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RENEWING THE SENSES

A Study of the Philosophy and
Theology of the Spiritual Life



MARK R. WYNN

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For John and Margaret, with thanks for Kate

Preface

This discussion has its origins in a familiar truth. Sitting upstairs in Georgina's coffee shop in the early morning, drinking in caffeine, and gazing at the passers-by below, the things in my environment seem to fall into place, and to resonate gently with my sense of myself. I am being driven to a cross-country race, and we are approaching a junction, when I become aware that our driver has not seen the vehicle ahead, and that we will hit it in seconds, and at that point the world becomes for me suddenly very vivid, and time itself seems to slow down. I am in an unfamiliar social situation, and unsure of what role I am expected to assume, and I find that I do not fully hear what people are saying, and that I move about clumsily, and I feel my disorientation in bodily terms. I hear a creature squeal, its cries intensify, and now there is nothing but animal pain. The teacher replays the tape of the last two minutes, and we realize how much that was audible we failed to hear. Someone explains to me the difference between a swift and a swallow and a martin, and thereafter my experience of these swooping forms is newly focused and newly informed. And so on. These experiences point to a familiar truth: depending upon our bodily and emotional condition, our repertoire of concepts, and our conception of our circumstances, one and the same sensory scene can appear to us in very different ways. In this discussion I am going to explore the idea that religious commitment can make a difference to a person's bodily and emotional condition, their repertoire of concepts, and their conception of their circumstances. And if that is so, then a further question comes immediately into view: perhaps the world's appearance can sometimes bear the stamp of specifically religious concerns or ideals or practices? It is this possibility which provides the focus for the present enquiry.

I was first struck by the thought that it should be possible to undertake some such exercise many years ago. At the time, I was an undergraduate, and I would visit in turn the various religious houses in Oxford. Sometimes, I would be at Blackfriars for lunch or tea, or some social event, sometimes at the Jesuit house, Campion Hall, or the Benedictine house, St Benet's, and sometimes I visited the Franciscan house, Greyfriars. In each of these places I found myself

encountering a particular and, as it seemed to me, quite distinctive embodiment of the Christian ideal of life. And in each case this embodiment was not just a matter of certain theological commitments being laid alongside a certain style of dining and conversation, which in turn was laid alongside a certain aesthetic sense, as evident in the construction of the building or the choice of artworks to hang therein, which in turn could be set alongside a particular set of ethical and political convictions. Rather, in an unreflective sort of way, I felt that these dimensions of the lives of the inhabitants of these various houses flowed into one another. In each house, various shared creedal commitments were embedded, I felt, in a particular sensibility—that is, in a particular way of taking hold of the sensory world, and not just in various ways of thinking about specifically religious questions. This book is intended as a study of religious sensibility in this sense. I would like some day to examine more concretely the ways of life exhibited by these orders. But here my concerns are of a preliminary kind: I have tried to sketch out how such a sensibility might be possible, and to consider in brief some of the forms which it might take. Of course, it is not only religious orders which exhibit sensibility in this sense: all forms of religious commitment do so. Each Jewish or Muslim or Hindu or Christian family, for example, incarnates its religious ideals in a very particular way, in a style of living which is in some degree unique to the family.¹ Or so it seems to me. If that is so, then it is of considerable philosophical interest to take ‘sensibility’ understood in these terms, rather than simply religious ‘belief’, as a focus for enquiry, and to ask how such a religiously informed construal of the sensory world might be possible. In these pages, my aim is to make some headway with a study of this kind.²

¹ I am grateful to Siobhán Garrigan for suggesting to me this extension in the idea of a religious sensibility, from the context of the religious orders to that of the family.

