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Upright in the Void: When John Donne Arrives in Heaven

Arnaud Zimmern

What does it mean for glorified bodies to be upright, if they stand on nothing? In sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, the foundational Christian metaphor yoking physical and moral notions of "uprightness" found itself undermined as reformers, radicals, and recusants alike struggled to confirm whether the realm of eternal glory might be spatial the way the Earth and the human body are spatial. The new heliocentric cosmology of Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* (1547), with its potentially infinite distances, put pressure on Christian divines to affirm either the "placeness" or "placelessness" of Heaven[1] and, by extension, to decide whether the resurrected body would have volume and dimension.[2] Responding to

[1] Wherever the distinction applies, I retain the capitalization of "Heaven" to signify the concept of the afterlife and the lower-case "heaven" or "heavens" to signify the supralunar celestial firmament. Donne himself is not consistent in this regard, nor were many of his contemporaries.

[2] See Jürgen Klein, *Astronomie und Anthropozentrik: die Copernicanische Wende bei John Donne, John Milton und den Cambridge Platonists* (Frankfurt am Main: P Lang, 1986); Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); and Stephen Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*, 2nd edition (University of Chicago Press, 2018), especially p. 28. Copernicus, in the words of his English translator Thomas Digges, left the question of spatial infinity and boundlessness "to be discussed of Philosophers," c.f. *A Perfit Description of the Coelestial Orbes in A prognostication everlasting* (London: Imprinted by Thomas Marsh, 1576; reprinted by Felix Kyngston, 1605), sig. O1, verso. Digges, England's premier astronomer, was himself the one to propose the infinite universe as a corollary of Copernicanism. See Charles

that pressure in his treatise *Vom Ort der Welt* (*On the Place of the World*, 1576), the spiritualist Lutheran Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) presented Heaven as "an eternal expanse in which there is neither stars, nor sun, nor moon. Neither water, nor air nor any element." "In this expanse," Weigel elaborates, "we will hover in God, not with a natural, comprehensible, elemental body, but rather with a supernatural, new, celestial, clarified body, which is no longer in need of any external place or element."[3] In his effort to bracket off the realm of the divine from the limitless distances of the new cosmology, Weigel first conceived of God and Heaven as an "expanse" (*Weite*) or non-spatial plane of being in which the human soul may "hover," but in which no corporeal bodies—"neither sun, nor stars, nor moon"—may subsist or take up "external place." In brief, acquiescing to a new cosmology meant Weigel also had to endorse a Neoplatonic anthropology that gave primacy to "clarified" spiritualized bodies over drossy, spatial, "elemental" bodies.

We can find fruitful contrasts and substantive opposition to Weigel's claims, however, in the later writings of the English poet and divine, John Donne (1572-1631). Notorious for his early fascination and frustration with Copernicus' New Philosophy that left "all in pieces, all coherence gone,"[4] Donne nowhere puts forward as systematic a

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Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, (Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 185, as well as Francis R. Johnson and Sanford V. Larkey, "Thomas Digges, the Copernican System, and the Idea of the Infinity of the Universe in 1576," *The Huntington Library Bulletin* 5 (1934): pp. 69–11.

[3] "Jn dieser Weite werden wir schweben in Gott/ nicht mit einem natürlichen reiflichen Elementaren Leib/ sondern mit einem übernatürlichen neuen himmlischen verklärten Leibe/ welcher keines Essern Ortes noch Elementes mehr bedürftig ist." Quoted in Alessandro Scafi, "All Space Will Pass Away: The Spiritual, Spaceless and Incorporeal Heaven of Valentin Weigel (1533-1588)," in *Boundaries, Extents and Circulations: Space and Spatiality in Early Modern Natural Philosophy*, ed. Koen Vermeir and Jonathan Regier (Switzerland: Springer, 2016), pp. 209-227.

