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# Autonomy, Exteriority, and Scriptural Authority: A Response to Hannah Hashkes

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# AUTONOMY, EXTERIORITY, AND SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY: A RESPONSE TO HANNAH HASHKES

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## Introduction

For my response to Hannah Hashkes's excellent essay, "Autonomy, Community, and the Jewish Self," I forward two claims. First, Hashkes's interpretation of Peter Ochs's work provides a response to Martin Kavka's provocative allegation that Ochs's conception of the self remains confused between modernity and post-modernity.[1] Kavka makes this criticism in relation to Ochs's *Return to Scripture* and his justifications for Textual Reasoning. Hashkes successfully argues that Ochs's technical work on the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce provides a sophisticated account of the self, which coherently accounts for individual autonomy, communal exteriority, and scriptural authority.

[1] See Martin Kavka, "Textual Reasoning and Cultural Memory: A Response to Jacob Meskin," in *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nancy Levene & Peter Ochs, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 175-190.

The second claim that I forward concerns a debate within the discipline of Christian ethics, particularly Protestant moral reasoning surrounding questions of the self. Hashkes's Peircean account of the self, which she learns from Peter Ochs's work on Peirce's philosophy, complicates a recent criticism of Stanley Hauerwas's reflections on selfhood. According to Charles Marsh, "Hauerwas goes overboard in his description of the body of Christ as the annihilation of the self."[2] Since it is known that Hauerwas and Ochs are colleagues and friends,[3] I sketch how Hauerwas "gets a little help from his friend" Peter Ochs, in particular, his technical work on Peirce's philosophy, in relation to Marsh's criticism.

I intend some nuance to accompany these claims, which ought to be stated at the outset: while I believe that Hashkes proves that Kavka's criticism of Ochs is misguided and mistaken, I think that Hashkes's Peircean account of the self only complicates matters within Protestant moral reasoning over the status of the self. Neither Hashkes nor Ochs get Hauerwas completely off the hook from Marsh's criticism, but the turn toward Peirce's conception of the self illustrates how Hauerwas might and should (in my judgment) respond to Marsh's critique.

My response to Hannah Hashkes's "Autonomy, Community, and the Jewish Self" serves as a full appreciation and explicit articulation of her contribution to Christian and Jewish ethics; I hope to show the theological fruit of Hashkes's adoption of and reflections on Peirce's philosophical conception of the self.

## Individual Autonomy and Communal Exteriority within Jewish Ethics

Hannah Hashkes tells the story of how autonomy, community, and exteriority are handled within modern Jewish ethics. American philosophy comes into this story because Eugene Borowitz and Peter Ochs

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[2] Charles Marsh, "In Defense of a Self: The Theological Search for a Postmodern Identity," *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 3, (2002): 259.

[3] For one report on this friendship, see Stanley Hauerwas's "A Conversation on Peace and War after Scriptural Reasoning" *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 8, no. 1 (January 2009).

turn to thinkers within American philosophy as part of their contributions to contemporary Jewish ethics. Hashkes claims, "Borowitz's writing of Jewish philosophy emerges from a standpoint of Jewish public interest and not, as the case of Levinas, from a primary philosophical ethical interest. Borowitz also operates within a very different philosophical mood [from Levinas], that of American Pragmatism." [4] According to Hashkes, Borowitz's "mood" is set mostly by John Dewey's pragmatism in the sense that he seeks to engage "in a quest for a set of values that will enhance a Jewish non-Orthodox 'common faith.'" [5] Hashkes notes that Borowitz critiques modern Judaism, on the basis of Dewey's pragmatism, because he seeks "a better model for the balance between individual freedom of choice and the communal value system." [6] For the purposes of her story concerning autonomy and community within Jewish ethics, Hashkes initially affirms Borowitz's reliance on the pragmatism of Dewey because it remains "very helpful for the question of freedom within the boundaries of a religious community," which is found in Dewey's emphasis on the existence of moral communities who implement "God as a unified ideal" and does not limit humanity's freedom. However, Hashkes ultimately finds Borowitz's conception of selfhood weak because it fails "to account for the totality of the experience that constitutes belonging to a traditional religious community." [7] She connects this limitation to what she considers a problem within Dewey's pragmatism, as well as the work of the neo-pragmatists, in which there is no "logical validation of the autonomy of human selfhood, since the ontology involved in such a claim runs in the same linguistic circle [where] we all run." [8] Borowitz's Jewish philosophy gives us neither genuine autonomy nor real community: there is no genuine autonomy because we remain

[4] Hashkes, section 4.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Idem., section 4.