² Here I have stated in biographical terms the source of my interest in these questions. In the introduction I shall try to demonstrate their significance by reference to the established literature in philosophy and theology. These two approaches are not in competition: the established literature provides a further perspective on the question of why the notion of ‘sensibility’ should be of interest for an account of religious life.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many friends and colleagues without whom I would never have come to think these thoughts, nor found time to record them as I have done here. This book was completed before my move to the School of Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science at the University of Leeds, and I would like to thank my colleagues and also my students in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Exeter for their many years of support and their continued interest in my work. I am indebted in particular to Siobhán Garrigan and Tim Gorringer, both of whom have nudged me and, at times, goaded me in my thinking on these questions. I am also most grateful to my fellow workers in the philosophy of religion, and especially to John Cottingham, Chris Hamilton, Douglas Hedley, Dave Leal, and Tim Mawson. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with these friends on a regular basis, and a number of the ideas I develop here were first presented and then newly shaped in conversation with them. In these enquiries they have been my immediate intellectual community. I have also derived immense benefit from the discussion of papers I have presented on these themes, and I would like to thank Sarah Coakley, Christopher Cook, Victoria Harrison, Brian Leftow, and Matthew Ratcliffe for the opportunity to rehearse some of the ideas that I present here in Cambridge, Durham (twice), Glasgow, and Oxford. I am grateful too for the guidance and encouragement provided by three anonymous readers for Oxford University Press, who were kind enough to read and comment on the whole manuscript. I would also like to give thanks to my first helpers in the philosophy of religion, Peter Byrne, Brian Davies, and Richard Swinburne, whose approach to the subject, they may be surprised to hear, continues to inform my sense of sound intellectual practice! Lastly, I would like to extend my thanks to my family. This book is a study of the notion of ‘sensibility’, and my own sensibility, including my interest in the question of sensibility, is firmly rooted in my family context. So my thanks to Kate and Rowan, Mum and Dad, Rob and Sarah, Geggys and Vania, and Mark and Sue for giving me what I have and who I am. The book is dedicated to my wife’s Australian parents, John and Margaret, who

have allowed me to keep Kate in the land of grey skies for the last ten years and more. I offer it to them with thanks for their continuing love and support, and in the knowledge that, as a radiologist, John has long been exercised by Plato's parable of the cave!

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There is an universal tendency amongst mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious. We find human faces in the moon, armies in the *clouds*; and by a natural propensity, if not corrected by experience and reflection, ascribe malice and good will to everything that hurts or pleases us. Hence the frequency and beauty of the *prosopopœia* in poetry, where trees, mountains, and streams are personified, and the inanimate parts of nature acquire sentiment and passion.

David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, Section III³

Grant that I may so
Thy steps track here below,
That in these masques and shadows I may see
Thy sacred way
And by those hid ascents climb to that day
Which breaks from thee
Who art in all things, though invisibly . . .

Henry Vaughan, 'I Walk'd the Other Day'

There is in the saint 'a conviction, not merely intellectual,
but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power'.

William James, 'Saintliness', *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

He was always with Jesus:
Jesus in his heart,
Jesus in his mouth,
Jesus in his ears,
Jesus in his eyes,
Jesus in his hands,
He bore Jesus always in his whole body.

Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, The Second Book

³ I am grateful to Robin LePoidevin for this quotation, which he used in his presidential address to the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion, September 2011.

The World of Sunlight and the World of Shadows

In the western intellectual tradition, Plato's story of the cave, as presented in the *Republic*, can lay claim to a certain pre-eminence, as the single best known account of the nature of the spiritual life. This story is of course a tale of 'enlightenment', as the prisoner learns to train his gaze away from the shadows whose flickering forms play across the surfaces of the cave, and towards, first of all, the firelight which stands behind him and projects those shadows, and then towards the sun, in the upper realm outside the cave. Given the larger concerns of the dialogue, it is of course integral to the story that the seer who has made it to the outer world, and set eyes on the sun, should be willing to return to the cave, since the vocation of the philosopher king is the exercise of political judgement—and to that end, he or she must lay aside the fulfilments of unimpeded and uninterrupted intellectual vision, and return to the realm of the senses. Although Plato does not dwell on the question, it is clear that the returning seer will experience conditions in the cave differently from his fellows who have remained there all along. Plato suggests that this is a matter of the returning adept experiencing disorientation, as his eyes learn to adjust to the darkness of the lower realm.¹ But we might also suppose that, even when his eyes

¹ In W. H. D. Rouse's translation, Socrates asks: '... if such a one [as has left the cave and seen the sun] should go down again and sit on his old seat, would he not get his eyes full of darkness coming in suddenly out of the sun?' And he continues: 'And if he should have to compete with those who had been always prisoners, by laying down the law about those shadows while he was blinking before his eyes settled down—and it would take a good long time to get used to things—would not they all laugh at him and say he had spoiled his eyesight by going up there...? And would they not kill

have adjusted, the seer's experience of the realm of shadows will remain different—and that it is for this reason that his judgement in the practical sphere, in the realm of the shadows, proves to be superior to that of his fellows.

