THE SECULAR FAITH OF GILLIAN ROSE

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ABSTRACT

Gillian Rose was a philosopher, social theorist, memoirist, and Jewish convert to Christianity who died an untimely death in 1995. She offers a novel account of faith, which grows out of her Hegelian philosophical background inflected by her reading of Kierkegaard and her rediscovered Jewish heritage. For Rose, faith is a mode of social practice. Rose's conception of faith is here reconstructed by translating her obscure jurisprudential idiom into the language of social practices and norms. The conception of secular faith developed by Rose is shown to have implications for contemporary discussions of ethics and politics. The contemporary relevance of Rose's work is made clear through comparison with recent work by Robert Brandom, Robert Adams, and Patrick Deneen.

KEY WORDS: *norms*, *social practice*, *pragmatism*, *virtue*, *Gillian Rose*, *Robert Brandom*, *Robert Adams*, *Patrick Deneen*

LIKE EDITH STEIN AND SIMONE WEIL, Gillian Rose was a brilliant Jewish philosopher who moved toward Christianity. Like Stein and Weil, Rose brought breathtaking intensity and rigor to her work on questions of both philosophy and religion. Also, like Stein and Weil, Rose died prematurely, her life and startlingly original work unnoticed beyond a small circle of friends and colleagues. Stein and Weil have achieved posthumous fame, but Rose remains in relative obscurity. Rose died in 1995, and her life and work, championed by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, may as yet rise to the academic celebrity status accorded to Stein and Weil (Williams 1995).[1] Here, I wish to demonstrate some of the fruitful resources that Rose's work has to offer by examining her conception of faith. Considering herself "too Jewish to be Christian and too Christian to be Jewish" (until, apparently, her deathbed conversion to Christianity), Rose was simultaneously attracted and repelled by organized religion (Jay 1997; Williams 1996). Her intellectual and personal struggles with questions of faith resulted

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[1] In addition to Rowan Williams, well-known academic friends and colleagues on whom Rose had a significant influence include John Milbank, Jay Bernstein, and Howard Caygill. Incidentally, literary theorist Jacqueline Rose was her sister.

in a novel conception of faith as secular and as grounded in social practice.

Rose's philosophical prose is notoriously dense. Her terminology is eclectic and inconsistent, and her readings of others are—to put it charitably—idiosyncratic. To reconstruct Rose's account of faith is thus no simple matter. In order to meet this challenge, some preliminary work will be necessary to construct a framework in which to situate Rose's understanding of faith. This framework, an account of social practice and norms, is intended to be broadly in line with Rose's thought and certainly will include nothing to which Rose would object. On top of this framework, Rose's own account of faith can be reconstructed. One way of thinking about Rose's account of faith is this: whereas Robert Brandom uses an account of social norms to move from Kant to Hegel, Rose uses an account of social norms to move from Hegel to Kierkegaard.

Rose's account of faith will then be compared and contrasted with Robert Adams's recent discussion of "moral faith." Rose's account does the same work as Adams's yet involves more palatable metaphysical commitments. However, discussions of political faith are reoriented when Rose's account of faith is substituted for Adams's. A peculiar feature of Rose's account of faith will be briefly examined: her account is tightly tied to love but leaves no space for hope. Along the way, I will insert Rose into contemporary conversations about religion, ethics, and politics.

1. Law

Born in England in 1947, Gillian Rose studied analytic philosophy at Oxford as an undergraduate; spent a year experimenting with sex, drugs, and Adorno in New York City; and returned to England to complete her doctorate on the Frankfurt School supervised by Leszek Kolakowski (Jay 1997; Lloyd 2008b). Rose's second book (1981) was on Hegel and, throughout her life, she aligned herself with a broadly Hegelian position—early in her career, inflected by Adorno; later in her career, inflected by Kierkegaard. Her reading of Hegel emphasizes not teleology and totalization but rather the interminable struggle between thesis and antithesis, between concepts and realities.[2] The project of the philosopher, according to Rose, is to grapple with these tensions. Reason must not be dismissed, for it is reason that makes this task possible. Reason is the tool by which we take our concepts and compare them against the realities we encounter; reason fuels the constant process of learning, which is experience. Rose, clearly indebted to Hegel, describes

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[2] Rose's terminology varies so greatly that I will make no attempt to either adopt it or to adopt a more orthodox Hegelian idiom, favoring instead these loose locutions.

"experience" as "the struggle to recognize: to know, and still to misknow, and yet to grow" (1992, 264). Understood in this way, Rose suggests, reason should not be feared as a frightening metaphysical myth. To emphasize the importance of reason is to do nothing more than to emphasize the importance of fallibility, to emphasize the possibility that our ideas about the world might get the world wrong.

A central motif of Rose's work, from her first book on the Frankfurt School (1978) to her final memoirs (1995, 1999), is the need to acknowledge no other authority than experience. Much philosophy and social theory has been concerned with the delusive task of locating a ground to which claims about the world can appeal. She argues that this problematic has occupied diverse corners of the theoretical world: from neo-Kantian natural law theory to Durkheim's understanding of "society" to Heidegger's interest in "Being" to Derrida's interest in "différance," and much in between. In each of these cases, a piece of theoretical machinery is introduced, and it is claimed that the world is accountable to the machinery. But Rose shows how, in each case, the machinery that claims to simply channel the world is in some way not accountable to experience. In short, by introducing any sort of theoretical apparatus other than austerely defined reason (austere because it merely judges concepts against realities), philosophers and social theorists arbitrarily set their own criteria for how the world should be. Machinery that is supposed to channel the world in fact distorts the world according to the whims of its architect.