[8] Ibid.

trapped in the linguistic circles that form us, and there is no real community because traditional religious community must be transformed into more generic moral communities. Hashkes desires strong accounts of autonomy in the modern, philosophical sense, and of community in the traditional religious sense. She turns to Peter Ochs's Jewish philosophy, and his reliance on Charles Peirce's work, in order to accomplish this task.[9]

While Hashkes dedicates a section of her essay exclusively to explaining key aspects of Peirce's philosophy,[10] I find her more focused section on Ochs's turn toward Peirce's philosophy especially helpful. Her goal within this section concerns how Ochs's interpretation of Peirce's work provides a way to affirm the logic of exteriority found within Emmanuel Levinas's conception of self. For instance, she claims:

> The analogy between a commitment to a religious community and [the] notion of a disturbed self lies in the connection between the experience of exteriority and *thought* in response to it. For Peirce, thought is the response that functions to make sense of it and incorporate it within one's world of meaning and action. For Levinas, the response to exteriority is the ethical responsibility of the newfound ethical self, a stance that generates the rational thought that conjures rules of justice, and the ability to choose between good (responding positively to my responsibility) and evil (neglecting [my responsibility]). *It is a consciousness of an exterior element that generates a logic, a rationality that is the response to that experience*.[11]

This connection between Levinas and Peirce, articulated by Hashkes, leads her to consider how Ochs's interpretation of Peirce provides a logic

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[9] "But how do these considerations, that delegate the religious affiliation to the self's emotional and psychic sphere still allow for personal freedom, free use of reason and individual autonomy? In order to show how it is possible to combine these elements I use an epistemological Pragmatist model. Specifically, I...show how Peirce's epistemological explication of the growth of reason could solidify the notion of Jewish selfhood and explain how religious commitment and practice can constitute a self's response to life experience" (Hashkes, section 4).

[10] See section 5, which is entitled "Peirce's Pragmatist Model of Knowledge."

[11] Hashkes, section 6.

of exteriority concerning the question of the self. I cite part of a lengthy paragraph by Hashkes, which develops this point:

> Ochs sees the unique contribution of Peirce less in the content of his rejection of Cartesian and Kantian understanding[s] of knowledge and more in his method of diagramming and correcting the philosophical texts his inquiry responds to. This corrective method consists of interpretational rereading of philosophical texts, including his [Peirce's] own, earlier formulations of Pragmatism. The rereading *diagrams* and then *corrects* the text in question by analyzing its logic, clarifying vague statements, and pointing to indubitable beliefs it relies on. There are a number of important elements of this reading of Peirce for our concern. The first is the acknowledgment that reasoning occurs within a community of readers, such as philosophers writing in the Cartesian or Kantian philosophic tradition, or philosophers belonging to the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition of thought. The second element is that each community of readers works within a context of indubitable beliefs without which there is no set of assumptions to start reasoning with. And lastly, Ochs follows Peirce in emphasizing that the corrective process of gaining inquiry induced by doubt is a continuous and relative endeavor that does not draw to an end as long as there are human thinkers and a reality to contend with.[12]

Within this passage, Hashkes makes three observations:

1. Reasoning occurs within a community, which works either as a philosophical or religious tradition. Reasoning *does not* occur egoistically or individually, totally independent of a community or a tradition.
2. The reasoning that occurs within a community and a tradition comes with a set of beliefs that remain unquestionable. They do not remain unquestionable because of a lack of critical thinking or a missing set of scholarly skills; they are unquestionable because to doubt them, within a particular tradition of reasoning, is to doubt rationality or reasoning altogether.

[12] Ibid.

3. Since reasoning occurs within a community, the present group of thinkers cannot and should not claim finality concerning their contributions to that tradition of reasoning. To affirm that reasoning takes place within a community is to learn how to be open to future inquiries and potential investigations. It requires locating yourself, as a thinker, in a community that comes before you *and* comes after you.