[4] See John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World*, l. 213, in *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, edited by Robin Robbins (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 838. Charles Monroe Coffin's *John Donne and the New Philosophy* and Marjorie Hope Nicholson's *Science and Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Great Seal Books, 1956) have mildly diverging accounts of how Copernicanism exploded into and ebbed out of Donne's writing. This essay, by focusing on Donne's later sermons and devotional writings, pushes gently on Nicholson's statement that "only

treatment of spatiality in the afterlife as Weigel's and leaves no traces of reading Weigel at all. Yet his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* of 1624 and the Prebend sermons of 1626 testify to a burgeoning theological anthropology that resists the spatial consequences of an infinite universe and eschews Weigel's solution via dualism and anti-corporealism.[5] Rather than fold before a new mathematico-physics, Donne holds that believers stand to gain from thinking anew what it means for humans to stand in the first place, both literally on the Earth and figuratively in the state of grace. To do so means to inquire why "God hath given Man that forme in nature, much more in grace, that he should be upright, and looke up, and contemplate Heaven, and God there."[6] In this essay I show that, rather than force Christian anthro–pology to acclimate to a new cosmology, Donne dares to reinvestigate the very notion of space underlying terms like "upright" and "vertical" in order to bolster his own and his parishioners' belief in a resurrected body that is indeed bodily. In particular, I show how Donne's anthropology draws on and revises an anatomical commonplace that bridged patristic interpretations of *Genesis*, ancient Greek natural

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occasionally in the sermons does Donne venture upon more philosophical connotations of the Galilean discoveries." Nicholson rightly deems it undecidable "[w]hether the churchman found it expedient in his sermons to keep away from those disputed matters, or... ceased to feel the appeal of figures of speech that once had led him to new reaches of poetry," but she concludes incorrectly when claiming "Donne apparently ceased to ponder the new hypotheses" (pp. 55-56).

[5] Nuancing Alexandre Koyré's assertion that Weigel does not support a gnostic dualism, Alessandro Scafi points out that Weigel's "sensible world is not the creation of an evil principle or an inferior divinity (as in gnostic dualism), but of God himself. It is possible, however, to identify in his thought some aspects that Festugière would name as belonging to a *gnose pessimiste*, for example in his negative evaluation of the sensible world, seen as a place of exile, and his evaluation of otherworldiness as our true fatherland, a future residence, which can nevertheless be "actualized" in this life through "spiritual or intellectual life," according to true Christianity or philosophical contemplation" (Scafi, p. 224).

[6] John Donne, "The Third of my Prebend Sermons upon my five Psalmes: Preached at S. Pauls, November 5. 1626. In Vesperis," p. 243. All citations of Donne's sermons are taken from Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, vol. VII (University of California Press, 1954).

philosophy, and early modern anatomy: the topos of human upright posture. Hitherto, that topos had served ubiquitously as eminent proof of the dignity and uniqueness of upward-looking human rationality vis-à-vis of downward-looking animal brutishness.[7] Donne reinvents and redeploys it, sidestepping the natural-philosophical debates on human dignity in order to combine an anatomical and phenomenological insight into what it means to be upright with a theological reflection on what it means to be upright in heart.

Early encounters with Copernican astrophysics in Donne's romantic verse and satiric writings have led scholars like William Empson to celebrate Donne's all-embracing curiosity for novelty, his restless wit, and his radical willingness to follow the likes of Giordano Bruno in hypothesizing plural worlds, despite the soteriological dilemmas that might entail.[8] A recent corrective account by Louisa Hall goes too far in suggesting that, compared with his contemporary Hester Pulter, who delighted in Copernicanism's poetic potential to explode the confines of Ptolemaic order, Donne looks intimidated by "a Copernican universe, proportionless in its enormity, incomprehensible in its perpetual spinning motions."[9] The illness of 1623 that left him bedridden, horizontal, and off of his feet prompted Donne's turn to a more situated, rather than objective notion of space, one lodged in the individual body's innate sense of space, one in which verticality is felt in relationship to God rather than determined by a body's vectorial weight relative to the larger body against which its pushes to stand. In the *Devotions,* composed during his convalescence, Donne's pronounce–ments are couched in the language of Aristotelian form and matter, teetering characteristically between literal and figurative meanings. Understood literally, they depict space as a construct of embodied perception, anticipating the work of twentieth century thinkers such as

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[7] This topos has been amply covered. Its treatment here owes special debts to Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales*, (University of Chicago Press, 2013) and Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Penguin Adult, 1991).

