says, until God has properly punished him' (p. 568). On the other hand, according to Chambers, 'only by riding westward can he [Donne] arrive at the east' (p. 51). As Chambers suggests, to ride westward is to ride metaphorically towards death in the east, but for Donne to turn his face and view Christ's face, as he reminds us in line 17, would be a more immediate route towards

the afterlife: 'Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye'. The last lines of 'Goodfriday' suggest that Donne will turn his face when he receives God's grace through the image of Christ; but God's grace has not been granted by the end of the poem. The suggestion at the poem's conclusion, then, is that a true understanding of God, represented by the image of Donne turning his face, can only come with death, but that worldly purpose can be achieved through a continuous process of action and contemplation, a succession of toil in the world, followed by a restoration of Christ's 'image'. In this way, Donne follows the advice of Gregory and anticipates the 'streight' movement of the 'Hymn to God'. Written ten years after 'Goodfriday', and in his sickness, the 'Hymn to God' reveals Donne expecting to experience his own immanent final rest in God. But rather than dwell upon heaven, the poem fixates upon the moment of death and the life Donne will be leaving behind. To this end, he maintains that finality, or an earthly 'home', can only consist in following the 'streights' of life as the best means of attaining rest in one's own conscience. Such a conclusion coheres with his roughly contemporaneous (1621/23?) sermon on Micah 2.10, where he states that 'our principall rest is, in the testimony of our *Conscience*, and in doing that which we were sent to doe' (V, 193-4).

Critical attention has often focussed on the circular structure of 'Goodfriday' and the suggestion in the poem that east and west meet; as Goldberg notes the 'presentation of the journey west that becomes the journey east, since east and west meet, depends upon a number of metaphors, some of very long standing' (p. 471). This focus has tended to overshadow the sense of unfulfilled process implicit in the final lines of 'Goodfriday', in which Donne's journey west remains both linear and incomplete. Sibyl Lutz Severance sees in the poem's symmetry a 'formal trope of poem as circle, corresponding to his metaphor of soul as

sphere'.[59] Similarly, Anthony Bellette suggests that a temporal progression is subordinated to the timeless wholeness of God, and that only a 'longer poem' like 'Goodfriday', 'less tied to a traditional form, less teleological in nature than the sonnet, can suggest the mysterious simultaneity of the processes'.[60] But I would argue that the entire thrust of the poem is teleological in nature. Not only does it seek the 'end' of earthly conduct, but it also anticipates the end of life and frames this search as an, as yet, incomplete physical journey. The beginning and end of 'Goodfriday' do not then complete a structural or thematic circle, but, instead, are joined in the admission that the circular perfection of the soul, as the symbol of rest in God, cannot easily be achieved in this life. Both action and contemplation define human experience. What is important is the need to bring these aspects of life to order through a controlling purpose.

Once Donne had taken Holy Orders in 1615 the organising principle of purpose continued to feature in his work. In a sermon for Whit Sunday in 1626, for example, Donne again addressed the issues of grace, justification, faith and works through an analogy of causes in the Scholastic style. God, Donne suggests, justifies us as the efficient cause, whilst Christ is the material cause:

> It is truly said of God, *deus solus justificat*, God only justifies us; *Efficienter*, nothing can effect it nothing can worke towards it, but onely the meere goodnesse of God. And it is truly said of Christ, *Christus solus justificat*, Christ onely justifies us; *Materialiter*, nothing enters into the substance and body of the ransome for our sins, but the obedience of Christ (VII, 228).

Donne then moves to the question of faith and argues that it is an 'instrumental cause' and that works are 'Declaratorie' and evidence of a 'good life':

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[59] Sibyl Lutz Severance, 'Soul, Sphere, and Structure in "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward"', *Studies in Philology* 84, No. 1 (1987): 24.

[60] Anthony F. Bellette, '"Little Worlds Made Cunningly": Significant Form in Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and "Goodfriday, 1613", *Studies in Philology* 72, No. 3 (1975): 346.