Hashkes wants to show from these premises that philosophic and religious thinking requires exteriority because communities and traditions sustain the possibility for reasoning. She interprets Ochs's work as illustrating a baseline logic of exteriority concerning the question of the self.

What about individual autonomy? Within Levinas's work, exteriority obliterates autonomy.[13] Is Ochs committed to this obliteration of individual autonomy? According to Hashkes, he is not...which makes Ochs's work unique within Jewish ethics. Ochs's Peircean notion of the self allows him to maintain both autonomy and exteriority. She claims:

> [A]n experience of exteriority that determines the self does not oppose individual autonomy: equipped with a sense of transcendence and our communal set of symbols, we are all lawmakers, we are all reasoners, and we are all autonomous, as Jewish selves, as scientific selves, as ethical selves. The crucial point is that being part of a communal discourse is a condition [not a hindrance] for our ability to exercise thought and therefore freedom.[14]

Hashkes articulates Ochs's argument well, and she persuasively outlines the logic and possibility for preserving both autonomy and exteriority. This involves recognizing how our thinking becomes determined through concrete forms of exteriority, because of communities of inquiry and traditions of reasoning, and our contributions to those communities and

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[13] Kenneth Seeskin most clearly presents this aspect of Levinas's thought. See Seeskin, *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 182-217.

[14] Hashkes, section 6.

traditions rely on our autonomy as individuals and thinkers.[15] She continues:

> What modernity afforded us is not an autonomous self...an autonomy that is endangered by those who...[seek] a return to some religious form of life. Instead, Modernity's gift is affording us the ability to stand within more than one set of symbols, to belong to more than one community. ... Different individuals and different communities have different strategies of harmonizing these worlds in cases of contradiction. The meaning of our freedom of thought is the fact that we are able to live in different worlds and operate according to different sets of rules without being executed, excommunicated or experience dissolution of our "self." In case of life threatening illness we can go to a medical specialist in the morning and gather the community for a special prayer in the evening without feeling any logical dissonance. We stand as selves at once in two faiths that dictate two different sets of rules, and we are autonomous participants in a community of inquirers in both.[16]

Interestingly, Hashkes identifies aspects of modern life lamented by both Alasdair MacIntyre and Richard Rorty. MacIntyre regrets how different communities form the modern self, and he thinks that this "fact" of modern life signals incoherence and tragedy.[17] While we usually do not consider how Rorty laments modern life, Hashkes names one aspect that Rorty wishes were different: how religion, and religious practices, still determine our modern selves.[18] Rorty wants to prioritize what we do

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[15] Hashkes compares and contrasts Levinas's ethics and Peirce's philosophy: both Levinas and Peirce present the logic of exteriority, but Peirce's philosophy encourages autonomy for how individuals and thinkers contribute to their communities of inquiry and traditions of reasoning.

[16] Hashkes, section 6.

[17] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 1-35.

[18] For one example among many, see Richard Rorty, "Religion as a Conversation-Stopper," in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 1999). For my reflections on Rorty's private/public distinction, see my "Contingency, Irony, and Vulnerability: Richard Rorty and Scriptural Reasoning," in *Richard Rorty and the Religious*, ed. Jacob L. Goodson & Brad Elliott Stone (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012).

differently in the morning and in the evening during a time of illness: going to see the medical specialist in the morning is "public," whereas the gathering of a community for a "special prayer" in the evening is "private."[19] Significantly, Hashkes responds to the limitations and misunderstandings of both MacIntyre and Rorty in her Peircean reflections on the modern self.

## Autonomy and Revelation in Peter Ochs's Jewish Conception of the Self

Martin Kavka is Textual Reasoning's most articulate critic, and his criticisms come from within the community of Jewish Textual Reasoners in 2002. According to Kavka, Textual Reasoning (TR) wants to take the best of modernity and the best of postmodernity without reflecting on what this combination really entails—or if it is even possible to do so. Kavka raises one biting question that represents well his whole understanding of TR: "How could it be that Jews could both be autonomous subjects, narrating their own stories, and narrate the story of Sinaitic revelation which challenges to that very autonomy?"[20] According to Kavka, the limitations of both TR and Peter Ochs's work are found in this conflicting tendency to maintain a modern notion of autonomy—in the sense that we control how we narrate our lives—with the non-modern claim that Scripture properly narrates our lives. Kavka's question can be stated in the following ethical terms: to return to Scripture requires an act of the freedom of the will—a freedom that remains infinite, because the will is infinite—which mandates the action to be on our own terms. Simultaneously, we observe that no individual will actually enjoys this freedom and volitional infinity, because our wills remain limited by our bodies, our communities, our traditions of reasoning. Kavka claims that Ochs wants it both ways but neglects to admit that he wants a notion of unlimited freedom—in order to return to Scripture on his own terms—

[19] To the extent that Eugene Borowitz wants us to prioritize our moral selves over our religious selves, his reasoning resembles Rorty's private/public distinction.