[8] William Empson,"Donne the Space Man," *The Kenyon Review* 19.3 (1957): 337-99.

[9] Louisa Hall, "*Hester Pulter's Brave New Worlds,*" in *Immortality and the Body in the Age of Milton*, edited by John Rumrich and Stephen Fallon (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 171-86, especially pp. 178-79.

Erwin Straus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for whom the uprightness of the body plays a foundational role in constructing the phenomenon of spatiality and for whom Aristotle's method of arriving at the faculties of the mind via the body was, if not inspirational, at the very least enabling.[10] Understood figuratively and eschatologically, where the earthly body prefigures the glorified body, these pronouncements in the *Devotions* harbor a redefinition of the "uprightness" of glorified bodies which Donne articulates most fully in his third Prebend sermon of 1626. That sermon reveals a caring and concerned pastor as well as an astute philosophical anthropologist, anchoring his flock's joyous anticipation of the afterlife using the aplomb of a widely-held commonplace of human anatomy.

Concerning Heaven itself, Donne—unlike Weigel and unlike the later Milton—nowhere provides a detailed account of it. On the contrary, he emphasizes its unknowability, even in spite of the scriptural metaphor of the house-with-many-rooms (John 14.2). In his 1624 letter to the Lady Kingsmel, Donne admits we "have no modell, no designe of the forme of that building,"[11] while in a 1626 sermon dedicated to that verse, he gives himself time to disabuse his flock of any ambitions to chart its architecture on textual grounds. The Holy Ghost is being "figurative"; the Church fathers, with their "spirituall elegancies" of gold-paved roads and bejewelled forteresses, are "wanton"; and the Scholastics are "wild" to calculate whether "every soule in that house shall have more room to it self, then all this world is." "We know not that," he insists with monosyllabic vim, "nor see we that the consolation lies in that."[12] To speak of Donne's Heaven is thus

[10] The rapprochement between Aristotle's and Merleau-Ponty's views on the primacy of the postured body in perceiving space—without any argument for direct influence—is made by Véronique M. Fóti,"Merleau-Ponty's Vertical Genesis and the Aristotelian Powers of the Soul," *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, edited by Burt C. Hopkins, (Springer Netherlands, 1999), pp. 39–58. David Morris, *The Sense of Space* (SUNY Press, 2004), p. 130, makes a similar but looser rapprochement when discussing Aristotle's rejection of Empedocles' fixed notions of upwards and downwards.

[11] *Letters* 1651, no. 5, pp. 7-10

[12] John Donne, "Preached to the King in my Ordinary wayting at White-Hall, 18 Aprill 1626," in Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, *The Sermons of John Donne*, vol. VII, pp. 137-138.

to speak of an aporia. It may be a "Holy Room" as he says in his "Hymn to God my God in my Sickness," or an "expanse" like Weigel's, perhaps a void, a *spatium imaginarium* like that of the Jesuit commentators in Coïmbra or the later Hobbes, or something radically different still.[13] Should Weigel ultimately prove right and Heaven provide nothing on which to stand, however, Donne's writings of the mid-1620s intimate that each resurrected body will remain postured and upright, even in the void, by its own sense of verticality. For "to come to God there is a straight line for every man every where," the Dean of St. Paul's reassures his listeners, punctuating both the individuality and universality of his theocentric anthropology. And in the presence of God, whether hovering or standing, those deemed "upright in heart" will not only retain their body's innate uprightness, but bring to fruition the *sens* or significance of that innate sense of space.[14]

Donne warns those auditors less inclined to celebrate the human body, however, that there is no way to come to God in a straight line, "if we come not with our heart," emphasizing a physicality or physiology that needs to be carefully historicized since it raises new questions about what Richard Sugg has called Donne's "uses of anatomy."[15] While

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[13] Raymond-Jean Frontain argues that Donne attempts a picture of Paradise, albeit brief, in his *Second Anniversary* to Elizabeth Drury. See Raymond-Jean Frontain, "Donne's Protestant *Paradiso*: The Johannine Vision of the *Second Anniversary*" in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, OH: Wayne State University Press, 2003) pp. 113-142. Even here, however, Donne's treatment of Heaven, unlike Weigel's, Browne's, Milton's, and Hobbes' avoids making clear metaphysical claims about the nature of Heaven itself. For Hobbes and the Jesuit commentators' notion of *spatium imaginarium*, c.f. Cees Leijenhorst, *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism: The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes' Natural Philosophy* (Brill, 2002) and "Place, Space and Matter in Calvinist Physics." *The Monist*, 84.4 (2001): 520-41.

