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**“Margaret, are you grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?”:
“Spring and Fall” in the Poetic Thoughts of Gerard Manley Hopkins
(and Charles Taylor’s Philosophy)**

The article has been written to celebrate the academic jubilee of Professor Andrzej Wicher whose historical, literary, and aesthetic writings and reflections on the Middle Ages have always aroused my interest, curiosity, and highest admiration. They have been much resistant to major trends in literary studies especially in the times of postmodernism, which tends to forget about traditional values (and virtues) as messaged in literature, history, and aesthetics. It is my “hero-worship” (as in Thomas Carlyle) of Professor Wicher’s indomitable character and his historical devotion to medievalism and Old English literature that inspired my literary contribution to the volume. Although Andrzej Wicher stays and works now “alas! away” (Hopkins) from our university, he will always remain with us at the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures. I have always seen Professor Wicher as a guardian of medieval values which, despite the present world’s “disassociation of sensibility,” remain still permanent and eternal in the aesthetic space of the humanities. The medieval “message” of Andrzej Wicher reminds me of “The Envoy of Mr. Cogito” by Zbigniew Herbert especially, but not only, in the stanzas that follow:

repeat old incantations of humanity fables and legends
because this is how you will attain the good you will not attain
repeat great words repeat them stubbornly
like those crossing the desert who perished in the sand [...]

go because only in this way will you be admitted to the company of cold
skulls

to the company of your ancestors: Gilgamesh Hector Roland
the defenders of the kingdom without limit and the city of ashes

Be faithful Go¹

Always dedicated to the medieval idea of truth, Professor Wicher has expressed his fascination with the times very dear to Charles Taylor,² for whom the loss of medieval faith resulted in the formation (traumatic as it has been) of the “disenchanted” self, no longer interested in the world cosmos but enjoying, as in the Renaissance that followed, all new challenges offered by the universe. But Professor Wicher never forgot that the medieval world allowed man to remain in the state of enchantment which he would never be faced with again in the history of the world after the Renaissance. I can only reveal my conjecture that Andrzej Wicher will enjoy reading about Taylor’s philosophical aesthetics enriched with and exemplified (as in medieval *exempla*) by the fragments of G. M. Hopkins’s poetic works, much as he always liked reading various medieval riddles, Geoffrey Chaucer’s tales, legends of the saints, and many Christian writers and poets in whose works he discovered the truth that has been man’s major objective of research, the “‘Truth’ – which is what the humanities strive to explore – the universal Truth of the human condition.”³

In his seminal work *A Secular Age* of 2007, Charles Taylor, an eminent Canadian philosopher and scholar, traces the movement from a society which believed in God to a new one which treats faith as one of several

¹ Zbigniew Herbert, “The Envoy of Mr. Cogito,” trans. Bogdana Carpenter and John Carpenter, accessed February 1, 2014, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178191>.

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); I will be referencing to this book by Ch. Taylor in this essay.

³ John Eric Starnes, unpublished essay: I am quoting from page 8 of the unpublished essay by Eric Starnes, when he references to Lindsay Waters’s words:

“The modern university governs/regulates the present order of knowledge as separate disciplines, separate, fortified communities – as inevitable as the categories of niche marketing. A modern scholar knows that his reading and writing should come down to thinking within the scheme.”

The essay has been submitted as part of the winter semester written work to the lecturer, Professor Tadeusz Ślawek at the University of Silesia in a Ph.D. course in December 2013. I have had the essay emailed to me by the Author himself and I enjoyed reading it.

human possibilities. Despite a "new freedom" and "human flourishing," whereby "church magic" was rejected, man is found mourning over the "sacred time" (round about before 1500) in the world which has been "disenchanted." The pre-secular age was an age concerned with God and spirituality at which, as Taylor admits, one could observe the transition from the "open, vulnerable and porous self" to what he calls the "buffered self," the self hostile to mystery since "buffered" from all spirits and more resistant to the challenges of nature and the world. In the work, which is a blend of historical, philosophical, and religious ideas, Taylor describes the shift of the centre of gravity, from a world that is "charged with the grandeur of God" (G. M. Hopkins), the world he calls "enchanted" (as the medieval *cosmos*), brimming over with spirits and magic, to the "disenchanted world" (as the Renaissance *universe*) where the divine declines and is no longer as ubiquitous as before. The rise of secularism, a consequence of the Renaissance focusing on man rather than God, brings about several changes in man's viewing of the world's origin and existence. In the new world of self-sufficient humanism which replaced religion there will be no final goal beyond what is called as the "flourishing humanism." However, not all Christian beliefs have been abandoned and God is still sensed (felt as present) in the social life of the modern world, in which science can reinforce religion and a reflection on the meaning of order suggests that there still remains the divine in man. For Taylor, religion (Latin *religare*, "bind together") is, among others, what can save man from falling into the temptations of "selfish desire."