> It is also truly said, *Sola fides justificat*, onely faith justifies us; *Instrumentaliter*, nothing apprehends, nothing applies the merit of Christ to thee, but thy faith. And lastly it is as truly said, *Sola opera justificant*, Onely our works justifie us; *Declaratorie*, Only thy good life can assure thy conscience, and the World, that thou art justified (VII, 228).

The instrumental cause, in the Scholastic tradition, denoted a branch or operation of the efficient cause. As Aquinas puts it 'an efficient cause is twofold, principal and instrumental' (III, Q. 62, Art. 1). The principal cause, according to this formula is always God: 'none but God can cause grace' (III, Q. 62, Art. 1). The instrumental cause represents the different means God uses to effect his plans for creation. In this respect, faith is the instrument employed by God which enables apprehension of 'the merit of Christ'. All of these causes Donne goes on to suggest might be required for justification:

> As the efficient justification, the gracious purpose of God had done us no good, without the materiall satisfaction, the death of Christ had followed; And as that materiall satisfaction, the death of Christ would do me no good, without the instrumentall justification, the apprehension by faith; so neither would this profit without the declaratory justification, by which all is pleaded and established (VII, 228).

Shami argues that 'Donne's treatment of the metaphor is unique in its effort to explain the '"right signification of that word, cause" (VII, 227) as it applies to salvation', and notes that the complexity of the analogy and the theological question is difficult for Donne to resolve (p. 282). His way around the difficulty is to suggest that each of the four causes, or justifications, are like four links of a chain:

> Consider we then our selves, as men fallen downe into a darke and deepe pit; and justification as a chaine, consisting of these foure links, to be let downe to us, and let us take hold of that linke that is next us, A good life, and keepe a fast and inseparable hold upon that (VII, 228).

The nearest link of the chain, Donne concludes, is a ‘good life’ and we should keep a ‘fast and inseparable hold upon that’ as the first step towards God. ‘In Donne’s treatment’ Shami argues, ‘the chain is not static, but a living chain of causality in which the works of faith – the “good life” – though most removed from God’s eternal decree, make salvation more accessible’ (p. 282). The performance of a ‘good life’ ‘assures’ the conscience and conforms to Donne’s frequent Calvinistic promotion of a calling as evidence of a Christian life. But the application of a Scholastic formula in the service of contemporary doctrinal controversy also reveals how he continued to employ the framework of causes in order to understand and explain a variety of moral and theological problems. Indeed, as we have seen with his sermon on Micah 2.10, Donne uses the same method of argumentation as a means of explicating the need for faith and works as ‘mediate causes’: ‘they may be both causes; faith, instrumentall, works, declaratory’ (V, 195). Donne’s rhetorical use of the chain simile and the Scholastic analogy demonstrate the extent to which ‘causes’ and an idea of process could provide a comforting sense of connection to God. In *Satire III* and ‘Goodfriday’, Donne engaged with the question of how Christians might assure their salvation through reason, right action, contemplation, and worldly obligations. But, in the end, any earthly actions, whether spiritual or physical, may be followed if they are virtuous and conform to a ‘good life’. In his Whit Sunday sermon, God remains for Donne the true cause of grace: ‘Alas, let us be content that God is the cause and seek no other’ (VII, 227).

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to show that the concept of final causality featured frequently in Donne's writing at a time when the idea was most under threat from new findings in natural and moral philosophy. As a consequence of this investigation, I have reached several conclusions which have implications for how we understand Donne's writing and his intellectual development. First of all, I have shown that Donne was sensitive to the imperfections of Aristotle's causal theory of motion, a sensitivity which was engendered in the alien physical environment of the Atlantic Ocean. In 'The Storme' and 'The Calme' we find early evidence of Donne's attraction to purpose in the social and physical world, at the moment when this sense of purpose is nullified by the unpredictable movements of nature. In 'The Calme', the torturous nature of inactivity dissolves all sense of the reality of the material world and, as a corollary, the social community of the ship becomes similarly fragmented. This uncanny environment prompted several existential questions relating to the operations of the natural world, the deceptiveness of sight, community and isolation and man's essential purpose, questions which, as we have seen, recur throughout Donne's writing. It is, therefore, possible that the Azores expedition was a key formative experience which had lasting effects on Donne's perception of reality. Moreover, this may also be why, in his maritime writing in general, a distinct trend emerges, whereby metaphors of navigation are conceived as teleological movements, examples of the folly of passivity and the necessity of fulfilling a course.

