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## *Quid aliud agat or How One Should Live.* An Analysis of the Jesuit Drama of Georg Bernardt from the Perspective of Existential Philosophy

### **Summary:**

In this article, an attempt will be made to analyse the Jesuit drama of Georg Bernardt, in terms of its existential philosophy content. It will become apparent that the Jesuits, in accordance here with reformatory theology, assume the existence of a *normative facticity*. In this normative facticity, the Jesuits then, in most profound conflict with reformatory thought, believe in the possibility to work towards one's state of grace.

### **Keywords:**

Georg Bernardt, normativity, facticity, free will, ought-to-be

### Normative Facticity

In his *Tundalus Hiberniae Miles Redivivus*<sup>1</sup>, Georg Bernardt (1595–1660), who had been a Jesuit since 1613, has his eponymous protagonist say:

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<sup>1</sup> The Latin text by Georg Bernardt is quoted from the edition: G. Bernardt, *Dramen*, 4 vols., ed. and trans. F. Rädle, Geistliche Literatur der Barockzeit. Texte und Untersuchungen, vols. 5–8, Amsterdam 1984–2008. The volume number of the edition and pagination of the original manuscript are provided in each case.

Translations from Latin, with continual reference to the German translations, are by the author. I wish to thank Karoline Pietsch for philological advice.

May heaven be the domain of God, hell that of the devil, take what remains for yourself [*coelum Deo, Orcum daemoni, caetera sume*]. When one remains in his keep, he can savour that which belongs to him. What is outside does not concern him. This is Tundalus' opinion, and thus teaches also the light of nature [*naturae lumen*]. (*Tundalus* II, 28<sup>r</sup>)

Tundalus presents a great Epicureanism: heaven is the realm of God, hell is that of the devil, and all that remains, the *caeterum*, which is worldly, is our concern<sup>2</sup>. No proof is necessary for this, as Tundalus explains, now with Aristotelian-Ciceronian vocabulary<sup>3</sup>: the evidence of the *lumen naturae* is sufficient.

Ontologically, heaven and hell, God and the devil, are not doubted. However, they have nothing to do with each other and with the world, and this is indeed how it should be so that everyone may savour what belongs to them<sup>4</sup>.

Tundalus' Epicureanism is thus revealed to be merely a vulgar Hedonism<sup>5</sup>: God and hell are banished from the *caeterum* primarily because they hinder the enjoyment of life, the enjoyment of the world: Tundalus is bothered by the idea of heaven and hell normatively infiltrating the world. He desires a *disjunctive caeterum*, separate from heaven and hell, a mortal world free from the normativity of the here-after<sup>6</sup>.

The play leaves us in no doubt as to the fact that this wish is futile. Just a few lines later, Tundalus suddenly collapses, dead. He regains consciousness in hell, protected by his guardian angel. Here, he realises the senselessness of the idea of a normative disconnection between the world, heaven and hell. Eventually, he returns to the world, regaining life and reporting to an astonished crowd of onlookers: he has seen the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum* I, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* III, 2, 1, resp. Aristoteles, *De anima* 430a.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Tundalus* II, 28<sup>sq.</sup>, similarly J. Gretser, *Dialogus De Udone Archiepiscoco* 241–251.

<sup>5</sup> This is in line with the general perception of Epicurus during this period (and well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century), cf. also G. Bernardt, *Jovianus* III, 55<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Bernardt's *Jovianus* goes even further, believing his power to be so great that he was immune to all mishaps (cf. *Jovianus* III, 63<sup>r</sup> and 68<sup>f.</sup>).

true hell, and not simply the hell that “my godlessness had created for me [*mihi fabricavit impietas*]”<sup>7</sup>.

There is no disjunctive *caeterum* then, the idea being merely a fabrication on the part of Tundalus. The spheres of reality are, in fact, in undoubted *conjunction* with one another, namely in a *normative* conjunction. Reality itself, that which cannot be conceived of as being non-existent, facticity<sup>8</sup>, is normatively interwoven. Thus speaks the guardian angel to Tundalus at the beginning of their journey into hell:

You will see hell [...] as the Lord in his wrath through all eternity decided upon it [*ab aeterno statuit*] and for all eternity established it [*aeternitati struxit*] for the atonement of the sins of the mortal. (*Tundalus* II, 36’sq.)

Hell does not simply exist. The Lord *decided* upon it – “statuit” – and *established* it – “struxit” – as a place of atonement for sins. With the creation of hell, normative facticity, the normativity of which finds its concrete form in God, posits the ought-to-be within reality, i.e. God posits the ought-to-be within reality. Hell *is* and *ought to be*; it *ought* to be exactly as it *is*; here, too, the normativity of facticity manifests itself. To hell go those who have not lived up to the normative requirements of normative facticity, who have not complied with the vital ought-to-be, or, put theologically, those who *have not done justice* to the vital ought-to-be.