[14] "In French, *'sens'* not only connotes meaning and the senses, but direction. A sign indicating a one way street reads 'sens unique'; 'dans le sens des aiguilles d'une montre' means 'clockwise'; 'être dans le mauvais sens' means 'to be the wrong way round.' Cars, clock hands or things going the wrong way round don't quite make sense, they are out of place." David Morris, *The Sense of Space* (State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 24.

[15] *Sermons*, p. 245. See Richard Sugg, "Donne and the Uses of Anatomy." *Literature Compass*, 1.1 (2003): 1-13.

scholars like Gary Kuchar and Nancy Sellek have addressed Donne's commitment to the Galenic humoral body in the *Devotions*, and Charis Charalampous has argued for Donne's Ockhamist understanding of the soul,[16] the largest body of scholars—including Rosalie Osmond and Ramie Targoff—regularly points to an eclectic Aristotelianism as the main source of his anthropology.[17] This essay adds to that scholarship by situating Donne within the context of reformed Scholastic anatomy, and that despite Aristotle's growing unpopularity among English natural philosophers, who considered his thought not just pagan but even atheistic and unadaptable to the purposes of Christian theology.[18] Of the three dominant interpretations of upright posture (Plato's, Aristotle's, and Galen's), Donne espouses and expands upon Aristotle's theory of the *uranoskopos*, the human being as heaven-gazer, to the exclusion of the other two paradigms, precisely because of its theological implications in a new Copernican world-order. Comparing Donne's notion of upright posture with the writings of the French physician André du Laurens and contrasting them with those of the English physician Thomas Browne, I highlight Donne's strangeness as well as his remarkable if unfulfilled ambitions for Aristotelian anthro–pology. Ultimately, unlike Valentin Weigel's Neoplatonism, which garnered renewed attention from later German Idealists, Donne's Aristotelian anthropology failed to be retrieved by later thinkers, whether that be those who share his Scholastic affinities or those who share his interests in human posture, a long list including Friedrich

[16] Gary Kuchar, "Embodiment and Representation in John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*." *Prose Studies* 24.2 (August 1, 2001): 15–40; Nancy Sellek, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Charis Charalampous, *Rethinking the Mind-Body Relationship in Early Modern Literature, Philosophy, and Medicine: The Renaissance of the Body* (Routledge, 2015).

[17] Rosalie Osmond, *Mutual Accusation: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul Dialogues in Their Literary and Theological Context*. (University of Toronto Press, 1990); Ramie Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[18] Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

Engels and Charles Darwin.[19] We should ponder seriously whether Donne's commitment to that reformed Aristotelianism may be more to blame than we have thus far considered for his belated intellectual reception, not just as a poet but as a philosophical anthropologist.

A Short History of a Long Spinal Column

C. A. Patrides quips about the upright form of humankind that "[f]ew commonplaces of thought have been so enthusiastically supported by authorities of the first magnitude, and, in close pursuit, a legion of lesser talents."[20] Among those authorities, Rémi Brague reports that we encounter the uprightness topos at its earliest in Xenophon's dialogues with Socrates, and that the reference *de rigueur* for the medievals and early moderns would have been Plato's *Timaeus*.[21] In the rich soil of allegorical metaphysics, Plato posits that human beings are upright because the imprisoned soul longs so desperately to rejoin the ideal forms from which it was plucked that it pulls the body up by the head, as a string might pull up a marionette: "for it is by suspending our head and root from that region whence the substance of