This need for fulfilment meant that, when Donne engaged with ideas of contemporary scientific, political and ethical change in his work, he consistently represented the final cause as an ideal principle, in spite of the intellectual and physical obstacles that he encountered. As we have seen, since the bonds of community were central to Donne's understanding of the social life, epitomised in his famous maxim, 'No man is an island', the ideal of the city, as the

pinnacle of social organisation in the Aristotelian tradition, appealed to his sense of order and finality. But again the reality of the senses and the experience of a disjointed, individualistic London, disabused him of such idealistic notions of an organic whole bound by the hierarchical structures of Natural Law. In his verse letters and *Satyre I*, therefore, he laments the disjunction between the real and ideal city and casts London as a place of disease and political vice, and in the process rejects the humanist notion, to which Sidney subscribed, that the highest end of man's knowledge should be exercised in service to the state. At the same time, however, in these works there remains an underlying assumption that final causality is the natural framework for expressing social connections between friends. This is why, for example, Donne experiments with scientific and metaphysical notions of matter and form in his letters and verse letters, and frames his writing and his friendships as enacting a process which will end in eventual reciprocated fulfilment.

The thesis has also found that Donne's writing incorporates and reflects contemporary debates concerning atomic theory to a greater degree than has been previously assumed. To accept atomism is to reject the fundamental elements of Aristotle's model of the physical universe and, significantly, the concept of final causality. In his early poems, such as 'Woman's Constancy' and 'The Broken Heart', we see Donne playing with notions of void, fragmentation, change and randomness, as a means of irreverently overturning the stylistic norms of Petrarchism. Such witty experiments are then succeeded by the bleak atomic observations of the Anniversaries; but by the composition of 'Obsequies to the Lord Harrington' in 1614, a more nuanced vision of a mechanical worldview emerges as the backdrop to Donne's elegiac purpose. Here, Donne imagines a world of atoms and empty space brought to order and given shape through the idealised figure of Harrington, who acts as the efficient cause. By figuring Harrington as the sun, a source of light which binds atoms into compounds and which derives power from God, Donne reaches a solution remarkably

similar to that of Nicholas Hill's conception of *vis radiativa.* Donne's literary experiments with atomic theory are therefore combined with concepts of causality drawn from the tradition of medieval philosophy and theology. It may seem surprising that Donne should be toying with atomic theory just one year before he was to become ordained as a minister of the English Church, but God remains the first and final cause of all things in his poem. Indeed, Donne frequently alluded to atomism in his sermons, his favourite reference being 1 Corinthians 13.9-12, which envisages the resurrection and re-assembly of man's disparate atoms at the last day. In his sermons and in his work in general, Donne drew on a variety of philosophical notions from the new philosophy and from the Aristotelian tradition as material for various rhetorical ends. In this respect, it is difficult to assign him an absolute belief in either the old or new philosophy. But given Donne's well-documented theological interest in embodiment and the final resurrection, the mechanics of atomic theory held a particular imaginative appeal for him. By presenting God as the first and final cause in the 'Obsequies', he is able to solve the problem of atomism in the same way as thinkers such as Hill and Gassendi approached the question. The framework of causes in the Aristotelian tradition, which merged natural philosophy with theology throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods, continued to be employed in tandem with new theories on the natural world. Because of Donne's enduring attraction to this framework, his literary experiments with scientific ideas reflect the stabilising influence of final causality and the centrality of God in the natural world.