[20] Kavka, 177.

alongside the claim that we do not have an unlimited freedom of the will.[21] In short, the conflict comes down to autonomy vs. revelation.

Kavka observes that Ochs and other Textual Reasoners seek to answer this question through textual analysis alone: "The reason why TR goes by the name of 'Textual Reasoning' and not 'Religious Reasoning' is that it begins from the insight that communities come together around religious texts and their ethos are predicated on bringing that text, and the God whom it reveals, to life."[22] He specifies by saying that in "Peter Ochs's Peircean model of scriptural thinking, the text and revelation do not become real without the community's attempts, through acts of reading together, to account for the vagueness of traditional texts."[23] This means that the autonomous nature of the interpreters is required for the proper interpretation of traditionally sacred texts.

However, Kavka boldly concludes that this model fails: it does not balance individual autonomy and textual revelation. Sometimes, Ochs and Textual Reasoning prioritize Scripture at the expense of autonomy; when this happens, according to Kavka, "they [TR participants] have expanded 'Silence is praise to you, O God' (Ps. 65.2) into 'Silence is praise to you, O Text', thereby undermining the very hermeneutical subjectivity [autonomy] which speaking about a text to others performs and concretizers."[24] At other times, Ochs and TR participants begin with autonomy but block out the exteriority of textual revelation: "To discuss the meaning of texts leads to animosity between discussants, and peace comes at the cost of the very texts to which TR seeks to return."[25] Kavka offers the following recommendation: "What TR needs...is a way of thinking through revealed texts in such a way that they speak both to the

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[21] I borrow this language from the moral theory of Baruch Spinoza; see *Spinoza's Ethics* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 1996), 160-180.

[22] Kavka, 177.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Idem., 178.

[25] Ibid.

heteronomy of revelation and to the autonomous subjectivity of the interpreter of revelation."[26] Kavka's final judgment is that Ochs's work within TR remains aware of this tension but provides neither the necessary arguments nor tools to balance the autonomy of the interpreter/self with the exteriority, or heteronomy, of the revealed sacred text.

I believe that Hannah Hashkes illuminates how Ochs's work gets the fly out of the bottle that is this dilemma. While it is true that Ochs sometimes prioritizes sacred texts over the autonomy of the interpreters, yet other times he emphasizes the resulting relationships of the interpreters "at the cost of the very texts [to which he] seeks to return," the reason for this is found in Ochs's reflections on redemption and repair. Hashkes points out how Ochs's understanding of redemption stems from both his Peircean pragmatism and his Jewish theological conviction concerning the authority of Scripture:

> Ochs follows Peirce in emphasizing that the corrective process of gaining inquiry induced by doubt is a continuous and relative endeavor that does not draw to an end as long as there are human thinkers and a reality to contend with. [Ochs refers to this] corrective approach to knowledge...as "redemptive." By redemptive Ochs means to capture both the pragmatist and the religious senses of the word. Thus as a redemptive act rereading captures the reliance on indubitable beliefs, which are a specific community's "scriptural" sacred traditional texts that define it as a community. On the other hand, it captures the pragmatic motivation of repairing the ailments that cause the suffering of individuals and communities within their social reality. Ochs refers to the teachings of the biblical prophets as the source for this redemptive effort: the divine instruction to take responsibility for the suffering of fellow human beings in our communities.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Hashkes, section 6. Hashkes's observation concerning how "Ochs refers to the teachings of the biblical prophets as the source for this redemptive effort" deserves so much more attention than either Hashkes or myself provide in this issue of *The Journal of Textual Reasoning*. However, I attempt to do justice to this aspect of Ochs's work in a chapter entitled "Solving Problems or Solving Catastrophes?: The Logic of Prophecy in Peter Ochs's and