For Bernardt, this normative pulse running through all facticity is of paramount importance. In the prologue of *Tundalus*, he speaks to us directly:

<sup>7</sup> G. Bernardt, *Tundalus* II, 46’.

<sup>8</sup> With the term facticity, we do not refer to objective entities but rather to that which *is considered to be objective*, to that which *is considered to be*, which cannot be conceived of as non-existent. To speak of facticity thus always means to speak of considering something to be reality. Facticity is therefore not only an ontological, but at the same time also a hermeneutic term: facticity encompasses reality and that which we consider to be reality. Cf. B. Freter, *Wirklichkeit und existentielle Praxis. Vorarbeiten zu einer Phänomenologie der Normativität entwickelt an narrativen Texten der altgriechischen, neutestamentlichen, mittelhochdeutschen und klassischen deutschen Literatur*, Philosophie aktuell. Studien und Diskurse, vol. 14, Berlin 2016, pp. 20-24.

Believe, you spectators, believe us that the departed souls and the kingdom of the underworld and a reckoning exist, and be wise in good time [*mature sapite*]! (*Tundalus* II, 5<sup>v</sup>–6<sup>r</sup>)<sup>9</sup>

It is not sufficient to believe in the departed souls and the underworld. One must also believe in the *reckoning* – the *peccatum originale* is constantly in the background, and hell cannot be understood as anything other than a place of *reckoning*. It is not sufficient simply to believe in the realms of the hereafter. They must be understood in terms of their *normative conjunction with our own lives in the world*. Bernardt portrays this particularly emphatically in *Thomas Becket*. Henry II makes the presumptive claim before Archbishop Thomas that whatever he – none less than the King of England – considers good could hardly be godless. Thomas must point out to the King, whose resulting wrath sets the real tragedy in motion, that he has gone too far with this claim. Thomas *cannot* consider the King's claim to be just when God damns the royal plans<sup>10</sup>.

The normative conjunction is an integral lesson of Jesuit drama and the baroque stage, and indeed the theological stage, in general. It is specifically vital to speak of a lesson here. The Jesuit stage in particular had didactic aspirations of the highest Order. The “tendency”, as Willi Flemming pointed out, is the “heart of the Jesuit drama”<sup>11</sup>.

Jakob Gretser indeed claimed that his *Dialogus De Udone Archiepiscopo* of 1587 was excellently suited to establishing good morals and encouraging a virtuous lifestyle<sup>12</sup>. These aspirations are fulfilled through two lessons, which can only be separated from one another by their use of terminology. The first of these is the lesson of normative facticity, which we have outlined above. The second is the lesson of determining the *existential consequences* of normative facticity: this is the question of how one should live under normative facticity.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. G. Bernardt, *Theophilus* I, 163<sup>v</sup> and *Jovianus* III, 101<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> G. Bernardt, *Thomas Becket* IV, 181<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> W. Flemming, *Geschichte des Jesuitentheaters in den Landen deutscher Zunge*, Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, vol. 32, Berlin 1923, p. 1 (transl. by the author).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. Gretser, *Dialogus De Udone Archiepiscoco*, Prologus, 164<sup>r</sup>, 5–7.

## “What Should I Do?”

Normative facticity, as we find it in the works of Georg Bernardt, which are undoubtedly representative of baroque drama in general, has direct existential consequences. The person who understands that the mortal world and the hereafter are normatively conjugated and understands that this conjunction affects them directly faces the particular question: “what should I do?”. It is of little consequence here whether this most elementary of questions is expressly formulated or whether it acts tacitly within questions about the reasons for one’s existence.

Human existence, whether we like it or not, is entirely orientated towards God<sup>13</sup>. The question “what should I do?” depends entirely on *what God wants from us*. The ‘should’ contained within the question is nothing other than the ‘will’ of God, in the ‘should’ lies nothing other than the ‘I want’ of God, which is addressed to us. This may initially be surprising. Is it not to be assumed that it is primarily a man who *wants* something from God, namely his salvation? Upon closer inspection of our texts, we find precisely this: once Augustine has finally become Augustinus Conversus, Gretser has God himself speak:

Finally, Augustine was willing to open ear and heart to the admonitions of heaven and let that into his innermost being to which I had long been calling him. Finally, he accepted the mercy which summoned him and surrendered his heart to me that I may henceforth possess it [...]<sup>14</sup>.