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), two centuries before Taylor's teaching, discusses the idea of an "enchanted world" in the secular Victorian Age in which, similarly to Taylor, the poet sees the universe as dull, routine, flat, and driven by technology. He laments over the lost "sense of belonging," which he attempts to recover in a poetic language that helps him to find his way back to the "real presence" of God. Taylor less and Hopkins much more keep lamenting over the glorious past of a practiced belief, each understanding in his own way the reason for man's disenchantment with the divine world. Hopkins's poetry can serve as a "cry of the soul" lamentation which conducts the reader and the pilgrim to participate in the spiritual odyssey of the world to mourn

the loss of the divine in an age contaminated by the growth of technology and mechanical reproduction. For Taylor, one of the ways “back to God” is to “re-enchant society with the mysteries of spirit,” “to recover a sense of the link between erotic desire and the love of God, which lies deep in the biblical tradition.”⁴ What the poet and the philosopher share is the view that the presence of God can be recovered in the “fullness of ordinary life” (in Hopkins the “current language spoken” has been heightened to the level of poetry), in the secular world which Taylor sees as “one option among others” and Hopkins accepts as the world of man’s incessant mourning over the “world shorn of the sacred.”⁵

The idea of the difference between the glorious past of belief (the world of enchantment) and the modern stance of the secular age (the disenchanted world) figures most prominently in Hopkins’s poem “Spring and Fall.” The poem shows a symbolic caesura between the season of regeneration and the autumnal twilight of (the) “fall” that are only separated by summer. Or, to put it otherwise, spring must finally fall (transform) into autumn since the natural way (consequence) of sowing and growth is harvesting followed by decline. The reminiscent thought can be found in the gospel parable of the Sower which was well familiar to Hopkins: “The Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed on the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he doesn’t know how. For the earth bears fruit: first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he puts forth the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Matt. 4: 26–29). Such is the message in Hopkins’s poem “Spring and Fall,” in which the apparently little girl Margaret is enquired in the opening verse of the poem if she is “grieving over Goldengrove unleaving,” a rhetorical question to which the reader, “instructed” by the mysterious metaphor, finds no reply in the text of the poem. The poem “Spring and Fall” seems to be but a synecdochial encapsulation of the most fundamental philosophical inquiry Taylor presents in his work which is, to be recapitulated, the idea of why and how the most

⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 387.

⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 388.

open and vulnerable self "fell" (or "rose") into the level of the "buffered self," the bounded identity from which there will never be a return to "self steeped and pashed" (Hopkins). However, man still looks back with nostalgia to the porous/open self with the wish to recover "some measures of the lost feeling"⁶ of vulnerability. The "fall" causes lamenting over the "porous" self that lived securely in communion with the divine ("myself it speaks and spells, what I do is me, for that I came," in Hopkins's poem "God's Grandeur") but is ceased to be "open and vulnerable" when it "disengaged from God and cosmos." The "new self" is self-shelled, blocked, and controlled in what is called the disenchanted world, which Taylor addresses as "universe." On the one hand, the little girl Margaret in Hopkins's poem is grieving over the past spring, the time of the rebirth of nature, splendour, blossom, and regeneration, which passes away but, on the other hand, spring can also symbolize a movement upward after which the descent (fall) is imminent. One finds in Hopkins's poem a mourning sound which shifts into a more miserable key of what is called the poet's "dark sonnets." One of the sonnets echoes "Spring and Fall" in what follows:

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! What sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 38–9.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
 The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
 As I am mine, their sweating selves, but worse.⁷

In the poetic way Hopkins, much as Taylor later on, seems to lament the transition from the state of innocent belief to one which is limited by some boundaries, physical, and moral. To put it in Taylor's words, the new self mourns over the loss of the "social bond intertwined with the sacred,"⁸ but finds it imminent to re-construct a new order in the secular world. Taylor seems to imply that there have been reasons which caused that the self lost its former balance in and with Nature, in the "world of enchantment," the world of security in which man lived until the year 1500. The new is the post-cosmic world of the Renaissance, the world of least security, the universe in which the self finds no more of the former shelter (under the canopy of God as in the Middle Ages).