Ethics, for Rose, is about the difficult work of navigating the world— about positing a concept, having it fail when compared with reality, and positing again. Rose rails against ethical theories that suppose that there is a way to do ethics without "law." She singles out for criticism ethics of "the Other," with Levinas and Derrida especially in mind. Those who contrast Athens and Jerusalem, "degraded power" and "exalted ethics," preclude an analysis of how ethics and power are inextricably linked (Rose 1996a, 11). This separation—"diremption" in Rose's Hegelian terminology—is a symptom of melancholia, the never-completed mourning initiated when it was discovered that the Enlightenment project of exulting reason was tainted by violence. Despite claiming to offer an ethics for a post-metaphysical age, this ethical move parallels the metaphysical move to which she already objected (Rose 1992, 264). It locates ethics in a realm that is not accountable to anything in the world. Rose exhorts philosophers and theorists to look to "law" to engage with ethical questions.

Although "law" is the key to Rose's thought, the positive term to which she always points after criticizing others, she does not provide a clear account of what she means by the term. Our goal is to explain what Rose means by faith, but this cannot be done without saying what

Rose means by law, for the two concepts, as we will see, are tightly linked for her. Let us introduce some terminology that Rose does not use but that captures the spirit of what she has to say about law.

Let us identify what Rose calls "law" with social norms.[3] What is a social norm? First, a social norm is different from social practice in the way that concept relates to reality on Rose's understanding of Hegel. A norm makes an approximation; it says, in *those* circumstances, *these* are the proper things to do. If *these* actions do not follow from *those* circumstances, the actor will be reprimanded by members of her community. Like a judge discerning the law from past practice and community values, an individual discerns social norms by taking into consideration the practices of a community and its history. Social norms are thus accountable to social practice. If a speaker posits a norm, the speaker's claim may be invalidated by noting that behavior contrary to the posited norm does not draw (or receive) a reprimand.

"Violence" is always implicated in law, Rose writes (1992, 147). In terms of the social norm idiom, this simply means that social norms never perfectly match social practice. As both Wittgensteinian Quietists and Derridean Deconstructionists have noted, representations can never lay on top of the world without remainder. The term "violence"—with its strong ethical implications—is justified because of the consequences of this mismatch. By definition, social norms exist only where there will be a community reprimand in store for those who do not follow the norms. That reprimand can vary from disdainful glances to severe penalties enforced by the institutions that codify social norms, for example, police, courts, and government agencies. This is why Rose argues that it is so important to continually interrogate social norms, to continually check them against, and revise them in accordance with, social practice. When posited norms do not match practice, there will be unwarranted penalties, and this is why Rose is so fiercely opposed to any theory that would suggest an authority for social norms that is not itself subject to interrogation. Such an authority is arbitrary, lending support to unjustified violence by justifying norms that mismatch practice. The violence involved in social norms is undesirable, but the violence involved in separating social norms from social practice is far worse, for this latter violence precludes the possibility of any palliation.

Although Rose does not use the terminology of social practices and norms, she does say things that suggest that she would not object to such a framework. Rose rejected both the notion that there is a

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[3] This idiom of social norms is indebted to Brandom 1979, discussed below, as well as Haugeland 1982, although it differs substantially from the proposals of both Brandom and Haugeland.

universal ethics that applies to Jews and the notion that halakha offers a necessary and sufficient ethical program for Jews. The idea that ethics is based in (always disputed) custom appealed to Rose, yet she thought that the scope of ethics could not be limited to a particular community. As a result, she offers an alternative: "halakha beyond halakha," custom without bounds (1996b, 167). With this formulation, Rose endorses the (Hegelian) notion that ethics starts with social practices and rejects any distinction between law and ethics.

2. Freedom

Let us take a brief excursus here to examine Robert Brandom's account of freedom.[4] This may seem far off topic, but the contrast between Brandom's account of social practice and norms and Rose's account will highlight the similarity and distinctiveness of Rose's work in relation to the work of another recent Hegelian while also exploring why Rose, but not Brandom, leaves open the door for the practice of faith. We will argue that Rose does for faith what Brandom does for freedom: she makes it into a mode of social practice. Indeed, the connection is stronger still; faith for Rose and freedom for Brandom both involve the capacity for creating something that did not exist before, yet Rose's understanding of faith also adds a new dimension that is foreign to Brandom's account.

Brandom begins his discussion of freedom by offering an account of action according to norms. As was suggested above, norms involve praise and blame—praise for acting correctly according to a norm (an action that is right), blame for acting in a way that is not in accordance with a norm (an action that is wrong). Norms are based on convention; which actions are praised and which actions are blamed could be entirely different. To understand what a particular norm is, on Brandom's view, we have to look at actual social practice. Which actions do real people in a community praise and which do they blame?

So far, Brandom sounds just like Rose. However, a divergence surfaces when Brandom argues that it is not possible to construct a metalanguage for norms. For example, in the special case of linguistic norms, the norms of what is correct or incorrect to say, he suggests that it is impossible to construct a list or algorithm that would encompass or produce every correct linguistic expression. If it was supposed that

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[4] The focus here will be on Brandom's early article, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms" (1979), rather than his more recent *Making It Explicit* (1994). In this more recent work, the fundamental account of social practice and norms does not change, but a number of extraneous issues are introduced which distract from the focus here. For a powerful critical response to the aspect of Brandom's work discussed here, see Rosen 1997.

such a sufficient list or algorithm could be constructed, we would be in the situation criticized by Wittgenstein of having rules, and rules for the application of rules, and rules for the application of rules for the application of rules . . . into infinite regress (Wittgenstein 1968; Kripke 1982).