Implicitly against critics like Kavka, Hashkes maintains that Ochs's "Peircean notion of the logic of scripture [serves] as the basis for Ochs's important contribution to the theological discourse since the 1990s." Why? Because his theological reasoning mandates reading Scripture "in this corrective and redemptive manner."[28] Ochs's purpose in sometimes prioritizing Scripture over individual autonomy involves his way to address the fragility of modern autonomy or the consequential problems within society when autonomy breaks down: Scripture is the sole source for repairing such breakdowns and responding to our fragilities. When it seems that Ochs emphasizes the relational results of autonomous interpreters at the expense of the logic and meaning of Scripture, in actuality he wants to point toward how Scripture prepares the way and serves as the ground for these harmonious peaceful relationships. It is not that "peace comes at the cost of the very texts to which TR seeks to return;" rather, it becomes Ochs's way to celebrate the relationships that the study of Scripture makes possible.[29]

In my understanding, Ochs maintains the authority of Scripture when it comes to the question of redemption: God redeems the world through God's Word. The logic of repair functions within the community of interpreters who read God's Word together: interpreters are autonomous agents, working for the repair of the world, within a community of inquirers (philosophers) as well as traditions of reasoning (Jews,

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Cornel West's Versions of Pragmatism," in *Prophetic Philosophy and Theology*, a book co-authored with Brad Elliott Stone, (under contract with Cascade Books).

[28] Hashkes, section 6.

[29] "In fact, Ochs has institutionalized this type of reading by establishing Jewish, and later interfaith, groups that read and reread scripture in this [corrective and redemptive] manner. In this, Ochs established what he terms after-modern scriptural theology. In spelling out this project Ochs distinguishes between Jewish anti-modernism and Jewish postmodernism. Anti-modernism moves from disillusionment with the Enlightenment project to projects of secular criticism or religious neo-traditionalism. In contrast, postmodern Jewish philosophers incorporate into their work traditional elements rejected by modern Jewish thinkers [as well as] elements of modernism that anti-modernists reject. In view of their awareness of the limits of modernism they incorporate in their thinking the practice of textual reasoning that Ochs describes in his Peircean interpretive work" (Ibid.).

Christians, and Muslims).[30] Turning to the questions of redemption and repair within Ochs's Jewish Peircean philosophy displays how the dilemma between autonomy and revelation remains an ad hoc problem within Ochs's reasoning. Ochs allows for and encourages the authority of Scripture and the autonomy of the individual interpreter because both factor into the potential for redemption (Scripture) and repair (interpreters).[31]

## For and Against the Self within Protestant Moral Reasoning

Charles Marsh's criticism of Stanley Hauerwas's reflections on the self resembles Martin Kavka's judgment on Ochs's work. Similar to Kavka's approach, Marsh contrasts the categories of "divine revelation" and "human experience." Marsh provides a comprehensive sampling of how these categories determine modern Christian ethics. He observes that while those Christian thinkers who begin from "human experience" have a place for the individual self within their theology, they tend to block "deeper access to the details and specificity of particular events and persons"—which renders their conception of the self "empty to many of us now."[32] However, those Christian thinkers who work from "divine revelation" alone neglect accounting for the self: "Personal identity lacks interiority or inner depth...[where] the concern for interiority and inner depth are evidence of human arrogance and pride, and betray the ambition of a world- constitutive subject."[33] This leads to claims "that the 'self' should be annihilated for the sake of the body of Christ."[34] Marsh

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[30] Hashkes' distinction between "the religious self" and "the scientific self" parallels my distinction here; however, I find that this distinction between redemption and repair remains closer to Ochs's own interests and purposes.

[31] One of the goals of my "Solving Problems or Solving Catastrophes?: The Logic of Prophecy in Peter Ochs's and Cornel West's Versions of Pragmatism" is to develop this distinction, as it is found within Ochs's thought.