In Hopkins's Christian world, however, the self can still find security in "nature [that is] never spent" and seek recourse in the "dearest him who lives alas! away," but it is no longer the same world of security which man once enjoyed with "selfyeast of spirit." The de-spirited world, the world of (Victorian) dis-enchantment (hence perhaps the "spring and fall" metaphor), is no longer the world in which the self "could fall under the spell" of magic and spirit. The apparently "liberated" self has been in fact the "buffered" self, the new self that keeps lamenting over the world bygone (the world of enchantment), in which the self was master of the meaning of things. In an apparently trivial or infantile metaphor, Hopkins seems to confess his mourning over the lost world, the world of "God's grandeur" (the medieval world of divine beauty as in "The Windhover") and the world of past values (virtues):

Margaret, are you grieving
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?

⁷ W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie, eds., *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, fourth edition, revised and enlarged (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 101.

⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 42.

Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! As the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By & by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep & know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What héart héard of, ghóst guéssed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.⁹

The old world where "wanwood leafmeal lies" (OED: "wanwood" – "faded or decaying woodland leafmeal, with leaves fallen one by one") is no longer that of spring, but one of fall in which Nature degenerates and which, symbolically, can also mark the end of one season which paves the way for the new one to arrive. The new world is not one of joy but of hopelessness, despair, sorrow, and finally death, the world of separation of heart from mind, the world of disenchantment compared with the former world of innocent childhood and hope. "Goldengrove" and "unleaving" could have been Hopkins's word coinages, though the former as a compound of two words can be referred to a place in Lancashire (Lydiat, the Rose Hill where the poem was written in 1880), not far away from Liverpool. The place had a chapel where Hopkins went to celebrate Mass once a week, an event he thoroughly enjoyed, because it allowed him to stay away in the little village, far from the city crowd, where silence was what he most wished to have for writing his poems and sermons. But "Goldengrove" can equally refer to St. Bueno's College in Wales, the Jesuits' residence in South Wales, which the poet liked to stay at very much since it enabled him to contemplate nature and materialise his poetic thoughts on paper. As one can learn while

⁹ W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, eds., *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 88.

reading about Welsh, the creation of new words such as “Goldengrove” by placing together two nouns or a noun and a modifier is very common in Welsh. The compound looks also like what is called a “kenning” in Anglo-Saxon literature, or a form of a riddle in Old English.

The trochaic metre in the poem in which most of the elegiac mourning is held reinforces the intense (declining) beat of the poet’s despondency as opposed to the upward, forward, and more speedy pace of the iambic metre. The internal rhyme of “heart grows older” and “such sights colder” is also significant since it seems to express the truth of man’s destiny (the word “blight”), that is the imminence of death which has been inscribed in man’s birth and life in the “valley of tears”; this is the reason man is doomed to “mourn for.” The poet laments over the loss of the “goldengrove” of silence but also of the “Golden Age” of the classical studies, aware how “fickle, full of vice and disorder, lacking in greatness or high deeds, full of blasphemy and viciousness”¹⁰ his present age is. In other words, the poet is aware of the “malaise of modernity” (Taylor’s phrase) which he diagnoses as the state of man who cries over the loss of former openness, vulnerability, and porousness, the recovery of which can be found in a return to belief (cf. Hopkins’s conversion to Catholicism). Hopkins, a dedicated worshipper of God in the way God was believed in the Middle Ages, mourns over the “eclipse of the transcendence”¹¹ (“the malaise of immanence”) in his times.

Both the present poem and the formerly quoted dark sonnet mark a caesura (as in Taylor’s concept of the two selves separated by the caesura between the Middle Ages and the world of modernity) between two worlds and the two selves that dwell in these two different spaces, one of self-security and one in which the self is blocked, buffered, and no longer free and vulnerable. The former self was one which dwelt in the “goldengrove” of no boundary between the inner and the outer world. The present self, in turn, is one that discovers the “unleaving” bareness of the new world of self-control and self-direction in which man will have to be self-reliant. On the one hand, there is nothing to weep over and la-

¹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 303.

¹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 307.

ment, given the imminence of regeneration (cyclicality) with which nature is regularly faced but, on the other hand, the view of the declining nature, deprived of its foliage vestment is miserable. Metaphorically expressed, the innocent self, at its most open and vulnerable, turns into a closed self, more individual but "buffered," since disengaged from the world of the cosmos which guaranteed the ultimate security "under the gambrels of the sky" (God, the expression is borrowed from Emily Dickinson's poem "I dwell in Possibility (466)").¹² The disengagement, however, poses a new challenge and though man feels insecure and not at home in the liberated world, it was what he looked forward to facing round about 1500 AD, a time that offered the new possibilities of creation and opened up the world of man's modern thinking. Despite the dangers of alienation, man, tired of a long time of security and external control, will have to face with "sights colder" ("older" is a large part of "colder") the challenges of the new world, the world of the "wanwood leafmeal" of decay.