This lack of a metalanguage need not trouble us because norms are "implicit in the practice of the community," according to Brandom (1979, 188). Instead of constructing a metalanguage that determines which acts are in accordance with norms and which are not, we can just *look*: if the action results in a reprimand, it is not in accordance with norms. As observers looking in on a community, even if that community is our own, we divide up behavior "into social practices" based on our observation of how community members act. The way that we divide up the behaviors we witness need not correspond with how members of the community themselves ordinarily understand their activities. For members of the community, norms remain implicit; it is the observer who makes them explicit.

An implication of Brandom's proposal is that social practices must be understood holistically, not in isolation from each other. One social practice is correct just if it is responded to without reprimand, just if members of a community take it as correct. Even so, the responses of the community are themselves social practices that can be correct or incorrect, as determined by further practices of reprimand, and so on "all the way down." To avoid being stuck in this bottomless pit, all social practices must be considered together at once. This holism means that social practices cannot be individuated: to convey the norms of a community we wish to describe, we need to perform a "translation," not simply identifying and describing one practice (in other words, norm) in which we are interested.[5]

This is the root of the most significant difference between Brandom and Rose. Brandom thinks that it is possible for norms to accurately reflect social practice: norms are *implicit* in practice and they just need to be made *explicit*. To do this accurately, holistic translation is necessary. Rose also turns to social practice to find norms, but she has no illusions about norms ever mapping onto social practice. Every attempt to articulate a norm will fail. There will be reprimands that cannot be accounted for by the articulated norm. However, that does not mean we should not attempt to articulate norms, because this is how we go about the necessary task of explaining and critiquing the world. We say that an action is right or wrong because it is authorized or unautho-

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[5] The slippage in terminology from practices to norms in Brandom's article is a result of this holism. It prohibits him from discussing an individuated norm. Thought of holistically, the distinction between practices and norms seems to dissolve.

rized by a specific norm. From Rose's perspective, Brandom's gestures toward holism and translation are just another attempt to still the "violence" of the mismatch between social practice and norms. For her, norms are not implicit in practice, waiting to be revealed. Rose turns out to be the true pragmatist, taking norms to be a tool, a fiction to describe social practice. People act *as if* there are norms, but in the back of their minds, they know that norms do not really match social practice.[6]

Brandom's account of social practice lays the groundwork for what he has to say about freedom. He distinguishes a "Kantian" understanding of freedom—"freedom consists precisely in being constrained by norms rather than merely by causes"—from a "Hegelian" understanding of freedom—"freedom as consisting of the self-expression made possible by acquiescence in the norms generated by an evolving community" (1979, 187). It is this latter, Hegelian understanding of freedom with which Brandom aligns himself. It is the freedom of "the artist and the genius" instead of the freedom of "the peasant and the worthy Pietist" because it emphasizes how freedom is "enabled by but not reducible to constraint by communal norms" (1979, 193).

This Hegelian understanding of freedom fits the phenomenology of freedom that we observe, Brandom notes. To master a language is not simply to be able to speak without making mistakes, without being reprimanded. To master a language is to be able to say things that have not been said before, to combine words in new ways that, despite their novelty, will not result in reprimand by one's community. Only then can it be said that an individual is a competent language user; freedom consists in the possibility for new performances enabled by the mastery of a "framework of norms." In this case, that "framework of norms" is "inherent in the social practices which make up the language"; in general, that framework of norms is inherent in the social practices of the community *in toto* (1979, 194). In sum, for Brandom, freedom is a feature of social practice, made possible by social norms, not the ability of an individual to transcend social norms.

Despite their differing accounts of social practice and norms, Rose would largely agree with what Brandom has to say about freedom—although she rarely uses the word. Reminiscent of Brandom, she writes of "our infinite capacity for self-creation" (1999, 63). Rose's account of law refuses stasis; law is always in flux. Moreover, for Rose, this flux results from the tension between social practice and norms (though there is no reason to think that she would not also agree with Brandom's location of flux within social practice). Out of the tension

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[6] For the seminal philosophical account of fictions, see Lewis 1978. For more recent work, see Kalderon 2005.

between social practice and norms emerge new practices and new norms that are surprising, which were unknown previously.

What Rose has to say about flux is made clearer by her descriptions of reading and writing. Rose describes reading as "the repository of my inner self-relation: the discovery, simultaneous with the suddenly sculpted and composed words, of distance from and deviousness toward myself as well as others" (1995, 35). By reading, Rose was able to call herself into question by leveraging the tension between practice and norms, between presentation and representation.[7] In other words, she was able to step back from the norms through which she understood herself, the norms that she unquestioningly accepted because of their apparently seamless connection with who she was. In fact, these norms had just been seamlessly borrowed from those around her and applied to herself. Her encounter with the explication of community norms through the written word, in the texts she read, distanced her from those norms, revealing the tension between social norms and practice, between her concept of herself and who she really was (that is, how she really acted). It allowed her to become "devious," to open new possibilities for herself, new ways of acting previously unimaginable.

The same process, but with an escalated intensity, occurs in writing. For Brandom, writing would seem to be a paradigmatic instance of "making it explicit," of articulating norms implicit in social practice. Jeffrey Stout (2004) uses Brandom's work to suggest that this is exactly what great American writers such as Whitman, Emerson, Ellison, and Baldwin have done; they have made explicit norms that are implicit in the American democratic tradition. But for Rose, instead of showing how norms are implicit in practice, writing shows the fecundity of the tension between social practice and norms.

Rose describes writing as a "mix of discipline and miracle, which leaves you in control, even when what appears on the page has emerged from regions beyond your control" (1995, 54).[8] Writing involves grappling with received norms ("discipline"), attempting to creatively follow those norms to produce an acceptable, desirable product ("control"). On the other hand, something else is at work, something utterly unexpected based on existing norms. This is exactly

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[7] For the terminology of "presentation" and "representation," which maps precisely the tension Rose identifies between social practice and norms, see the very insightful discussion in Badiou 2005.