The text does not force this reading upon us: it is possible that with time, once his eyes have adjusted, the phenomenology of the enlightened person's experience of the shadowy realm will be no different from that of his fellows, but that, even so, he will draw different conclusions about what do to on the basis of this shared experience.² But given Plato's openness within the terms of the story to the possibility that enlightenment will change the phenomenology of the seer's experience of the shadows, he supplies, at least, an invitation to consider whether the seer might be enduringly distinguished from his fellows not only by his practical and political judgements, but also experientially, even when his experience is of the realm of shadows. And we might suppose that some such difference is only to be expected, given that he experiences the shadows as shadows, and not as though they were themselves the sum or the bedrock of reality. In any case, it will be a contention of this book that we ought to read Plato's story in this way—given what we know about the interaction between the phenomenology of a person's experience and their beliefs, desires, and emotional feelings. If we do take this stance, then the pattern of spiritual development which we find sketched paradigmatically in the story of the cave is to be read as a tale of how, following enlightenment, the appearance of the sensory world may be transformed, and not simply as a story of some transformation in the seer's practical judgement or capacity to attend to another, non-sensory realm. On the view I shall be exploring here, we should see

anyone who tried to release them and take them up . . . ?' See *The Republic*, Book VII, in *Great Dialogues of Plato: Revised Edition*, tr. W. H. D. Rouse (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 375. It is, of course, natural to take this last allusion as a reference to Socrates, and the fate he suffered at the hands of the Athenian state. See, for example, Nicholas Pappas, *Plato and the Republic* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 118–9.

² As the passage I have quoted now makes clear, the story treats the disorientation which the seer experiences on return to the cave as temporary: it is a matter of his 'blinking before his eyes settled down', although the text also acknowledges that on return to the cave 'it would take a long time to get used to things'. I am suggesting that even when the seer is 'used to things', there is reason to suppose that his experience of the shadowy realm will be, in phenomenological terms, different from that of his fellows.

these three developments as connected: the 'enlightenment' which is achieved in the intellectual realm effects a shift in the experience of sensory things, and thereby it enables the seer to make a new set of practical discriminations. This way of putting the matter still privileges the intellectual realm, by seeing changes in our apprehension of this realm as the source of changes in experience and practice; but in fact, so I shall argue, the relationship between these three realms might better be seen as one of multi-stranded reciprocal influence.

So this is one context for the present enquiry. Given that our understanding of the spiritual life is to be patterned, at least roughly, on the story that Plato presents in the *Republic*, how should we represent the connection between the intellectual transformation which he describes and the seer's experience of the sensory and practical realm upon his return to the cave? Plato leaves open the possibility that the seer's experience of the cave undergoes an enduring shift in phenomenological terms, and we should pick up that possibility, I am going to argue, and see the spiritual life as realized, in important part, in a changed perceptual relationship to the sensory world.³ So a central theme of our discussion will be the idea that concepts, including religious concepts, or concepts concerning what is ultimately real and what is simply 'shadowy', can enter into, or shape the phenomenology of, our everyday experience of the sensory