[32] Marsh, 254.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

seeks to correct this tendency: he defends a strong notion of personal identity, starting from the category of "divine revelation" and not from "human experience." Marsh states his thesis as follows: "to show that modern [Christian] theology does itself and Christian congregations a disservice if it fails to reckon with the depth, complexity, and created dignity of human personhood."[35]

Stanley Hauerwas's reflections on the self become Marsh's target for the binary between divine revelation and personal identity. Marsh gives special attention to Hauerwas's book, *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified*, where "Hauerwas applauds the postmodern notion of the disappeared self for its capacity to recover an understanding of holiness 'not as an individual achievement but as the work of the Holy Spirit building up the body of Christ.'"[36] Marsh notes that Hauerwas "suggests we begin to think of physical bodies in the framework of a spirituality that makes God alone the agent of sanctification."[37] Marsh correctly presents Hauerwas's arguments from this particular book, and this observation marks a general trend within Hauerwas's work. The particular feature of Hauerwas's work that puts it within the Protestant moral tradition is found in his emphasis, when it comes to moral action, on the primary agency of God alongside the secondary agency of humanity. Since Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, which states that neither human action nor human volition play a role within God's salvific purposes for our lives, the debate within Protestant ethics has revolved around the question of agency. Hauerwas's role within this debate has been to show how secondary agency does not necessarily make it impossible to think of the moral life in terms of the language and logic of the virtues. Within Protestant moral reasoning, talk of the virtues risks thinking that the moral life is our doing—and not God's doing—because

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[35] Idem., 255.

[36] Idem., 256; quoting Stanley Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 78. Interestingly, the title of this particular chapter by Hauerwas is "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self.'"

[37] Idem., 256.

excellence and virtue require us to cultivate particular dispositions and habits. However, Hauerwas has demonstrated in various ways how the language and logic of the virtues neither violates a proper understanding of the doctrine of justification nor requires the human to be the primary agent within the moral life. For Hauerwas, we can and should have it both ways: God is the primary agent within the moral life *and* we should emphasize how the virtues provide the best way to reflect on the moral life. After all, as Hauerwas's logic goes, faith is *both* a gift of the Holy Spirit that Christians receive at baptism (faith) *and* a virtue that requires cultivation and skill (faithfulness).

Marsh claims that Hauerwas goes too far in his rationale for articulating how God is the primary agent within the Christian moral life. Instead of displaying how God's primary agency leads to a fruitful understanding of the self, Hauerwas "protest[s] the notion of self-determination and...show[s] that the continuity of the self is always framed within a more determinative category, such as story or church."[38] According to Marsh's interpretation, Hauerwas bases the issue of personal continuity solely on "the self's extrinsic associations."[39] The result is that Hauerwas obliterates the self and the possibility for a coherent, consistent self that develops over time. Quoting Hauerwas on the self as "a sign," Marsh gives the final blow to Hauerwas's reflections on the self:

> Hauerwas should recognize that some formal identity is presupposed in the habits, practices, and crafts of the church, without which any foregrounding of sanctified bodies... contrite hearts and character falls into incoherence; but he does not. For Hauerwas, the self...'is but a sign that gets it meaning from other signs that get their meaning through their relationships of similarity and difference with other signs.' ...The self is swallowed up by whatever 'random constellation' of private desires and public forces blindly impress themselves upon it.[40]

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[38] Idem., 257.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Idem., 259; quoting Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 99. (Marsh mistakenly attributes this quotation to page 11 of *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, but in actuality it is on page 99.)

After criticizing the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams for displacing the self in his theological work as well,[41] Marsh turns to German philosophical theology in order to defend a notion of the self in a framework that makes divine agency and revelation primary.[42] My goal in this response, however, is not to evaluate Marsh's own "defense of the self." Rather, I tease out how Hashkes's presentation complicates Hauerwas's reflections on selfhood.

Hauerwas does not necessarily affirm the argument that the self "is but a sign that gets its meaning from other signs that get their meaning through their relationships of similarity and difference with other signs." This quotation concludes a section entitled "The 'Postmodern' Turn," and the paragraph begins with a simple observation:

> Postmodernism represents a more radical questioning than that propounded by either Marx or Freud just to the extent that it denies subjectivity and correlative notions of agency altogether. Accordingly, the postmodern thinker does not try to reconcile what he or she may say about the self or agency with anything that is implicit in his or her own act of propounding.[43]

He further remarks that while "such a [postmodern] self has surprising affinities with Christian accounts," it "does not mean...that the 'decentered self' of the postmodernist is sufficient to sustain a practice as basic to the church as the naming of the saints."[44] With this clarification from Hauerwas's *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, Marsh's criticism of Hauerwas's reflections on the self comes across as misguided and perhaps mistaken. However, Marsh's conclusions seem right when Hauerwas says only two pages later that "story is a more determinative category than self. Indeed, our very notion of 'self' only makes sense as part of a more determinative

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[41] See Idem., 262-274.