[8] In light of the discussion of anxiety below, compare: "If I knew who or what I were, I would not write; I write out of those moments of anguish which are nameless and I am able to write only where the tradition can offer me a discipline, a means, to articulate and explore that anguish" (Rose 1993, ix).

what a "miracle" is: a phenomenon not explicable in terms of existing laws, in terms of existing norms. Writing involves miracle because, in the process of confronting existing norms—norms that are necessarily incomplete, which necessarily do "violence"—something new appears in ink on the page. This something that appears reflects neither the existing norms nor the "personality" of the writer, but a Hegelian (on Rose's non-totalizing reading of Hegel) synthesis of the two. Rose characterizes these possibilities as an unexpected "paradise," which is "unlocked as a result of coercion, reluctance, cajolery and humiliation" (1995, 35). The new possibilities open up through a confrontation with the law, through being forced to grapple with the rigors of the norms of reading and writing.[9]

These cases of "making it explicit," grappling with explicated norms through reading and writing, are certainly a part of the practice of freedom as Brandom would understand the term. According to Rose, however, making norms explicit through reading and writing is not the precondition for building on those norms, for *Bildung* (Brandom 1979, 193). Rather, grappling with norms opens the possibility of unlocking the fecundity of their failures. It demonstrates how norms do not fully represent the possibilities for social practice and how, by standing back from those norms, by bracketing them, it might be possible to act in new ways. This bracketing move, understood more radically, is precisely the maneuver that Rose will identify as the foundation of faith.

3. Faith

Until the last few years of her life, Rose focused her intellectual attention on secular philosophy and social theory. This began to change as Rose worked on *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (1992). In that book, Rose engaged with Kierkegaard's thought, putting him in dialogue with a range of modern writers from Lacan to Kafka to Arendt to Milbank. Rose grappled with Kierkegaard's account of faith, trying to find a way to assimilate faith into her very secular Hegelian framework.

Faith had become a live intellectual topic for Rose; it would soon become a live personal issue as well. Rose writes that her interest in Judaism, her "return" to the faith of her ancestors, was spurred by a dinner party conversation. A friend explained to her, "An orthodox Jew

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[9] Compare how Truman Capote described his initiation into the world of the writer: "It was a lot of fun—at first. It stopped being fun when I discovered the difference between good writing and bad, and then made an even more alarming discovery: the difference between very good writing and true art; it is subtle, but savage. And after that, the whip came down!" (1980, xi–xii).

doesn't have to worry about whether he believes in God or not. As long as he observes the law" (Rose 1995, 20). This struck a chord with Rose, offering the possibility that the Jewish tradition might be mined as a resource for her jurisprudentially oriented philosophy. She studied ancient and modern Hebrew and the works of Jewish writers; she also served on a commission charged with memorializing Auschwitz.

Rose's interest in issues of faith underwent a change from intellectual to personal, from Kierkegaardian to Jewish. Her faith later underwent a second change that coincided with her fatal illness. Rose's interest shifted from Judaism to Christianity, culminating in her deathbed conversion (Jay 1997). In her last writings, especially *Paradiso* (1999), she explores the intellectual and spiritual resources of the Christian tradition, ranging from Augustine on the virtues to the significance of monasticism and seclusion. Nonetheless, in each of these three phases of Rose's relationship to faith, the way that she understood faith philosophically remained consistent. Faith always remained a feature of social practice, never something beyond social practice. From Kierkegaard she took an interest in moments that reveal faith, from Judaism she took an interest in the centrality of law for faith, and from Christianity she took an interest in the role of love in faith.

Unlike almost every other topic Rose discusses, she presents a straightforward statement of her understanding of faith. The difficulty comes in trying to understand how this statement, offered in her final, posthumously published work, illuminates the variety of statements that Rose made about faith at other points during her life. Rose asserts that faith has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it is "the capacity of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"; on the other hand, it is "the enlarging of inhibited reason in the domain of praxis, of practical reason, Aristotle's *phronesis*, the educating of wisdom that knows when to pass unnoticed and when to act" (1999, 31–32). Faith is a practice: it is the practice of continuing to grapple with the world, realizing that the world is, and always will be, uncertain. Commitment to this task leads to excellence in navigating the world, excellence at the job of being a lawyer whose specialty is social norms.

The example that provides the centerpiece for Rose's account of faith is Abraham's preparation to sacrifice Isaac. Constructing her argument in dialogue with Kierkegaard's famous reading of the biblical story, Rose begins by rejecting any reading of the story that would take the sacrifice to be "a pre-ethical condition of a founding murder" (1992, 148). What is at work is a *suspension* of the ethical—which immediately entails that the ethical already existed before its suspension. The sacrifice is not the moment when social norms arrive on the earth from the starry skies above; social practice and norms have always existed.

Instead of focusing on the "leap" of faith so often read into Kierkeg- aard, Rose is at least equally interested in what happens *after* the moment when faith is tested. Indeed, what happens during the moment itself can remain in brackets—its only salient feature is its existence, that such a moment does happen. After the moment, the individual who has experienced it returns to his ordinary existence. Kierkegaard's heroes return to the ordinary world. However, their lives afterwards are notably altered. It is this new style of living, a practice inflected by the moment when faith was tested, that Rose identifies with faith.

The "suspension of the ethical" (Kierkegaard's phrase appropriated by Rose) only occurs for an "imperceptible" moment, "for the movement of faith does not take place in time, or, it takes place in every moment of time" (1992, 148). This perplexing observation is a reminder that faith, like freedom, is a mode of living, a stance toward social norms. It is not a feeling or a belief or a decision that happens in a "moment." The moment simply allegorizes the lifestyle of faith, condensing it to a point. The story of Abraham and Isaac is a fiction; it forces us to think about what it would be like *if* social norms were suspended, even though they really are not and cannot be suspended. To suppose that social norms actually are suspended, and that such a suspension is the foundation of ethics, is to separate ethics and "law"—it would be exactly the move Rose so vehemently opposes.