Man (the poet himself?) starts lamenting because he feels "heartburn" by further obedience to the divine and respect for God's authority, and wishes to be unshackled from God's decree by which his self was bound like "dough soured by yeast" to make bread. Hence his "cries countless," his mourning and lamenting, on the one hand, to shake off the divine restraint no matter how fearful in face of the looming death or, on the other hand, to welcome, not without fear, the chance of a different life, unrestrained, the life of disenchantment but with "fresh thoughts" of the "sweating self," the life of labour and action even at the cost of "sorrow spring." The poet's stance is one of "pitched past pitch of grief," yet faced with the most uncertain future of a comforter whose advent he will receive with relief, yet after all "woe" and "world-sorrow" are over with death that "does end and each day dies with sleep." Hence the elegiac tone in yet another "dark sonnet" which is entitled "No Worst, There Is None"; it reads:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.

¹² Emily Dickinson, "I dwell in Possibility (466)," accessed November 3, 2014, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/182904>.

Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
 Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
 My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
 Woe, wórl-d-sorrow; on an áge-old anvil wince and sing

Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
 ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
 May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
 Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
 Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
 Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.¹³

The order of the rhyming “grief, relief, chief, brief” followed by “cheap, creep, sleep” is not fortuitous in the poem because of its semantic bearing. In the first stanza of the sonnet, the world’s misery, which is also effected by the short duration of life, the “*vita brevis*” (as opposed to “*ars long*”), is finished with death, the relief of sleep followed by eternal existence. Such is the final scenario of life in the world of enchantment, in which man is unaware of the potential of his mind since he remains so reliant on the divine. Yet, the human mind is endowed with the potential “no-man-fathomed” and man’s mind is the most intriguing construct of all parts of the body – it has “mountains, cliffs of fall/Frightful, sheer [...]” which proves how potent it is and how much engaged it is in what lies outside it. The system in which the self lived (Hopkins: “pitched past pitch of grief” in “world-sorrow”), even if threatened from without, as Taylor further explains, is no longer relevant in the new world, the world of the universe which man entered with the advent of the Renaissance. It is the reason for which the mind creates “anti-structure” (a kind of “anti-code,” in Hopkins’s sonnet it can be called a “comforter”), which

¹³ W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, eds., *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 100.

for a man of belief may indicate the "secularization of public space,"¹⁴ a result of the tension between a constant turn toward God and "the requirements of ordinary ongoing man's life."¹⁵ The poet seems to propose that man should drop out of the code in which the self was encaged/programmed (encoded) for long and "spring" into the open variety of possibilities even if at danger of isolation. The "buffered man" lives still far away from God's eternity, in the sphere of cyclicity, the (horizontal) flow of secular time which offers the challenges that deny transcendence.

Though aware of the zone of eternity and the "real presence of God," which he sensed at the moment of conversion, Hopkins realizes that he no longer lives in the ideal ("habit") of perfection of the Christian world. The poet seems to mourn the "turbid ebb and flow" of the "sea of faith," whose tide will never return and whose music is a lost cadence, as in Matthew Arnold's famous poem which echoes in the invocation to the later composed Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland*; in Arnold's words:

Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

[...]

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 50.

¹⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 43.

Retreating, to the breath
 Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.¹⁶

The poet's lament is over the loss of the time immortal which Taylor calls the "sacred time" (the time of spring, as in Hopkins's "Spring and Fall") and the descent into "exclusive humanism" with its "threat" of the growing power of individualism, which is reinforced by the "new urban milieu" (the Industrial Revolution) with the human agencies of reproduction, civility, commerce, technology, as well as rational-moral self-control (cf. such sonnets as "Harry Ploughman" in which man is sentenced to the burdensome labour, "Amansstrength," or "Felix Randall" in which man is portrayed as a ferrier exhausted with work, "mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome").

When asked what is the Western man lamenting over, Richard Weaver, in his seminal work *Ideas Have Consequences*,¹⁷ replies that first of all over the lost past, like Macbeth obedient to the illusions of witches which bring up only confusion (in Scene 3 of Act 5 in *Macbeth*, Hecate speech). The grieving of the Western man is over the Aristotelian thought of transcendence abandoned in favour of "illusions," "vessels, spells and charms" of playfulness which betrayed mourning, as in the Hecate scene of *Macbeth*:

¹⁶ Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach" (written in 1867), accessed November 3, 2014, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/172844>.