While Chapters 1, 2 and 3 dealt with the issues of science, the material world, physical environments and political and moral philosophy, in my final chapter I addressed matters relating to Donne's conscience and to the everyday moral questions of the Christian life. To this end, I showed that the debate over the active and contemplative lives, rather than being merely an intellectual exercise, represented a real problem for Donne. In the context of

predestination, the implications of troubled thoughts suffered during a life wasted in idleness and solitude meant that the act of contemplation had negative as well as positive aspects. Donne’s own tendency towards melancholy, evidenced in his letters to friends, only heightened this problem. My readings of *Satyre III* and ‘Goodfriday’ found that both poems are marked by a preoccupation with action and contemplation, and that while the satire demonstrates a restless, searching tone in its attempts to reconcile the two concepts, ‘Goodfriday’ is much more at ease with the paradox. The reason for this, as Donne later stipulated in several sermons, is that fulfilling one’s true end is the only way towards strengthening the conscience and this may be achieved by combining action and contemplation in different measures. This conclusion not only draws from the notion of final causality in the tradition of Aristotelian ethics, but also agrees with the life of Christ and Calvinistic notions of pursuing and fulfilling a calling in everyday life. In the poem, Donne combines both at a moment of revelation, leaving behind presumptuous questioning and choosing instead to continue his westward course. A final causality imbued in the individual, therefore, becomes the measure of Christian morality, just as it becomes the guiding principle of friendship and the binding force of physical matter.

What this thesis has attempted to show, through examination of these ideas, is that Donne was of his time in terms of how he responded to new knowledge with the range of resources which he had at his disposal. The Aristotelian/Ptolemaic universe remained the basis from which Donne’s various literary conceits and intellectual speculations on natural and moral philosophy emerged, and, as Umberto Eco might put it, the sources of the past and present become ‘dilated’ to support an individual hypothesis.[1] This is why elements of atomic theory are fused with an Aristotelian and Christian sense of causality in the ‘Obsequies’. In this respect, the idea behind this thesis – taking a central axiom of old knowledge (the final

[1] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13-14.

cause) and setting it against the new – provides a more productive strategy for measuring how educated individuals such as Donne responded to shifting understandings of the natural world during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

For Donne studies in general, the thesis contributes in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of Donne's biography, it provides an alternative to the narrative of his supposed careerism, devised in large part by Carey and Marotti. It argues instead that the formative and motivating issues in Donne's life were twofold: on the one hand, an intellectual commitment to final causality and, on the other, a personal aversion to idleness which was bred during the dramatic withdrawal of his sense of purpose in social exile at Mitcham. By identifying a consistent thread in Donne's thinking, this study also adds to the critical impulse which seeks to account for the seeming disparities between his younger and mature self. This was a distinction cultivated by Donne himself when he wrote to Sir Robert Ker about his work *Biathanatos*: 'it is a Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by *D. Donne*' (*Letters*, p. 22). Isaak Walton then enshrined the idea in his biography of Donne: 'the *English Church* had gain'd a second *St. Austine*, for I thinke none was so like him before his conversion; none so like *St. Ambrose* after it; and if his youth had the infirmities of the one, his age had the excellencies of the other, the learning and holinesse of both'.[2] Disagreeing with the 'two Donnes' theory, the division of his life into profane and scared periods, I suggest that there exists a continuity of purpose throughout his early and later years with respect to notions of the final cause. Indeed, if we return to Henry Valentine's elegy for Donne's death, which was appended to the first edition of Donne's poems (1633), we can see that there was no sense that his wide

[2] Walton, *The Life of John Donne, Dr. in Divinity, and Late Dean of Saint Pauls Church London* (London, 1658), 44.

interests constituted a fracturing of his identity. Referring to 'that philosopher' Epicurus, Valentine writes:[3]

> If that philosopher, which did avow
> The world to be but motes, were living now,
> Were they in several bodies blended, would
> Produce new worlds of travellers, divines,
> Of linguists, poets; sith these several lines
> In him concentrated were, and flowing thence
> Might fill again the world's circumference (33-40).

These 'several lines' – of travel, divinity, languages and verse – are 'concentrated' without any tension in the individual person of Donne. This is the case, I have suggested, because notions of the final cause played a role in his thinking about each of these subjects. The extent to which a concern with final causality can appear specifically or generally across a variety of works written at different periods, testifies to its wide reaching application in Donne's writing. In his letters, it can appear in a light-hearted context, to stress, for example, the rambling nature of his writing and the need to bring it to a conclusion.[4] Similarly, in the dedication to 'Coryat's Crudities' the same trope of literary excess is denoted by its uncertain origins and ends: 'Infinite worke, which doth so far extend, / That none can study it to any end' (9-10). In 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', the verse letters to Salisbury and Bedford and the Anniversaries and 'Obsequies' it takes on a more sombre role as Donne considers the possible disappearance of the notion as a way of understanding the world. Indeed, it often becomes more pronounced by its absence. For example, Donne repeatedly alludes to meteorological phenomena which were supposed to be characterised by their unfinished natures. He was clearly fascinated by meteors because they were the only natural things in Aristotle's universe that operated without a final cause, and thus provided him with rich