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac is just one of many examples of suspensions of the ethical to which Rose points. Moments of suspension occur in much less supernatural circumstances. Rose cites illness, bereavement, separation from a loved one, and natural disasters as moments that fulfill this function—"to loose and to bind, to bind and to loose" (1995, 98). All of these circumstances function to radically alter the norms by which one lives; each results in a re-formation, in the emergence of new, previously unforeseen norms.

What does a faithful life look like, a life informed by stories of faith such as those told about Abraham? Rose describes the life of faith as one in which an individual is continually "willing to stake oneself again" (1992, 148). By this she means that a person with faith will whole-heartedly participate in the practice of positing concepts (norms) and testing them against reality (practice), always willing to revise the concepts they posit. A faithful person will not exempt themselves from this process; he will remain sensitive to the evidence of experience, never dogmatically holding to concepts that are not supported by evidence, to norms not supported by practice. It is thus only faith "that prevents one from becoming an arbitrary perpetrator or an arbitrary victim; that prevents one, actively or passively, from acting with arbitrary violence" (1992, 148).

To hold dogmatically to a view of the world, as discussed above, is to act with arbitrary violence because it is to offer reprimands that are not supported by the evidence of experience and are only based on personal whims held as dogmatic truths. A faithful person does not imagine that she can act without violence; rather, she realizes that all actions are continually implicated in violence and yet she perseveres in acting, in positing concepts and testing them against realities. In this struggle, "'violence' is inseparable from staking oneself, from experience as such—the initial yet yielding recalcitrance of action and passion" (1992, 151).

This is why Rose opposes much contemporary religious thought, both Jewish and Christian. She takes the project of religious thinkers, from Buber to Fackenheim to Metz to Milbank, to be one of "mending the world," which has the effect of "betraying" the hard work of living (1992, 293). In short, they lack faith. They lack the commitment to persist in the "revel of ideas and risk" that is living and instead opt for an easy out, for the fantasy of an ethics purified of law (1995, 135). The "New Jerusalems" that they posit foreclose the possibility of critical analysis of social norms, of the worldly power and worldly institutions from which they recoil. "Against the tradition from St. Paul to Kant which opposes law to grace and knowledge to faith . . . the modern congregation of the disciplines—from philosophy to architecture—*loses faith* when it renounces concept, learning, and law" (1992, 307).

If Kierkegaard identifies and describes the problem of anxiety, the solution he offers is a lifestyle of faith, on Rose's reading. Anxiety is experienced any time one truly grapples with the law. To live life without anxiety would be to shut oneself off from a central feature of the world; it would be to live in delusion. Living life without anxiety is like living life without freedom—possible, perhaps, but only when one understands social norms to be absolutely rigid and static.

Rose notes Kierkegaard's two-stage move, which demonstrates the relationship between law, anxiety, and faith (1992, 89–90). First, there is a movement "from law to anxiety." A person who is living an ordinary life in the world experiences anxiety for some reason—perhaps because of a moment of crisis when social norms are suspended. Faith allows the individual to return back from the moment of anxiety to the law. Instead of despairing indefinitely because of anxiety, if the individual has faith, he is able to go back to ordinary life. However, the ordinary life of the individual before the experience of anxiety coupled with faith is different from that ordinary life afterwards. What was before simply a life lived with "ambivalence" becomes a life lived with full-blown existential angst, with deep "equivocation" (1992, 90).

Rose explicitly links freedom to anxiety—and hence to faith. "The art of power is 'freedom': how to be always all-ready for anxiety" (1992,

87). In this rather bewildering sentence, we find a tangled knot of Rose's key concepts. To begin untangling, the absent center of Rose's sentence is law, which we have been translating as social norms. Law is infused with power, according to Rose. To navigate the law, to find one's way around the world of social norms, to use *phronesis*, is what Rose here calls "freedom." Let us think of anxiety as what happens when law is suspended, for instance in Abraham's case, or in the case of disease or disaster. The *phronimos*, the person with practical wisdom, the person who has the ability to navigate the law with excellence, will be able to continue to act when it seems as though the law is suspended. This person has freedom—and he also has faith, although, in fact, it is not only in moments when the law is suspended that this ability to have faith is needed. Faith is needed all of the time because social norms always involve anxiety. In a sense, they are always suspended, for they are just fictions trying, and failing, to match social practice. This being the case, to be free is to have faith because freedom is the ability to navigate social norms, and faith is the energy that fuels that task.

Faith is also a central topic of Rose's philosophical memoir.[10] Disease and hardship without despair pervade *Love's Work* (1995). We encounter character after character who has gone through great ordeals, ordeals that only reinvigorate his or her zeal for life. The book's epigraph quotes an Orthodox monk: "Keep your mind in hell, and despair not." This is the core of faith for Rose, to continue to struggle in the world instead of opting for easy escapes. One's mind—and body—may suffer unspeakable travails, yet one who has faith will persevere in the engagement, in the struggle.[11]

In the first pages of Rose's memoir, we meet the nonagenarian Edna, a woman who "exudes well-being" despite a battle with childhood cancer and various other maladies. Edna is a model of the understanding of faith endorsed by Rose; Edna "lived sceptically" (1995, 6). Despite her age, she continued reading, thinking, engaging with the world of ideas and people. Edna is not perfect and is not even extraordinary. She makes mistakes, frequently. Yet Edna believed in "the quiet and undramatic transmutation that can come out of plainness, ordinary hurt, mundane maladies and disappointments" (1995, 6).