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[19] For Weigel's recuperation by later German thinkers, see Andrew Weeks, *Valentin Weigel (1533-1588): German Religious Dissenter, Speculative Theorist, and Advocate of Tolerance* (SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 175-186. Weigel's views on tolerance were akin to Donne's, yet Weigel's irenicism and its associated anthropology proved swiftly recuperable by later political thinkers while Donne's has remained largely neglected by political philosophy and philosophers generally. Some underexplored exceptions include Suzanne Marshall, *John Donne: An Existential Analysis* (Eastern Washington University Press, 1984) and Ryszward Wolny, *The Ruinous Anatomy: The Philosophy of Death in John Donne and the Earlier Seventeenth-century English Poetry and Prose* (Perth, Western Australia: 1999). For references to Engels and Darwin, see Pavel Gregorić, "Plato's and Aristotle's Explanation of Human Posture," *Rhizai: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, 2.2 (2005): 183–196.

[20] C. A. Patrides, *Premises and Motifs in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Princeton University Press, 1982). See also Patrides, "Renaissance Ideas on Man's Upright Form," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19.2 (1958): 256-258.

[21] Rémi Brague, *The Wisdom of the World: The Human Experience of the Universe in Western Thought*, translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004).

our soul first came that the Divine Power keeps upright our whole body."[22]

Aristotle, hardly enticed by his predecessor's idealism and violently opposed to the notion that souls might be infused from the great beyond, echoes Plato's teleology only to adapt it. The human intellective soul is not infused into the body, he insists, but it is the body's form, its inner principle of organization, and thus the cause of its uprightness. In *On the Parts of Animals*, he emphasizes that we are not born upright and thereby rendered able to contemplate the heavens, as a modern evolutionary account might try to put it. Rather, the final cause precedes the formal cause, teleology precedes morphology, purpose precedes posture. We were meant to contemplate the heavens and therefore we grow upright. Animals, Aristotle adds for contrast, are not organized by an intellective soul aspiring to heavenly contem–plation; they therefore do not stand upright but "grovel," to use the early modern verb of choice.[23]

Donne explicitly employs the categories of Aristotelian hylomorphism—the tight unity of the soul and body, form and matter—to discuss uprightness in the *Devotions*, fitting it to a language of reciprocity and gift-giving. Frustrated by his own supine posture, he considers uprightness "a thankfull forme, and recompences that soule, which gives it, with carrying that soule so many foot higher, towards heaven." Had Donne somehow failed to learn Aristotle's rendition of the upright topos from reading the Stagirite during his school years at Cambridge and Oxford, he would have found it succinctly and memorably articulated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Bk. I, as Prometheus sets about moulding humankind from the clay: "*Pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram, | Os homini sublime dedit, caelumque videre | Iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*" In their translations of these verses, early modern poets stressed different aspects. In his 1575 version, Arthur Golding translates:

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[22] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann Ltd. 1966), 90a-b.

[23] For Aristotle's opinion of upright posture, see Shannon, Thomas, Patrides and Brague, as well as *inter alia* William K. Gregory, "The Upright Posture of Man: A Review of Its Origin and Evolution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 67:4 (1928): 339–77; and Jason Tipton, *Philosophical Biology in Aristotle's* Parts of Animals (Springer, 2013).

> And where all other beasts behold the ground with groveling eie,
> He gave to Man a stately looke replete with majestie.
> And wild him to behold the Heaven wyth countenance cast on hie,
> To marke and understand what things were in the starie skye. . .[24]

Golding takes a fourth line to mark the stateliness and majesty of the human gaze while also drilling home the need to interpret the skies, not merely to ogle at them. We might be tempted to think George Sandys, writing in 1626, was offering a more devotional or spiritual version of the same lines, when he translated the glories of the heavens as "transcendent" matters, not meant for eye-sight but for a more contemplative kind of "loftie look."[25] But in all likelihood, early modern English readers, accustomed to conflating the firmament and the transcendent Heaven, would have taken both of these translations with Psalm 8: 3-4 of the *King James Bible* in mind: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Within this scriptural hermeneutic, what Aristotle presented as the rational teleology of the human body becomes an explicitly devotional teleology.