[42] See Idem., 274-281.

[43] Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 98-99.

[44] Idem., 99.

narrative."[45] While we could continue *ad infinitum* with examples from Hauerwas's work that display (a) exceptions to Marsh's criticism and then (b) confirm Marsh's criticisms,[46] I wish instead to consider the question of how Hannah Hashkes's presentation of Ochs's Jewish Peircean philosophy provides a way forward for this debate within Protestant moral reasoning.

What we have here, in my judgment, is evidence that Hauerwas goes back and forth between emphasizing how we ought to negate the self and then find the self within God's narrative. Hauerwas wants to say that the self we find within God's narrative is not the kind of "self" that philosophers think we will find.[47] In this sense, Marsh helps us see that we can put to Hauerwas the same question that Kavka asks of Ochs: "How could it be that [Christians] could *both* be autonomous subjects, narrating their own stories, *and* narrate the story [of divine] revelation [in Christ] which challenges [obliterates] that very autonomy?"[48] In the previous section, I argued that Ochs escapes Kavka's biting question in his reflections on redemption and repair. However, Hauerwas does not

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[45] Idem., 101.

[46] Marsh takes this route, briefly, by looking to Hauerwas's *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* as potential ground for a positive conception of the self within Hauerwas's work (see Marsh, "In Defense of the Self," 258). Marsh's final judgment on Hauerwas's career, concerning his reflections on the self, is this: in 1983, "Hauerwas was inclined to speak in more consistently theological terms on the theme of human selfhood" (258); by 1998, "Hauerwas goes overboard in his description of the body of Christ as the annihilation of the self" (259).

[47] Developing this line of thought, Samuel Wells comes to quite a different conclusion concerning Hauerwas's reflections on the self than Marsh does. Wells explains that Hauerwas thinks of selfhood in terms of "character," which makes sense within Hauerwas's emphasis on narrative or story: for Hauerwas, "the self is not indeterminate. The self is determined; but character is that which ensures that the self is nonetheless not lost in the fact of being determined. ... The self is determined, but this determination need not take the form of a 'cause'" (Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* [Lancaster: Paternoster Press, 1998], 21). Moreover, according to Wells, Hauerwas's notion of personal identity is not an answer to the question "Who am I?" but, instead, answers the more "narrative- based" question "How have I come to be here?" (Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 42).

[48] Kavka, 177.

provide reflections on redemption and repair. So what should he do? What is a potential way forward? Where can he find help?

In terms other than redemption and repair,[49] Hauerwas can lean on the work of his friend Peter Ochs for addressing Marsh's criticisms. In language quite similar to Hauerwas's Christian moral reasoning, Hannah Hashkes articulates how Ochs's philosophical theology strengthens "a commitment to a religious community of practice and discourse" without negating the self:

> [T]he identity and integrity of a religious self is dependent upon a specific conceptualization of...what is beyond my being.... [M]y reason is necessary for a specific type of reasoning within a given intellectual space. The religious person...having God at the center of her or his gravitation...is a person who lives with a strong experience of exteriority. Within the faith of Israel...the exterior element is also *personal*. This means that the experience of encounter with it is intimate...but not personally intuited.[50]

In *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, Hauerwas speaks of "'sovereign self," and one of the characteristics of this conception of the self is that the self remains "personally intuited."[51] Marsh worries that Hauerwas throws the baby out with the bath water, that in his attempt to overcome the intuitionism of "the sovereign self" Hauerwas also rids the possibility for any "intimate" or "personal" notion of the self. *Ochs's Peircean conception of the self aids Hauerwas by showing the significance of carefully working through temptations toward intuitionism, slowly correcting forms of intuitionism within reflections on the self, and finding the self —the intimate and personal self—*

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[49] Ochs provocatively and successfully re-describes Hauerwas's "theopractic reasoning" in terms of redemption and repair in *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 93-126.

[50] Hashkes, section 6.