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[10] Rose's memoir is both personal and philosophical. As Rose writes, "In order to write philosophy or to be a philosopher, you've got to bring together your emotional and your intellectual life. If you keep them separate, you'll be a bad philosopher" (Lloyd 2008b).

[11] At points, Rose's account of faith sounds strikingly similar to the account of faith offered by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "I discovered later, and I am still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. . . . By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities" (Bonhoeffer 1953, 201–2).

In contrast, Rose describes her own mother as faithless. The Holocaust claimed the lives of fifty of her mother's relatives, yet her mother lives in denial. Her mother claims that the loss caused no suffering, yet this only masks the depth of the suffering that has been left unresolved, according to Rose. Her mother's refusal to "live in hell" results in melancholia, in an entrenched despair that will not budge because it is denied. Her mother appears content, she wears a smile, yet she has an "all-jovial unhappiness." The trauma is not *worked*, in Rose's idiom, because it remains unthought.

Rose's understanding of her mother's denial, and faithlessness, is exactly parallel to Rose's critique of postmodernism and neopragmatism (1984, 1996a). Rose argues that these movements evade the difficulty, violence, and suffering of the world. They claim to sweep away "metaphysics" and "law," they claim to offer a possibility for "ethics" without law, an ethics not framed in terms of individuated social norms. However, in doing so, they merely exemplify a form of incomplete mourning—mourning for reason, lost because of its now all too evident entanglement in violence.

4. Moral Faith

Robert Adams, approaching questions of faith from the perspective of analytic philosophy, has also offered an account of faith divorced from religious commitment but necessary for a moral life (1999).[12] Although Adams's account differs in significant ways from Rose's account, both Rose and Adams are interested in providing an account of faith that does not depend on religious commitment. Adams argues that "moral faith" is necessary for morality independent of belief in God. He defines faith as "believing something that a rational person might be seriously tempted to doubt, or even not to believe" (1999, 373). The believer is aware of the possibility of doubt and yet persists in her belief. In other words, faith is a belief that is not fully explainable by rationality: a person perfectly weighing reasons for and against a particular belief would not have enough evidence to believe "beyond a reasonable doubt"—unless she had faith.

Faith, as Adams understands it, involves clinging to a belief and rejecting reasons against it. One will occasionally encounter evidence against beliefs in which one has faith, but because one has faith, that evidence will be dismissed. Dramatically, in a society suffused with evil, an individual will constantly encounter reasons to doubt beliefs about being good. While to the Average Joe in contemporary America

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[12] See also the similar points made by Baier 1985. Both Adams and Baier are, of course, indebted to William James 1905.

it might seem reasonable that honesty is the best policy, no doubt about it, unless Joe has *faith* in the goodness of honesty, when he finds himself in a totalitarian state, his belief in the goodness of honesty will quickly evaporate. Dishonesty will seem more expedient, more beneficial for him—unless he clings to his belief in the goodness of honesty.

Adams identifies several sorts of objects of moral faith. First is morality itself. Even if reasons are presented for belief in morality, these reasons can never be totally conclusive. A student who has taken for granted a belief in morality may take an ethics class or an anthropology class (or an economics class!) and begin to doubt that her belief is correct. The student might read about people in faraway lands who act dramatically different from the way she acts. To be moral requires having beliefs about good and evil, but she doubts her own beliefs about good and evil. Consequently, to be moral, she needs faith.

A second sort of object for moral faith involves specific beliefs about the world. Adams argues that to be moral, it is necessary to have faith in the proposition that a person's life is worth living. This is a belief that is supported by reasons but that can be doubted. The degree to which it is believed is not proportionate to the reasons in its favor. If a friend is gravely ill or is going through very hard times, it might be reasonable to believe that the individual would be better off not living at all. Conversely, if one has faith in the belief that human life is always worth living, one will be supportive of one's friends even in the worst conditions, never giving up hope for them. Supporting one's friends is part of being a good friend, part of being a moral person.

The account of faith defined as belief offered by Adams clearly differs from the account of faith defined as practice offered by Rose. Most obviously, beliefs are different from practices; beliefs happen in the head (or have some relation to the mind). For Adams, faith has objects—even if its object can be an amorphous entity like "morality itself." For Rose, faith is not about any object in particular; it is an inflection of the way that all actions are performed. The sorts of specific beliefs that Adams suggests would be necessary objects of moral faith would strike Rose as dogmatism plain and simple, as an elevation of particular claims about the world to a safe haven immune to the turbulence of the world, making the norms so protected no longer accountable to social practice.

However, like Rose, Adams presents phenomenological accounts of moments that shake us out of the ordinary and accentuate faith. For Adams, these moments are when we realize the possibility to doubt beliefs that we previously took for granted. When we read in a Marxist newspaper that morality is the tool of the oppressing class, we are shaken from our default belief in morality. If we continue to believe in morality, it is because we have faith: we persist despite doubts.

Similarly, as we have seen, Rose points to situations where norms are suspended, where it is no longer clear what one is supposed to do, and where one's willingness to continue forward is shaken. If one does continue forward, one's life will be inflected by that experience, and this is what Rose calls "faith."

Both Adams and Rose characterize secular faith as involving a certain ineffable quality. Adams describes it as a "stance" of which "any verbal formulation" will necessarily fall short (1999, 374). Similarly, recall how, for Rose, it is impossible to represent social practices as norms—every attempt will necessarily fail. The "stance" that faith involves, according to Adams, is one that involves "commitment" that is more than conventional acceptance. In a homogeneous society, moral and religious beliefs may be accepted without commitment, simply as custom. (Adams suggests that this is like our belief in history: we are taught about it, and accept it by custom, but without a commitment, without being *for* it.) The stance of faith, in contrast, is to be committed to something, to have "courage" to defend it. This courage is "felt more than chosen" and is "an inner force which carries one forward." It is "sustaining determination" (1999, 389). With this language, Adams seems to move very close to Rose. Adams is here describing faith as a way of living, as the push to remain engaged in the activities of life.