A substantial challenge arose to this Aristotelian version of the topos from the 2nd century physician Galen, whose adepts believed the development of upright posture had more to do with freeing our hands from the chore of locomotion than extending our eyes to the skies.[26] Yet, despite Galen's steady recuperation by humanists in the sixteenth century and his primacy in the medical curriculum, the Aristotelian version of the topos profited from the combined authorities of Ovid and Christian anthropology and thus persisted with surprisingly little revision until the late seventeenth century. It survived the rises and falls, transformations and rivalries of Platonic and Aristotelian

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[24] Ovid, and Arthur Golding, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation, 1567*, ed. John Frederick Nimms (Paul Dry Books, 1965), p. 6, ll. 96-100.

[25] George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished by G.S.* (London: William Stan–bys, 1626), p. 3.

[26] Galen was in fact rehearsing claims found already in Anaxagoras, with whom Aristotle disagreed on teleological grounds, c.f. Tipton, 162-165.

metaphysics; the waning of a geocentric cosmos and the waxing of a heliocentric paradigm; and even the challenges of Cartesian mechanism and Gassendian atomism. The macrocosm might be decentered, the soul might be wrenched from the body, matter itself might be sanded down to corpuscles, but the meanings of 'upright' would not budge. Entries on "posture" and "soul" in early modern lexicons attest to its continuing relevance even as late as 1667 in Guy Miège's French-English dictionary as well as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.[27] In the eyes of philosophers, poets, and lexicographers alike, the uniqueness of human posture proved to be an anthropological invariant.

Why this invariance? We could point to a number of factors, both theoretical and pragmatic. It heightened, for instance, the intellectual cachet of anatomy textbooks by medical humanists like the fourteenth century Catholic Mondino de Luizzi and the seventeenth century Huguenot Jacques Guillemeau. Their prefaces "On the Dignity of Mankind" were strategic for attracting a broader, less technical readership, irrespective of religious confession, and bespoke the intellectual nobility of anatomy as a discipline. But to suggest the topos survived strategically is to fail to appreciate how committed early modern medicine remained to the principle behind Psalm 8: 3-4, that human persons bear a prayerful teleology deep in their flesh. The Stuart physician James Hart (fl. 1633) writes in his medical textbook *Κλινική, or the Diet of the Diseased* that, unlike

> dogs, wolves, etc. who minding only their belly, have their guts descending almost straight down from their ventricle or stomach to the fundament. . . in this noble microcosm man, there are in these intestinal parts many anfractuous circumvolutions, whereby, longer retention of his food being procured, he might so much the better attend upon sublime

[27] Under the entry for "AME (f.) the Soul, or spirit," Miège writes: "*La Nature aiant courbé le corps de tous les Animaux vers la Terre, où ils devoient trouver leur nourriture, a fait celui de l'homme seul droit & elevé.* Nature having bent the body of all Beasts towards the ground, where they were to feed, made only that of man streight and upright." c.f. Miège, *A New Dictionary French and English, with another English and French* (London: 1677). Milton, writing in the 1660's, insists on Adam, Eve, the Son, and even Satan's upright postures, c.f. *Paradise Lost* 1.221-22, 7.505-518, and *Paradise Regained* 3.551-61.

> speculations, and profitable employments in Church and Commonwealth.[28]

While Hart argued for the contemplative nature of our guts, Ambroise Paré, France's most reputed military surgeon, unceremoniously blended anatomy and theological anthropology when he considered his soldiers' postures "so certaine an argument of the celestial origins of our soule, that he which considers those things can no ways doubt, but that we have our minds seasoned by the universal divine understanding."[29] Despite its ubiquity in the literature of Donne's day, the upright topos with its devotional implications appears in Donne's writings only once before the 1624 *Devotions*, in the *First Anniversary* elegizing Elizabeth Drury.[30] It is a passing mention in a text better known for being Donne's *cri de coeur* against Copernicanism, suggesting that only at the start of Meditation III, when recounting how his own illness left him supine and nearly dead, did Donne sees the topos gathering greater personal and cosmological significance.

Donne's *Devotions:* Posture and Space

"Wee attribute but one priviledge and advantage to Mans body, above other moving creatures," says Donne in Meditation III, "that he is not as others, groveling, but of an erect, of an upright form, naturally built, and disposed to the contemplation of Heaven."[31] The language of "form" Donne uses here is not at first indicative of a particular school

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[28] James Hart, *Κλινική*, *or the Diet of the Diseased,* (London: John Beale for Robert Alloy, 1633), p. 84.