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[3] Valentine (London, 1633), 380.
[4] John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. John Donne Jnr. (London, 1651), 112.

metaphorical material for expanding upon ideas of incompleteness and division. Not only were meteors composed of disparate and changing materials, but they were also spatially unclassifiable as mobile entities which could move between heaven and the sublunary world, and were, therefore, somewhat analogous to the perplexing nature and motions of body and soul in man. Lastly, the impact of the concept of the final cause on Donne's religious life can be seen in the sermons, *Satyre III* and 'Goodfriday', where it unites with his sense of devotion and Christian finality as a remedy for his moral and spiritual concerns. In this respect, the end of man's purpose on earth is just as important as his final end in death.

With regard to claims about Donne's seeming desire for enclosure and retirement from the world, which have been made by critics such as Maria J. Pando Cantelli and Stephen Burt, this thesis has stressed Donne's consistent reactions against seclusion and immobility and suggested that they were motivated by his understanding of the idea of final causality.[5] Contrary to Burt, I suggest that Donne's sea imagery is much more concerned with actively reaching a final destination than shunning the world in confinement. This is why Donne can write in 'Love's War', 'To mew me in a ship, is to enthral / Me in a prison' (21-2), whilst in his sermon before his embarkation for Germany he states, 'We see ships in the river… but all their use is gone, if they go not to sea' (II, 246). His love poetry, as Cantelli maintains, is concerned with the enclosed spaces of lovers defined against an expansive universe. But removed from the Neoplatonic connection and union of lovers specific to the songs and sonnets, enclosure no longer has such an appeal when Donne writes in isolation, hence his troubled expressions to Goodyer regarding the 'stupid and stony' 'stickings and hesitations' of his life at Mitcham (*Letters*, p. 61).

Moreover, in terms of Donne's religious development, I suggest that, during his years of doubt, action and contemplation acted as moral gauges in the absence of any particular

[5] Cantelli, 45-57. Burt, 137-8.

'true' church. *Satyre III's* pursuit of religious truth is, therefore, framed not only against the backdrop of Catholicism, Calvinism and the English Church, but also against an ethical concept of action and contemplation. Donne's concern to work out a viable balance between action and contemplation might seem to chime with the notion, supported by several critics, that he later held to the *via media* of the Church of England.[6] At the same time, the impulse to find a solution for a divided religious self meant that this dualistic way of analysing things in Donne's writings, was tempered by the application of a Christian teleology to man's moral actions.

Finally, the thesis raises interesting questions about Donne's conception of writing and speech as somehow involved in the processes of the physical world. So, for example, in 'The Storme' and 'The Calme', Donne borrows from Quintilian and enhances the classical rhetorical correlation between words and nature. Connecting the form of each poem to the action of the experience, he gives literal expression to Quintilian's notion of the tumults of nature as over-abundance in speech, exaggerating Quintilian's own wind-blown ship metaphor. In this respect, the storm assaults the senses of those on board the ship and reduces all communication to a state of confusion. In the calm, the unnatural absence of physical processes, results in a similar loss of coherent communication, again emphasising Quintilian's notion of wind-blown inspiration by its absence. Fulfilment of poetic purpose correlates with the purposes of nature, so just as the ship languishes in physical paralysis, the verse letters may also be deprived of fulfilment if never received and actualised by their recipient, Christopher Brooke.