Although Adams and Rose both present accounts of faith without God, Rose's understanding of faith is more metaphysically austere. It is committed only to social practice and norms, not to entities like "morality" with their mythological ring. If Rose's account can do the same work as Adams's—which it appears to do, as it allows us to talk about the strong commitment to grappling with life without invoking God—then Rose's account is preferable because of its austerity.

5. Political Faith

What are the practical implications of Rose's practice-based account of secular faith when it is considered as an alternative to Adams's belief-based account? Let us turn to a political theorist who has written eloquently about questions of faith and has drawn on Adams's work. Patrick Deneen has recently offered a novel argument that commends the benefits of religious faith for democratic politics. Contemporary American democracy—as well as democratic political theory, both liberal and radical—rests on faith in democracy, he charges. Describing the project of his book, he writes, "This is a study of paradox, an inquiry into how a political system designed to minimize claims of faith itself rests on faith . . ." (2005, xvii). Deneen tries to show this both genealogically and conceptually, demonstrating how Christian faith sublimated into democratic faith while also showing how the

concept of democracy is often dependent on faith in certain foundational principles. This conceptual dependence results from the need for "ground rules" in both radical democratic and liberal political theorizing, rules that must be accepted in order for politics to work. The theorist must have "faith" in these rules, Deneen suggests. Moreover, democracy is often linked with human perfectibility, the desire to transform human beings into something better through their participation in democratic politics. This, too, requires faith.

Deneen values faith, but he also values skepticism—when faith in democracy is allowed free reign, it leads to "unwarranted optimism, utopianism, and fanaticism" (2005, xvii). Instead of democratic faith in human perfectibility, he suggests that democracy should be premised on the *imperfection* of human beings. This is not a result of his faith but of his skepticism. This skepticism should be accompanied by a "commitment to amelioration . . . that motivates out of democratic *caritas*" (2005, 10–11). Where Rose advocates the virtues of faith and love but (as we will shortly see) not hope, Deneen recommends, for the purposes of democratic politics, the virtues of love and hope but not faith—at least not what he calls democratic faith.

Deneen's strong commitment to "democratic hope" but not "democratic faith" is a result of his focus on human imperfection.[13] Democracy should not try to make humans divine but rather should try to improve the lot of us sinful creatures. Deneen's task, then, is to sever democratic faith from democratic hope and to demonstrate how the latter can be retained when the former is discarded. To do this, he draws on Augustine and Aquinas. Augustine notes how hope must be aimed at a divine rather than a secular object, while Aquinas notes that "hope goes wrong and is mistaken when you rely on your own strength" (2005, 244). Hope goes right when the project of achieving the object of hope is framed in a communal context, shared with those around us, strengthening our resolve while reminding us of our personal insufficiency (2005, 244).

By severing democratic hope from democratic faith, Deneen is able to emphasize the importance of religious belief for democracy. Where "democratic faith" involves a "belief in human malleability" that often causes the democratic faithful "to reject traditional religious belief as undemocratic," on Deneen's view, religious belief is valuable to democracy because religious belief emphasizes "human fallibility, insufficiency, and humility" (2005, 11). Religious belief is thus "the first line of defense against the threat to democracy that 'democratic faith' can

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[13] Deneen's emphasis here is very close to that of Charles Mathewes (2000). In addition to the similarities in the substance of their proposals, both draw on Reinhold Niebuhr and Arendt as resources for "democratic realism" (Deneen's phrase).

engender" (2005, 11). Faith in God is "more modest" than faith in democracy: while faith in democracy is very specific and concrete, faith in God recognizes the mysterious nature of its object. By recognizing that there is something so great that it is beyond human comprehension, faith in God promotes humility in politics.

Deneen uses Adams's account of faith as a framework for his political theorizing. However, if we turn from the account of faith offered by Adams to the account of faith offered by Rose, the political implications dramatically shift. Adams describes an "object" of faith, and this is what allows Deneen to compare faith in transcendent divinities favorably to faith in democracy. Faith in democracy is more dogmatic because its object wears a tighter semantic belt than amorphous divinities. The democratic faithful feel like they know what the objects of their faith are so they feel like they have more control over them.

Alternatively, if we understand secular faith to be a *practice* rather than a belief, the dogmatism that Deneen associated with "democratic faith" vanishes. Transcendence does enter into Rose's conception of faith, but only as the unexpected, as the transformation of social norms that results from a commitment to "work" those norms. This kind of faith has nothing to do either with human perfectibility or with divinities. It has to do with a commitment to intersubjective reality. This commitment—which seems like just the sort of thing Adams, hobbled by his belief idiom, is trying to get at—is certainly a virtue in democratic participation. It is a virtue that supports critical interrogation of political institutions and political rhetoric while not holding dogmatically to any pre-commitments. Indeed, on Rose's view, it is the believer in an all-powerful God who is a problematic participant in politics, for the faith of such individuals will preclude them from full participation, from truly risking themselves by exempting no norms from investigation and possible reformulation.

6. The Theological Virtues

One way to read Rose is not, primarily, as a Hegelian metaphysician, but rather as a theorist of the theological virtues of faith, love, and hope (Lloyd 2007). Rose offers an account of ethics, of how to live. But, because of her philosophical framework, questions of how to live are questions of how to navigate law, how to navigate social norms. In *Love's Work*, Rose offers examples of her acquaintances and friends who live life virtuously. They live lives that demonstrate faith and love, as Rose understands these virtues, but a curious feature of her philosophy emerges as Rose discusses the theological virtues—although Rose ties faith and love very closely together, she almost never mentions hope.