Augustine gave in to the admonitions, the divine inspiration, the call: he did that *which God wanted* – and, of course, that which God had at the same time made possible<sup>15</sup>. God’s efforts are made even more

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ignatius von Loyola, *Exercitia spiritualia* 23.

<sup>14</sup> J. Gretser, *Augustinus Conversus*, in: D. Weber, *Augustinus Conversus. Ein Drama von Jakob Gretser. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, vol. 674, Wien 2000, vs. 1771–1775.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ignatius of Loyola, *Exercitia spiritualia* 175 and 180.

clear in the anonymous *Münchener Theophilus* of 1597<sup>16</sup>. In the allegory of mercy, the normative facticity *explicates* itself<sup>17</sup>. Here, Gratia speaks:

As soon as man treads upon the earth, I, the mercy of God, come down from heaven to his side and accompany him always, whether he is aware of this or not. (*Münchener Theophilus* 75–77)<sup>18</sup>

Of decisive importance here is the heavenly, the divine efforts made *for* us. Facticity, reality, thus explains itself in a more precise sense to be that which it is.

With the help of this realisation, it can now be determined which form the correct Jesuit way of life *sub specie aeternitatis* must have: we must, as is our understanding of the Jesuit dramatists, become people *through whom God's desire for salvation can and wishes to be fulfilled*. The *existential task* of man is thus determined.

## Jesuit Free Will

To take this as the existential task of man is an audacious theological and dramatic peculiarity that characterises Jesuit drama to a significant degree<sup>19</sup>.

The existential task of man is to wish to make God's will the object of one's own desire. Ignatius expressly emphasises that we ought to beg God for his mercy to fulfil his will<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Ignatius also emphasises the efforts of the angels for us (cf. *Exercitia spiritualia* 60), cf. also the efforts of Cenodoxophylax for his prodigy in *Cenodoxus* II, IV.

<sup>17</sup> This self-explication, this hermeneutic clarification, is, we suspect, mostly the function of the allegorical figures.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymus, *Theophilus* <München 1596> [*Münchener Theophilus*], in: *Lateinische Ordensdramen des XVI. Jahrhunderts mit deutschen Übersetzungen*, ed. F. Rädle, Ausgaben deutscher Literatur des XV. bis XVIII. Jahrhunderts, series Drama vol. VI, Berlin, New York 1979, vs. 75–77.

<sup>19</sup> But certainly elsewhere as well. The most famous example is surely Levin Brecht's *Euripus*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ignatius von Loyola, *Exercitia spiritualia* 91, cf. ibidem 155 and 180.

In order to be able to work on this existential task at all, man must be in a position *to determine his will in exactly this way*: human will must have the freedom, at least this one freedom, to be able to determine itself in at least this one particular sense. This comes very clearly to the fore in the speech of Gratia from the *Münchener Theophilus*, from which we quoted previously. Gratia, as she continues to explain, incidentally entirely in the spirit of the *Exercitia spiritualia*<sup>21</sup>, stands at man's side from birth onwards, however:

oftentimes I follow him only from a distance and shield my light from his eyes, so that the faculty of free will is not completely buried, leaving no space for man's own merit. (*Münchener Theophilus* 78–81)<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, we are left with one existential task and the capacity to fulfil this task, i.e., the correct use of our freedom.

## Reformatory Non-free Will

Nearly everything that we have established thus far stands in the starkest contrast to the reformatory theology of Luther. Luther would surely deny the claim that God had no interest in granting salvation, for he also understood the coming of Christ as an unmistakable act of devotion from God to mankind, as an interest in us and our salvation. However, the Lutheran God succumbs to the restraints of his own justice: this God cannot approach man, unable to overcome the most profound guilt of mankind through the deepest love. Luther emphasises time and again, following Augustine<sup>23</sup>, how much man deserves hell and how inexplicable God's kindness is, allowing some to be redeemed. *Unde malum?*, Augustine claimed, is one of the most challenging co-

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<sup>21</sup> We must not, Ignatius emphasises, insist on mercy so much that free will hence becomes damaged, cf. *Exercitia spiritualia* 369.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. N. Avanchini, *Pietas victrix* 427–452, J. Bidermann, *Philemon Martyr* III, II.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* I, 2.

nundrums. However, the genuine conundrum for both Augustine and Luther is: *Unde bonum? Unde gratia?*

It is, says Luther, “the highest degree of faith [...] to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable”<sup>24</sup>. If we understood how God managed this, faith would no longer be necessary. However, it cannot be grasped, thus creating “room for the exercise of faith”. God hides – “abscondit” – his “eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, righteousness under iniquity”<sup>25</sup>.