³ Although I have introduced these themes by reference to the *Republic*, the same sort of point might be made through a reading of scriptural sources. See for example Sarah Coakley's instructive discussion of the scriptural warrant for the idea that recognising the risen Christ calls for a kind of 'seeing' which is still bodily and yet infused by moral insight: 'The Resurrection and the "Spiritual Senses": on Wittgenstein, Epistemology and the Risen Christ', in Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), Chapter 8. See too her suggestion that the 'spiritual senses' tradition, as it was developed by various Platonically inclined patristic authors, might be applied to these questions. For further discussion, see Paul Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, eds, *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). In *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), Susan Ashbrook Harvey presents a fascinating review of patristic attitudes to the role of the senses, and especially of smell, in the life of faith. Commenting on a passage from Ephrem concerning the significance of the eucharist, she writes: 'as the divine was "mingled with the senses", the senses could then perceive the divine in the world they experienced' (p. 62). See too Margaret Miles's description of Augustine's account of the role of the bodily eyes in the experience of God in the resurrection world: 'Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De trinitate* and *Confessions*', *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983), especially 141–2.

world. If that is so, then, so I shall argue, sensory experience can partake in insights which we might also record more abstractly in discursive or creedal terms. And in that case, such experience cannot be irredeemably corrupt, because it can itself be structured, at least in principle, according to a proper account of the ultimate nature of things.

This understanding of the capacity of the phenomena of sensory experience to share in creedal or metaphysical insights, and to take on a commensurate importance in the spiritual life, seems to be contrary to the drift of Plato's perspective in certain dialogues. In the *Symposium* he famously sketches another version of the spiritual ascent. Here, the seeker begins with experience of beauty in the sensory realm, and specifically the experience of the bodily beauty of a particular human being, before training his gaze away from this particular beautiful body towards bodily beauty in general, and from there towards moral beauty or beauty of character. And the summit of this progression is, of course, the state of contemplating not now the Form of the Good, as in the *Republic*, but the Form of Beauty. On this account, the sensory world has some importance for the spiritual life, insofar as it sets the novice on the path towards spiritual progress, by awakening in him a love for beauty which will find its fulfilment only when he has become absorbed in the beauty of a non-sensory realm.⁴ So in this dialogue, the sensory world seems to be accorded a larger role in spiritual terms than in the *Republic*, to the extent that here the spiritual life does not have its beginnings in a turning away from, or shunning of, the realm of the senses, as when one turns one's back on the shadows in the cave, but instead in a willingness to appreciate, and indeed to love, particular examples of sensory beauty.

But from another point of view, the tale of the *Symposium* gives a less exalted role to the realm of the senses. After all, in the *Republic*, the seer returns to the cave—and in so doing he signifies that the

⁴ Michael McGhee discusses the importance of the *Republic* and the *Symposium* for a conception of the spiritual life, and provides an insightful account of the role of the body in these matters, in his *Transformations of Mind: Philosophy as Spiritual Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 11. See especially his development of the idea of a 'dhyanic body' (p. 172). Douglas Hedley's work constitutes a rich and sustained examination of the contribution which might be made by a Platonic scheme to a contemporary understanding of the spiritual life. See especially his *Living Forms of the Imagination* (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

realm of the senses has an enduring importance. And as we have seen, in this work, Plato seems at least to leave open the possibility that when the seer directs his vision once again to the realm of the senses, that realm will be differently experienced, because his experience will now partake in the enlightenment that was won in the upper, intellectual realm. By contrast, in the *Symposium*, we learn that the lover who has focused his vision on the Form of Beauty will come to think of the sensory world, from the vantage point of his newly acquired spiritual insight, as a 'mass of perishable rubbish'.⁵ The account we are given in the *Republic* at least allows for the possibility of a more affirmative conception of the contribution of the realm of the senses to the spiritual life post-enlightenment. Again, this is most fundamentally because the *Republic* acknowledges that the sensory realm can take on a new appearance post-enlightenment, and this suggests not simply that it might no longer deceive the seer because the seer now knows what construal to place on the sensory appearances, but also that in the seer's experience, these appearances may in themselves cease to have any tendency to deceive, because they are now inhabited or structured by a true conception of the nature of things.

