

Revealing by Concealing

REVELATION IN NATURE, DIVINE
HIDDENNESS, AND RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION

OSKARI JUURIKALA, ÅBO AKADEMI
UNIVERSITY (FINLAND)



Divine hiddenness

(A PROBLEM AND AN INSIGHT)

Paper outline

Maximus
the
Confessor

Natural
theology

Scripture and nature
'simultaneously reveal
and conceal the same
Logos':

- They conceal 'through written words and whatever is visible',
- They reveal 'through ideas and whatever is hidden'.



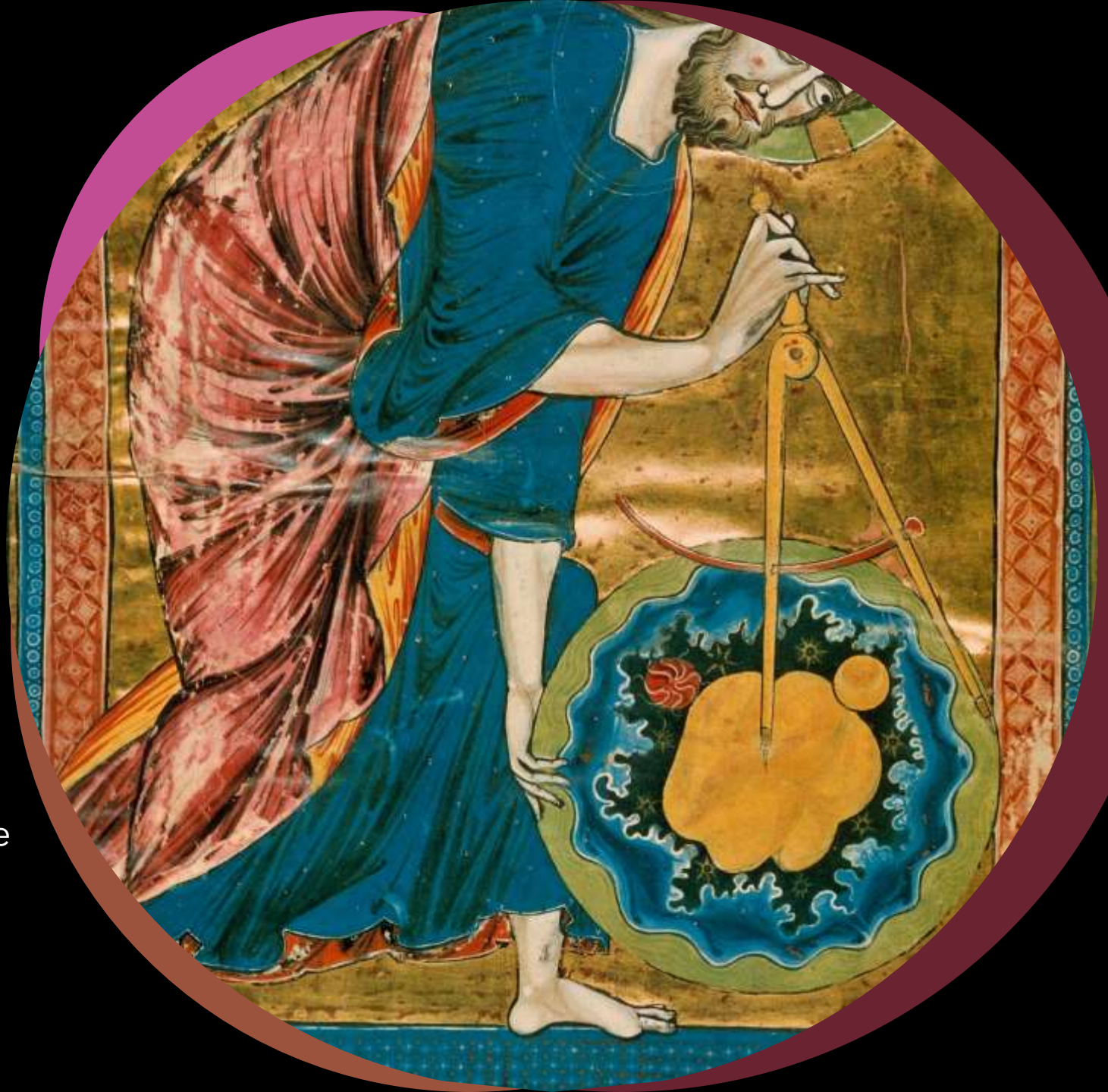
Revealing and concealing

'For when we say that the words [*logoi*] of Holy Scripture are "garments," we understand from this that their inner meanings are the "fleshes" of the Word, and thus by means of the former we conceal, and by means of the latter we reveal.'

'In the same way, we can say that the forms and shapes of created things that appear within our vision are also "garments," the "fleshes" of which are the principles [*logoi*] according to which they were created, and likewise by the former we conceal and by the latter we reveal.'

Why?

- 'For the Word, who created the universe and established the law, is **concealed in his manifestation**, being **invisible according to nature**; and he is manifested through concealment, assuring those who are wise that by nature he cannot be apprehended.'



Aristotelian-Thomistic interpretation (an attempt)



- Material substances: accidents do not conceal the substance but reveal it.
 - a) Accidents that are *effects* of the thing's nature (e.g. colours of a tree)
 - b) Accidents that are produced in the thing from some outside source (e.g. beaver toothmarks on the trunk) - but how a thing can be effected also says something about its nature
- In a sense, however, they do 'conceal' the substance: knowledge through senses, and the senses perceive accidents only

The uncreated being

- God has no accidents (STh I, 3, 6)
- Self-manifestation to creatures through creatures:
 - Analogy, greater dissimilarity
 - Not effects of divine nature (not effected by some other)
 - Thus, 'garments' (Amb. 10)





Examples of 'garments'

- Nature / works of creation
- Prophecy + Scriptures
- Incarnation
- What about interior experience?
 - Religious experience
 - Human experience of truth, good, beauty, love...
 - (Human thoughts on natural theology?)

Pseudo-
Dionysius'
*Symbolic
Theology*

Created beings as theophany
(following Romans 1:20)

Both sensible 'symbols' and
intelligible 'names' (God
transcends both: dissimilar)

Very *dissimilar* symbols may
even be better: grasp
dissimilarity (cf. STh I, 1, 9 ad 3)



Contemplation and *diabasis*

- Beyond the sensible aspect of creatures
- Beyond the surface meaning of Scriptures
- Beyond the 'mere' humanity of Christ ('He who has seen me has seen the Father')

Possible consequences for natural theology

Metaphor and myth

The role of rational
argument

Information vs.
transformation



(1) Metaphor and myth

(2) The roles of rational argument

Demonstrations - point
toward the mystery

Purify the errors of myth (e.g.
Xenophanes)

Clarify the obscurity of
metaphors (STh I, 1, 9, obj 2)

Like two wings

- Faith and reason
- Imagination and reason
- McGilchrist and two sides of the human brain
 - 'Designed' (also) for this purpose? (i.e. to seek the Logos that reveal himself by concealing himself)



(3) Information or transformation?

- Two aspects of 'distance':
 - Creator/creature dissimilarity
 - Sin/rebellion
- Goal: not knowledge but love (movement, directionality)
- Need for movement: must not suppose one is there yet?





Paradoxes

- The Cross - the most profound revelation?
- 'Dark night of the soul' - the greatest gift?