[29] Ambroise Paré, *Of Living Creatures and the Excellency of Man in The workes of that famous chirurgion Ambrose Parey translated out of Latine and compared with the French, translated by Thomas Johnson* (London: Thomas Cotes and R. Young, 1634), p. 78.

[30] *An Anatomy of the World*, ll. 113-27: "There is not now that mankind which was then,/ When as the sun and man did seem to strive /… / And when the very stature, thus erect, / Did that soul a good way towards heaven direct. / Where is this mankind now?"

[31] *Devotions,* p.10. All citations to the Devotions refer to the manuscript facsimile of *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, edited by John Sparrow (Cambridge University Press, 1923).

of thought; it takes on explicit Aristotelian contours of the *uranoskopos* only later when he adds that it is "Indeed . . . a thankful form, and recompenses that soul, which gives it, with carrying that soul so many feet higher towards heaven."[32] Recognizing "form" both as the organizing principle of the upright body and as the Christian soul yearning for heaven, Donne frames the tight hylomorphic unity between form and matter, soul and body, as a reciprocal gifting of thanks and recompense. He implies thereby not a Neoplatonic hierarchy of the sovereign soul over the base, unruly, and servile matter of the body, but an intimacy between friends and equals, making upright posture not something the soul does to the body despite the body but something the human body does with the soul and for the soul.

Prayer III, hearkening back to this *uranoskopos* of Meditation III, turns and opens up further the cosmological and hermeneutic problems Donne feels upon being cast into abject horizontality:

> O Most mightie and most merciful God, who though thou have taken me off of my feet, hast not taken me off of my foundation, which is thy selfe, who though thou have removed me from that upright forme, in which I could stand, and see thy throne, the Heavens, yet hast not removed from mee that light, by which I can lie and see thy selfe, who, though thou have weakened my bodily knees, that they cannot bow to thee, hast yet left mee the knees of my heart, which are bowed unto thee evermore.[33]

It is with passages like these in mind that Achsah Guibbory describes the *Devotions* as a "liminal" text, not just "because Donne imagines himself inhabiting a space somewhere between earth and heaven, life and death."[34] It is also liminal, she says, insofar as Donne experiments with reading the body both literally and figuratively, anatomically and soteriologically, without ever quite distinguishing for us what is to be taken which way.[35] Donne deploys his metaphors partly to find some consolation and order in the midst of his disorder, but partly also to test

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[32] *Devotions*, p. 10.
[33] *Devotions*, p. 14.
[34] Achsah Guibbory, *Returning to John Donne* (Routledge, 2016), p. 10.
[35] Guibbory, pp. 10-11.

whether his metaphors are in fact God's metaphors.[36] Situated somewhere between biological reality and poetic conceit, the topos of upright posture provides Donne with an ideal convergence where a humanly-conceived metaphor for moral and devotional life draws its authority from the plan of divinely-conceived creation.[37] Donne therefore enlists his own posture as a leitmotif for the text and as a benchmark of his spiritual progress at the two bookends of the *Devotions*, first in Meditation and Prayer 3 when his illness leaves him bedridden with nothing but the "knees of [his] heart" and again in Meditation and Prayer 21 as he begins to emerge and rise again on shaky legs.

While at the start of the Meditations, the notion of the *uranoskopos* seems to be a conceit Donne rehearses only in order to problematize it further, by the end of the *Devotions* it returns to serve as a central nub of Donne's critique of Copernicanism and to ground a phenomenology of space that makes God one's "foundation." The recovering Dean of St. Paul's, remembering what it was like to stand again for the first time, interrupts his 21st Expostulation to reflect upon the spell of dizziness that ensued:

> I am up, and I seeme to stand, and I goe round; and I am a new Argument of the New Philosophie, That the Earth moves round; why may I not beleeve, that the whole earth moves in a round motion, though that seeme to mee to stand, when as I seeme to stand to my Company, and yet am carried, in a giddy, and circular motion, as I stand?[38]