This experimentation with the relationships between speech, writing and the movements of nature is particularly prominent in the verse letters. Here, Donne again plays

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[6]See Herbert J. C. Grierson, 'John Donne and the "Via Media"', *The Modern Language Review* 43, No. 3 (Jul., 1948): 305-314. For a modified interpretation which admits a more complex *via media* in Donne's preaching see Peter McCullough, 'Donne as Preacher at Court: '"Precarious Inthronization"', in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. David Colclough (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 192-93.

with scientific ideas of motion, of potentiality and actuality, and matter and form, which reflect the real life movements and emotional responses of his correspondence with friends. Acts of reciprocal composition, sending and reading, particular to the genre of the verse letter, allow for metaphors and conceits of process. In Donne's verse epistle to Thomas Woodward ('Haste thee harsh verse'), for example, the form itself is equated with the physical motion involved in the transmission of letters, the movement of 'feet', the ideas of the 'reasoning soul' and communication by virtue of its 'tongue'. The writer, in this instance, is figured as a creator and compared with God, a commonplace trope which has its origins in the classical period. Moreover, because it has not yet reached its destination, this verse letter is a creation that has matter but not form (which will be given when read and appreciated by its recipient). In this way, its suggested movement towards Woodward, unread and unrealised, corresponds with Aristotle's account of motion as potentiality. The notion of matter and form in writing was a favourite conceit of Donne's, and, as we have seen, could denote the overall quality of a work. In the genre of the verse letter, then, there exists a sense of immediacy owing to its liminal status, being finished and unfinished, conceived and written but not yet validated and given form by its addressee's appreciation of the idea.

Atomic theory also allowed Donne to indulge in speculations about the relationship between matter, speech and writing. In the 'Obsequies', for example, he borrows from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* the notion that writing, and as a consequence, his own poem, is composed of letters that are analogous to atoms. A 'perfect Reader', Donne maintains, 'doth not dwell / On every sillable', but rather lays 'together every A and B' to form a 'compound good' (93-8). Letters and syllables, in their joining together to create whole worlds of language, are thus perfect analogues of atomic fusion in the material world. Donne's sermon on Christmas Day in 1624 also uses atomic theory to describe the way preaching fills the air with the church's mercies which are then absorbed by the congregation. With such an

emphasis on the physicality of language throughout these works, however playful these observations might be, it is tempting to think that the new scientific materialism was having an effect on how Donne thought about the process of writing and the borders between thought and expression, immateriality and physicality.

This study has laid foundations for future work in several ways. Firstly, given Schmitt's observations on the revival of Aristotelianism in the 1580s, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge, it might be productive to explore Donne's reading in this area.[7] After all, Donne was at the heart of changes in the education system. He was initially instructed according to a Scholastic curriculum which continued to dominate in schools, and then exposed to new knowledge, humanist discourses and revised natural philosophy at Cambridge. We might, then, begin by looking for the major sources for those of his opinions which are grounded in the Aristotelian tradition. Might he have been receptive to humanist revisions of Aristotle's work, or immersed in the Scholastic tradition? Or perhaps drawn to Aristotle's ethical and political works, at a time when his own ambitions were set on service to the state? Such explorations might begin in archival work on Donne's library, or in searching for further traces of Aristotelian thought in his writings.

In keeping with this examination of Donne's intellectual influences, there is still more work to be done on his connections with atomic theory. For example, drawing from Keynes's bibliography of works in Donne's library, Hirsch identified a variety of volumes which he believed were, if not directly concerned with atomism, related to the theory in some degree.[8] However, this identification seems to be based on the titles in the bibliography rather than on inspection of the books themselves, which means that we do not know how far they engage with atomism, or whether Donne incorporated ideas from these texts into his own work.

[7] Schmitt, 21.
[8] Hirsch, 91.

Finding these works and subjecting them to a fuller examination might therefore shed new light on whether Donne's reading in unorthodox scientific works extended further than his copy of Nicholas Hill's *Philosophica Epicurea*. Moreover, given his willingness to dabble in heterodox ideas, some more attention to his association with the Earl of Northumberland and his circle might prove fruitful. Figures such as Thomas Hariot and Northumberland subscribed to atomism, and this included an adherence to the central doctrine that the universe was infinite. In Donne's references to atomic theory, the question of infinity appears to be elided; but given contemporary controversy surrounding the topic, owing, in part, to Bruno's vigorous promotion of an infinite universe during his visit to England in 1583, an account of Donne's responses to the prospect of infinity would provide a more complete picture of the impact of mechanical philosophy on his thinking.