[51] See Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 98. I employ Hashkes's language to summarize Hauerwas's account: "Descartes' 'ego' is irrefutably present to itself [personally intuited] as pure extensionless consciousness requiring no acknowledgement or complicity with language or community" (98).

*within a system of signs*.[52] In Hauerwas's language, this system includes the church as the body of Christ as well as the narrative or story determined by God's revelation. In this way, the self is not "but a sign"—where the introductory "but" becomes problematic, not the claim in and of itself that the self is "a sign"—as the "postmodernists" want to have it. Rather, Hashkes proclaims that the good news of Ochs's Peircean philosophy concerns how the self is a sign—requiring communal exteriority because the self is a sign among other signs and simultaneously displaying autonomy as, itself, a coherent and continuous sign. Hashkes presents why we should celebrate the self as a sign. Learning to celebrate the self as a sign, within concrete communities, characterizes how Hauerwas "gets a little help from his friend" Peter Ochs.

## Conclusion

While this kind of help might seem anti-climatic and ultimately insignificant, it becomes much more exciting and salient when we consider Stanley Cavell's point "that in philosophy it is the *sound* [of arguments] which makes all the difference." [53] If Hauerwas sounded different in his explanations for "why perfection does not require a 'self'"—if he sounded less binary, for instance—then he might sound like he celebrates the ways in which the self is a sign. If he sounded more celebratory, then his critics like Charles Marsh might see his work as contributing to questions concerning selfhood rather than presenting an obstacle to such reflections. Cavell's point is helpful for remembering that *what* we say, in philosophy, ought to be demonstrated in *how* we say it. Marsh's criticism might be put as follows: what Hauerwas says about the self ought to be worked out, concretely, in how he—as an individual,

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[52] This is one way to summarize Ochs's emphasis on Peirce's skill for "the corrective method" and "rereading diagrams": "Ochs sees the unique contribution of Peirce less in the content of his rejection of Cartesian and Kantian understanding of knowledge and more in his method of diagramming and correcting the philosophical texts, including how own" (Hashkes, section 6).

[53] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.

perhaps performatively autonomous, author—makes such bold proclamations against the self. In other words, Hauerwas needs to show more care and caution in his seemingly autonomous statements against the possibility for autonomy.[54] Hauerwas seems to recognize this problem when he tells a story about one of his students:

> So the loss of the 'self', the loss of our agency, threatens the metaphysical presuppositions on which Christian ethics in modernity has been built. As one of my feminist students observed in a seminar in which we were reading Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 'Just when women were claiming the power to be selves they now tell us such a thing does not exist. I suspect this is some kind of conspiracy to keep women in our place.'[55]

Hauerwas wants to learn from his student's observation, and I hope that those of us who struggle with questions on autonomy and selfhood within Christian ethics seek guidance from Hashkes's account of the self within Jewish ethics.

In conclusion, Hannah Hashkes points toward Peter Ochs's Peircean philosophy as a way forward for thinking about the relationship between autonomy, community, and revelation within Jewish ethics. In doing so, she offers the right avenues for addressing Martin Kavka's provocative criticism that Ochs fails to properly balance individual autonomy, communal exteriority, and scriptural authority. Finally, she provides the tools necessary for a better understanding concerning what's at stake

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[54] Hauerwas seems more concerned about the concrete problem of "self-deception" rather than the abstract question of autonomy and selfhood. See Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 82-98. Sam Wells provides an exhilarating and helpful analysis of this aspect of Hauerwas's work: "Hauerwas discusses self-deception through the auto-biography of Hitler's minister of armaments, Albert Speer. Hauerwas identifies self- deception as arising from the desire to be consistent: when the range of experience and behavior becomes so wide and diverse that it threatens to expose that consistency is an illusion, the agent seeks increasingly deceptive methods of sustaining a sense of unity. The parts of the agent's life that he or she is reluctant to spell out are those which break this consistency: these are the parts where the agent is vulnerable to self- deception. The irony is that the agent who makes little effort to lead a consistent life is less prone to such self-deception" (Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 45).

[55] Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 97; I conclude with this reference since it comes in the same section of the book that Marsh engages.

concerning the self within the Protestant moral tradition: we should neither assert nor deny the self, but we should celebrate the self as a sign within concrete communities. All of this displays a portion of the theological fruit of Hashkes's wonderful essay, "Autonomy, Community, and the Jewish Self."