So part of the context for the present investigation is given by the vision of the spiritual journey that is set down in Plato's work, and by the long tradition of enquiry that has been shaped by that vision. A further, related context derives from debate about the nature of the spiritual life in modern literature. In this literature, Christian and other religious conceptions of the spiritual life are sometimes criticized on the grounds that they do not take sufficiently seriously our experiences and choices in the present, sensory world, since they take such experiences to be at best a preparation for some further realm in which our true fulfilment is to be found. Of course, so far as this tendency is present in Christian thinking about the spiritual life, we might suppose that this shows the influence of, or at least a convergence with, the account of the spiritual life that we find in, for example, the *Symposium*. On that account too, the sensory realm so far as it figures positively in the spiritual life has at best a transitional role, not simply in the sense that the human person's final destiny lies in another, *post-mortem* domain, but also in the sense that even in the course of this present life, the spiritual adept should learn

⁵ Plato, *The Symposium*, tr. W. Hamilton (London: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 95.

to keep his gaze fixed upon a non-material world and free from the distractions or, worse, the corruptions that are inherent in experience of the sensory world.

There is no doubt that there are strands of the Christian tradition which can be read in these terms. Take for example these words of Gregory of Nyssa:

How can the soul which is riveted to the pleasures of the flesh and busied with merely human longings turn a disengaged eye upon its kindred intellectual light? . . . The eyes of swine, turning naturally downwards, have no glimpse of the wonders of the sky; no more can the soul whose body drags it down look anymore upon the beauty above; it must pore perforce upon things which though natural are low and animal. To look with a free gaze upon heavenly delights, the soul . . . will transfer all its power of affection from material objects to the intellectual contemplation of immaterial beauty.⁶

Here we find the same ocular and spatial metaphors that structure the account of the *Republic*. And crucially, here, rather as in the *Symposium* on the reading I have just offered, the relationship between sensory experience and experience of the upper realm seems to be conceived competitively: in its later phases anyway, the spiritual life requires the soul to ‘transfer *all* its power of affection from material objects to the intellectual contemplation of immaterial beauty’. Unsurprisingly, such an account invites the objection that it fails to reckon properly with the worth of things that, surely, we know to be worthwhile, because it evacuates this world of all significance, and instead sees everything that might be finally important in a human life as belonging exclusively or competitively in a higher, non-sensory, non-material realm. As Martha Nussbaum expresses the point, commenting on Saint Augustine in particular, on this sort of Christian perspective, we should say that ‘Death is irrelevant, real suffering in this world is irrelevant, all that is relevant is coming into

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, ‘On Virginity’, in Gregory of Nyssa, *Select Works*, Nicene and Post-Nicene, Series 2, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 343, cited in Janet Martin Soskice, ‘Love and Attention’, reproduced in Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 1, p. 16. As we shall see in Chapter 6, Gregory’s understanding of the metaphysics of the incarnation invites a rather different assessment of the significance of the sensory realm.

God's presence.⁷ Whatever its merits may be in abstractly intellectual terms, such a position is, I take it, ethically and existentially insupportable.

This sort of point could be developed in the terms proposed by William James when he suggests that a philosophy of life needs to satisfy not only various theoretical desiderata, but also certain practical requirements if it is to serve a fitting terminus of enquiry. James comments:

A philosophy may be unimpeachable in other respects, but either of two defects will be fatal to its universal acceptance. First, its ultimate principle must not be one that essentially baffles and disappoints our dearest desires and our most cherished powers. A pessimistic philosophy like Schopenhauer's . . . will perpetually call forth essays at other philosophies. . . . But a second and worse defect in a philosophy than that of contradicting our active propensities is to give them no object whatever to press against. A philosophy whose principle is so incommensurate with our most intimate powers as to deny them all relevancy in universal affairs . . . will be more unpopular than pessimism. Better face the enemy than the eternal void!⁸

A philosophy of life of the kind that is implied in Gregory of Nyssa's pronouncements may not be so pessimistic as Schopenhauer's, insofar as Gregory allows that the human person may be fulfilled in relationship to God, and may enjoy such fulfilment even in the course of this life, in the way he describes here. But there is, we might say, still a kind of pessimism in this view, to the extent that those 'desires and powers' of the person which have as their object the sensory world seem bound to be 'baffled and disappointed' on this picture. After all, the relationship between those desires and the desires and powers whose cultivation is required for the later stages of the spiritual life is conceived in competitive terms: the role of desires and powers which have as their object the sensory world is therefore simply to be placed in abeyance, or perhaps to be eradicated, and to this extent these powers are 'contradicted' or set at nought for the purposes of the spiritual life. This way of putting the matter suggests that a Christian philosophy of life, of the kind we are considering, will

⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 552.