Donne's tendency to incorporate scientific and existential questions into his dedicatory works to wealthy patrons, both alive and dead, has also been touched upon in the thesis, and this raises interesting questions about his reasons for doing so. Donne's most famous poems of this kind are, of course, his Anniversaries commemorating Elizabeth Drury, but the often fraught issue of science and metaphysics also comes up in his elegies on Prince Henry and Lord Harrington, his verse letters to the Countesses of Salisbury and Huntington and several times in his poems to the Countess of Bedford. Thus we might ask what makes the dedicatory poem such an apt vehicle for often cryptic intellectual imagery, and what this tells us about his relationships with his patrons? Donne has often been accused of disingenuousness in these poems, as a consequence of these riddling conceits. Might intellectualism then be a way for him to retain a certain prestige in his dealings with a socially superior class? Does he use such impenetrable images as a form of veiled political

critique, as Ted Larry Pebworth argues of the 'Obsequies'?[9] Or are the poems tailored towards intellectual questions because these are the issues in which the ruling class have a particular interest? Might bleak prognoses about the world's physical and moral decay appeal, for example, to the Puritan proclivities of the Countess of Bedford? Or perhaps, does the inclusion of philosophically framed imagery act as a form of flattery, even if the patron does not fully understand its implications? Donne's funeral elegies, it must be remembered, were intended for consumption by the public. With a work so open to public scrutiny as the 'Obsequies', and in the knowledge that the Anniversaries came in for criticism for its exuberant themes, did Donne experiment with atomic imagery in this poem with the expectation that it would remain largely impenetrable? A range of questions on the nature of Donne's connections to these wealthy families would, therefore, profit from further research, on the one hand, into the reciprocal movements between Donne and his network of benefactors, and, on the other, the extent of his patrons' involvement in the period's intellectual culture.

Finally, given the multi-faceted nature of the discussion of final causality in the Christian tradition, there is scope for a greater, more comprehensive exploration of the connection between religion and the final cause in Donne's sermons. This thesis has touched upon Donne's account of the earthly ends of religious conduct, and his preoccupation with death, judgement and resurrection are well documented. Moreover, contemporary notions of the Reformation as heralding a second coming of Christ meant that intimations of the last days were ever present in religious discourse. In this respect, closer examination of Donne's biblical exegesis and preaching could go some way towards uncovering previously unexplored instances of topical millenarian references, eschatological detail, typological observations or commentaries upon the purposeful teleology of the life of Christ. The object

[9] Ted Larry Pebworth, '"Let Me Here Use That Freedome": Subversive Representation in John Donne's "Obsequies to the Lord Harington"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 91, No. 1 (1992 Jan.): 17-42.

of eschatology, as the OED notes, is to consider the 'four last things: death, judgement, heaven, and hell'. Studies of Donne's devotional works have largely focussed on his interest with the first two, which suggests unwillingness on Donne's part to depart from corporeal things, or a reluctance to envision the afterlife.[10] A comparative evaluation of these 'last four things', as they appear in the sermons, might thus indicate Donne's true feelings on the Christian's final cause. For Donne, the final cause might begin and end with the body, or it might end in the spiritual fulfilment of heaven.

[10] On Donne's obsession with corporeality see Blaine Gretemen, '"All this seed pearl": John Donne and Bodily Presence', *College Literature* 37, No. 3 (Summer 2010): 26-42. Felecia Wright McDuffie has argued that he 'seldom preaches on the cosmic apocalypse, the second coming of Christ, or the last judgement directly. The only eschatological event that really captures his imagination is the general, bodily resurrection of the dead.' McDuffie, *To Our Bodies Turn We Then: Body as Word and Sacrament in the Works of John Donne* (London: Continuum, 2005), 83. See also Eleanor McNees, 'The Eschatology of Real Presence: Donne's Struggle Towards Conformity with Christ', in *Eucharistic poetry: the search for presence in the writings of John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, and Geoffrey Hill* (Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 33-68. Ramie Targoff argues that both body and soul occupy centre stage in Donne's thinking about his religious self. Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

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