The depravity of mankind, with Luther once again following on from Augustine, is a consequence of the original sin. Everything about us that is of value is not from us at all; it is nothing but Christ. The love of God finds nothing about us worthy of love, rather creating it in the first place<sup>26</sup>. Mankind is so far removed from God that it is not capable of self-determination in any respect. Free choice “can do nothing but engage in the service of sin”<sup>27</sup>.

Luther also finds the man to be subject to normative facticity, and, of course, he too assumes normative conjunction. However, this conjunction leads to hell with much greater severity. Entirely inexplicably, against all logic, entirely *undeserved*, the *deus absconditus* occasionally breaks this conjunction and saves a person from their entirely *deserved* fate. In “Adam omnes moriuntur”, in “Adam all die”<sup>28</sup>, says Paul. From here, as Augustine interprets Paul and is later met with absolute agreement by Luther, “the insult to God spread over all mankind”. Following this insult, all people are nothing more than a mass of sinners who deserve punishment by death from God<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> M. Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, [in:] *Luther and Erasmus. Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. G. Rupp, P. S. Watson, The Library of Christian Classics, Louisville 2006, p. 138.

<sup>25</sup> M. Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, in: *Luther and Erasmus. Free Will and Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. M. Luther, *Disputatio Heidelbergae habita*, Ex philosophia, Conclusio Prima and XXVII.

<sup>27</sup> M. Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*, in: *Luther and Erasmus. Free Will and Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>28</sup> *I Corinthians* 15, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* I, 2.



## “I Can Do Nothing”

The normative facticity of the *Deus absconditus* has entirely different existential consequences to the normative facticity of the Jesuit God willing to grant salvation. An example of this can be found in Gryphius’ *Catharina von Georgien*. When Catherine, a prisoner for many years of the Persian King, finds out that she may soon be freed, she is devastated. Catherine would much prefer to die in Muslim captivity since the fact that she can endure this misery proves to her that she is a recipient of God’s mercy:

Lord that your poor maid still stands unharmed;  
Is your work / not that of man.  
(*Catharina von Georgien* IV, 53sq. [transl. by the author]).

God’s interest in granting salvation is demonstrated in the fact that Catherine endures her suffering, to put it in both reformatory and baroque terms, that she *proves* herself. Proving oneself (*Bewährung*) is indeed *not* a human virtue but rather divine providence which manifests itself in man<sup>30</sup>. If Catherine were to be freed, she would no longer need to prove herself and would fall back into the darkest uncertainty of salvation. Of course, Catherine’s concern proved to be unfounded, and she suffered one of the most horrific deaths of the baroque stage.

Catherine’s merciful acceptance by God has nothing to do with herself. She hopes for the mercy of God, but she cannot work towards this mercy. It may be possible to reinforce the guarantee of a hellish fate, but no more than that. One who here asks “what should I do?” must learn to live with the realisation “I can do nothing”. It is thus no surprise that in the protestant dramas, the individual, singled-out person, hero or heroine and the egregious story of this person are the centrepieces of the work. However, the events of the Jesuit drama are (mostly) something that could, in principle, be experienced by anybody.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. H.-J. Schings, *Die patristische und stoische Tradition bei Andreas Gryphius. Untersuchungen zu den Dissertationes funebres und den Trauerspielen*, Kölner Germanistische Studien, vol. 2, Köln, Graz 1966, p. 152.

### *Quid aliud agat?*

The Jesuits did not accept the conundrum *Unde gratia?*. Let us consider the traitor to God Theophilus. In the *Münchener Theophilus*, he eventually realised his guilt and turned to Mary, seeking mercy. An angel asks him how he could dare to burden the Holy Mother considering his transgression. Theophilus replies:

I know this and dare not to speak against it. I have as a sign of my remorse only tears, which cause my voice to fail in pain. (*Münchener Theophilus* 612-614)

Moreover, Poenitentia – penance – adds:

What more should Theophilus do [Quid aliud agat Theophilus], or what does the Holy Virgin [...] require of him further? (*Münchener Theophilus* 614sq.)

The Jesuits undoubtedly took the original sin very seriously, but the right of God to send all of depraved humanity to hell is ruptured by the will of this God to grant humanity salvation. For the initiation of salvation (if God does not wish to initiate it himself, as may be the case), only one thing is required: to be a person who *allows* God to be able to redeem them by desiring God, by desiring him sincerely, by solemnly dedicating themselves entirely to him – *Quid aliud agat?*

The Jesuit God wishes to be desired; he grants mankind this one freedom. Furthermore, he waits for the man to make use of this one freedom to be able to unfold his mercy. And this mercy is indeed the actual and the only power that can affect salvation<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. the speeches of the angels in J. Bidermann, *Philemon Martyr* III, 2.