¹⁷ Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (University of Chicago Press, 1946).

And you all know, security
Is mortals' chiefest enemy (3.5)

and, as in the beginning of *Macbeth* when the witches say:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hovering through the fog and fairy day [...] (1.1)¹⁸

Man's failure of seeing is mainly because now he sees "as through the mist, vaguely," which obscures the clear vision "face to face" (St. Paul) that he might expect when his "doors of perception are cleansed" (Blake).¹⁹ Hopkins's conversion seems to have occurred (fallen upon) at the most unwelcome time of growing materialism, when man was expected to be explained by the work of Darwin, which was published in 1859. As we read in Weaver: "Biological necessity, issuing in the survival of the fittest, was offered as the *causa causans*, after the important question of human origin had been decided in favour of scientific materialism."²⁰ Hopkins must have been puzzled many a times with the question of whether man "is molded entirely by environmental pressures," or "created in the image of God under the clouds of transcendental glory."²¹ In fact, it was in the Victorian era when the idea of man's creation in the image of God was put into question and finally replaced by "man the wealth-seeking and – consuming animal."²² The poet seems to grieve over the "upholders of material causation," over man who "bade a cheerful good-bye to the concept of transcendence" which left him in the condition of "abysmality" (man in a "deep and dark abysm with nothing to raise himself"²³). Hence the phrase "the worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie" which might point to the abyss, to the darkness (one of the meanings of "wan" is dark and gray)

¹⁸ All quotations from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* come from: *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, Volume the Fourth (London: Printed by H. Baldwin, MDCC XC).

¹⁹ William Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, accessed November 3, 2014, http://www.levity.com/alchemy/blake_ma.html.

²⁰ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 6.

²¹ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 6.

²² Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 6.

²³ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 7.

and the grayness of the world which faces the “colder sights” of material technology rather than a blissful hope of creative production. On the one hand, man is curious of the truth but, on the other hand, he feels like looking for the experimental inventiveness, to become emancipated from the old ideas.

Hopkins’s poetic lamentation is over the shift from the “goldengrove” of the truth of the intellect (Wales as a possible “goldengrove” for the poet to pray and write his best poems) to “the facts of experience” and, accordingly, the shift of onus from the “faith in language” to the “new science of semantics” in which the “wanwood leafmeal lies,” the most complicated compound words (difficult to disentangle) might indicate that the poet has to “take liberties with worlds” since “faith in language as a means of arriving at truth weakens.”²⁴ “Goldengrove” has been the poet’s world of cosmos, the sense of ordered whole he lived by while in Lancashire or in Wales. His lamenting over its loss is grieving over the loss of cosmic and poetic security contaminated by evolutionary modern ideas of the “new” life which is deprived of order, hierarchy, and cohesion. Man’s awakening to the “new” is welcome but not without mourning (cf. Hopkins’s sonnet “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day [...]”) as man has to descend (as in *The Descent of Man* by Darwin) from the “religious or philosophical transcendentalism” to materialism, the transition which has been called “a story of progress.”²⁵ Since man’s intellectual “goldengrove” is getting more and more bare (“unleaving” or waning, the time of fall “strips trees bare”), he is left in the world(s) of sorrow, of the unexpressed or obscure ideas, biological reproduction and fall. Hopkins mourns in the “dark” sonnet: “And my lament / is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent / To the dearest him that lives alas! away.” Hence, too, the triad of engagement, naturation, grace, through which Donald Walhout²⁶ sees Hopkins’s poems, the initial grieving of the “sweating self” that finally might end up in a better world. However, mourning is a highly justifiable state of man, in fact, “the blight man was born for” and it is natural that he has to grieve

²⁴ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 7–8.

²⁵ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 10.

²⁶ Donald Walhout, *Send my Roots Rain: A Study of Religious Experience in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Ohio University Press, 1981).

over his “impairment, destruction, ruin and frustration.” Man’s life is between “spring and fall” and the consolation is that between spring and fall there is summer. Similarly, man’s life is shaped by the space between birth and death, the space which cannot be determined and which often appears as a “walking shadow, full of sound and fury signifying nothing” (Shakespeare) (hence the word “blight” man is born for as in the poem “Margaret, are you grieving [...]”). But in Hopkins, there is always consolation for the future since “nature is a Heraclitean fire,” man is “footfretted in it [nature]” and “million-fuelèd, / nature’s bonfire burns on,” which is followed by the “comfort of the Resurrection.”

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