Like reading and writing, love is a practice of freedom according to Rose.[14] Norms are reworked; new norms emerge. Furthermore, something more is exemplified by love; it also is an instance of the suspension of the ethical. Despite the similar phenomenologies of writing and love, writing "is a very poor substitute indeed for the joy and the agony of loving" (1995, 54). The phenomenologies are similar, but the intensities are different: the intensity of love is an order of magnitude greater than the intensity of writing.

As in reading and writing, love involves confrontation with norms. In love, however, this confrontation is doubled—the lover and beloved confront each other, confront the other's way of acting, the other's practices and norms. As a result of this confrontation, the norms of each are suspended and reworked. The lover does not become the beloved, nor do they begin to approach each other. Instead, lover and beloved each alter themselves in response to the other, although each remains entirely distinct. Each is confronted with his lover's "ever-strange being, which comes up against you, and disappears, again and again, surprising you with difficulties and with bounty" (1995, 54). This confrontation is a challenge, it is full of "difficulties," but it is also fecund, producing "bounty," producing new ways of acting. A result of this phenomenology is Rose's conclusion that true love is not unconditional. It must acknowledge its implication in violence. It must acknowledge the limits of lover and beloved—limits conceived as norms, norms that constitute the individual.

The phenomenology of love affairs, according to Rose, is the same as the phenomenology of the binding of Isaac. Both expose the workings of faith through the temporary suspension of law. Love relationships differ from all other types of relationships because in them, we are not playing a role that has a set script. As a teacher, a coworker, a friend, or even a sibling, there are precise ways that we are supposed to act, norms that we follow. These norms offer protection, according to Rose, setting expectations and providing a mechanism for accountability. If a coworker does not perform her job, her supervisor can point to her job description; if a friend is not present at a time of need, she can be held accountable by pointing to the norms of friendship.

In contrast, love involves "absolute power." Even if an explicit agreement is made between the two parties, "one party may initiate a unilateral and a fundamental change in the terms of relating without renegotiating them" (1995, 54). There is no means of holding each other accountable; at any moment, one party can walk away. To continue in love, aware of this risk, is an act of faith. It is to persevere even when

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[14] For a more extensive discussion of Rose's understanding of love, see Lloyd 2008a.

norms have been suspended. The morning after making love, no longer blinded by the passion of lovemaking, is a moment that calls for great faith, according to Rose. In the morning, the lovers become aware of their "rootless exposure." "Eros passion is fled: its twin, the passion of faith, is taunting my head" (1995, 64).

Love, understood in this way, as the twin of faith, is a microcosm of life. The faith exhibited in the moment of love is the faith required over the whole course of a life. Practicing love is an exercise for the marathon of life. The virtue of faith developed in love fuels a virtuous life, even if that life appears thoroughly ordinary. As Rose puts it, the twins of love and faith make it possible to "achieve the mundane" that "brings you into the shared cares of the finite world" (1995, 65). As in her discussion of Kierkegaard, Rose notes a path that is begun by love that continues to faith and then, finally, returns the lover to everyday life—from ordinary to extraordinary and back to ordinary. The faith performed by the faithful lover the morning after love carries through to the whole of the lover's life, even when the lover is no longer in the presence of his beloved.

Faith and love are twins, but what of hope? It is these three theological virtues, not just the pair, that form the classic triptych and which have been appropriated by contemporary theorists. Richard Rorty (1999) and Charles Mathewes (2007), writing from very different perspectives, have both suggested that these three virtues contribute to the sort of democratic politics which is to be commended. Rorty applauds "a faith in the future possibilities of moral humans, a faith which is hard to distinguish from love for, and hope for, the human community" (1999, 160).

Rose says very little about hope.[15] According to Augustine's seminal account of the theological virtues, one of the differences between faith and hope is that the objects of hope can only be good while the objects of faith must be both good and bad (Augustine 1996). One hopes for eternal life but one has faith in the possibility of eternal damnation. One does not hope that millions of individuals will go to hell, but one believes it to be so as an object of faith. Perhaps this is why Rose writes of faith but not hope—hope is unequivocal. Those who exemplify the virtue of hope posit a "New Jerusalem," an antinomian future that is purely good, which is free from violence. Faith, in contrast, is

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[15] Moreover, what she says about hope as part of the triptych of theological virtues is not entirely consistent. In *Love's Work* (1995), she condemns "these enchiridions of Faith, Hope, and Love [which] would condemn you to seek blissful, deathless, cosmic emptiness—the repose without the revel" (99), but in *Paradiso* (1999), her final work written shortly after *Love's Work* and largely continuing its themes, she seems to hold a more sympathetic view of the theological virtues.

commended by Rose because it grapples with both good and evil; it grapples with the realities of the world without solace in any fantasy of escape.

Perhaps we can now understand Rose's puzzling response to an interviewer's question: "Do you believe in eternity?" "Definitely. It's the only thing I believe in." Rose goes on to be even more confounding, "If there is eternity, then it's now. . . . Time is devastation. You can't believe in time. Time is going to destroy you. So you have to believe in eternity" (Lloyd 2008b). The interviewer's question solicits a statement of hope, not of faith. He is asking Rose for her thoughts on a future that will be unequivocally good, a future outside of time, outside of law. Rose manipulates the question, toying with the concept of eternity by rejecting its projection into the future. Eternity offers an alternative to time, where time is understood (counter-intuitively) as stasis. For Rose, eternity is present in the freedom made possible by faith. Eternity is the transcendence made visible by the unexpected, by the surprising fecundity of norms. In a sentence which could apply to both her writing and to her own life, Rose writes, "The rhetoric of virtue, virtue alive to the negative, is discernible in the pathos of syntax, where eternity shines through violence, where transcendence percolates immanence" (1996a, 146).

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