⁸ William James, 'The Sentiment of Rationality', in William James, *Essays in Pragmatism* (New York: Hafner Press, 1948), p. 17.

also fail the second of James' tests—since it postulates a 'principle'—namely God—or the spiritual life conceived as fulfilment in relationship to God, which is 'incommensurate' with our sensory powers, insofar as the exercise of these powers cannot contribute anything positively towards the success of a human life understood in these terms.

Of course, there is a tradition of Christian apology which would find the expression of dissatisfaction with the Christian worldview on these grounds wearisomely predictable: the unreformed person will of course find the Christian conception of life practically insupportable; but this only goes to show that the 'natural man' must be converted, so that his desires run true. Here we touch upon a central question in theological anthropology, which I shall not try to adjudicate right here. But I take it that a central motivation for this view is the thought that if the person or 'the soul' is to be properly directed to God, then this requires that their attention be trained away from the sensory world. The central thesis of the present discussion is simply that various doctrinal claims, or in general a Christian conception of the person and of their fulfilment in relation to God, can be inscribed in, or can 'colour', sensory experience, so that the sensory realm itself becomes a medium for reckoning with those claims and allowing oneself to be shaped by them. If that is so, then there is no need to adopt the competitive construal of the relationship between attention to the sensory world and attention to the heavenly realm that defines the position which Gregory enunciates in the passage above. And in that case, at least one central support for the claim that the spiritual life requires disengagement from the sensory realm will have been overturned.⁹

The objection that the Christian conception of the spiritual life, or in general theistic or Platonizing accounts of the spiritual life, imply

⁹ As we shall see in Chapter 6, when we consider the work of St John of the Cross, this point might also be developed in chronological terms: while there may be spiritual reasons for disengaging from the sensory world for a time, these reasons may also suggest that, as the person matures, it will be appropriate for them to re-engage with sensory objects and concerns. David Brown's work provides a richly textured account of the idea that the divine can be encountered under sensory forms. And my discussion here could be read as a phenomenological rendering of some of the central themes of his book *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See, for instance, his allusion to 'the possibility that a divine structure is already implicit in certain forms of experience of the natural world': p. 22.

‘doing the dirt’ on our own humanity, looms large, of course, in a range of spiritually motivated critiques of Christian theology. Such a view is developed famously and at length in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁰ But it is also very much apparent in modern objections to received religious conceptions of the spiritual life. Grace Jantzen, for example, protests that (Christian) philosophy of religion is ‘necrophilic’ because it locates all genuine value in another, non-sensory realm, and sees death as a condition of full admission to that realm. On her account, as on Nussbaum’s, the failing of such a conception of human life is fundamentally ethical: if we think in these terms, and suppose that what matters at bottom is our condition in some further, non-sensory world, then what will become of our resolve to challenge this-worldly structures which sit on the side of oppression? For Jantzen, the remedy for this deficiency in traditional theological thought is to erase any distinction between God and world, and to admit the possibility of human divinization: at a stroke, theological language will then cease to have the consequence of sucking value from the sensory world, and projecting it onto another, divine realm, and will instead provide a conceptual resource for investing importance in the sensory world, once it comes to be represented as divine. So on this view, the human calling is not to lay aside our concern with the realm of sensory affairs in the name of obedience to a God who inhabits some other realm; on the contrary, we are called to become divine ourselves, in the midst of this-worldly experience, by deepening our commitment to various this-worldly concerns, and especially our identification with our fellow human beings insofar as they are vulnerable and afflicted. In this vein, Jantzen comments:

From a feminist perspective, becoming divine is inseparable from solidarity with human suffering: a symbolic of the divine is a symbolic of outrage, imagination, and desire, and compassionate action, not the detached and objective intellectual stance which traditional philosophers of religion assume and which they take to be characteristic of God.¹¹

¹⁰ See for example his reference to God as ‘the enemy of life’, in *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, ed. A. Ridley and J. Norman, tr. J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 174.

¹¹ Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 263.