The "New Philosophie" alluded to here is the Copernican revolution—Donne's spinning mind allows him to poke fun at a heliocentrism he has trouble believing in. But, more importantly, Donne is asking a fundamental question about the apprehension of space: why not believe the Earth orbits the Sun, although I cannot and do not perceive it that

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[36] Guibbory, p. 7

[37] Hardly new, this argument can be found in Joseph Mazzeo's reading of Donne's poetics in light of the Italian theorist Emmanuelle Tesauro's theological notions of 'conceits' or *acutezze*. See Joseph Mazzeo, "Metaphysical Poetry and the Poetic of Correspondence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14.1 (1953): 221–234.

[38] *Devotions,* p. 128.

way, if here and now no one around me sees that my world is spinning? More than mere wit, the passage registers Donne's nascent conviction that space is phenomenological (a matter of lived perception) and individually subjective (a matter unshared with others). Using the analogy between the microcosmic scale of human relations and the macrocosmic scale of planetary movement against itself, Donne begins to assert that spatiality is more a matter of subjective perception than it is a matter of ontological, geographic, or geometric certainty.[39] What analogy there is between the macrocosmos and the microcosmos does not dictate the manner in which space is individually perceived. Timothy Harrison make the point eloquently when he claims Donne's "illness highlights how lived experience is distinct from the world in precisely the same way that 'the *new Philosophie*' uncouples the experience of beholding cosmic motion from the actual movements of the earth through the cosmos."[40] I would only add that Donne's experience uncouples also the link that had spurred Weigel to tune his anthropology according to his cosmology. For Donne, God-given and God-centered posture must take primacy over any rearrangement of the cosmological furniture.

We can see, then, that in Prayer 3 Donne is already expanding, however subtly, the argumentative scope of the Aristotelian *uranoskopos*. Unlike Weigel, who lets Copernican cosmology dictate theological anthropology, Donne is inclined to use an anthropological statement to shape a broader theological perspective on what grounds cosmology. God, when he stripped Donne of the external trappings of the *uranoskopos* by weakening his knees and taking him off of his feet, only reasserts the true "foundation" of the world-order, "which is [God's] selfe." Donne's third prebend sermon, delivered shortly after the publication of the *Devotions*, takes its cue from these passages and from

[39] It is interesting, although beyond the scope of this paper, to note that Valentin Weigel, partially, and Thomas Hobbes, more fully, would come to the conviction that perceptions of space (and all empirical knowledge) are likewise phenomenological. For Weigel's epistemology, see *The Golden Grasp* (1578) in *Valentin Weigel: Selected Spiritual Writings*, ed. Andrew Weeks (Paulist Press, 2003), pp. 143-ff. For Hobbes, see Leijenhorst, *Mechanization*, ch. 3.

[40] Timothy Harrison, "John Donne, the Instant of Change, and the Time of the Body," *ELH*, p. 31. I owe Tim a great debt for his pioneering work in phenomenological readings of Donne.

these nascent insights. It merges the notion of God as a "foundation" in Prayer 3 with the experience of phenomenological "lived space" that marks Expostulation 21 and reveals Donne's effort to change the meaning or *sens* of geometric concepts such as verticality by positing not a geocentric but a theocentric cosmos. The process of his thought is especially visible wherever his expanded conception of the *uranoskopos* takes on eschatological implications for those the Psalmist describes in Psalm 64.10 as "the upright in heart."

Donne's Third Prebend Sermon: Redefining Verticality

Upright himself and fully convalesced from the 1623 illness that prompted the *Devotions*, Donne mounts St. Paul's pulpit once more, armed with a growing conviction that there is no ontological connection tying anatomy to geography or cosmography, but rather a divine foundation to all spatial norms, for "every man every where." In January and November of 1626, Donne dedicates the second and third of his five Prebend sermons on the Psalms to a discussion of the "two Hemispheares of Heaven," Joy and Glory, emphasizing that the spatial metaphor of hemispheres is merely heuristic, and that one must "crush Heaven into a map" for it to obtain.[41] In the third sermon, Heaven, as always with Donne, bears only loose and figurative contours. He contradistinguishes the created heavens ("the first thing Moses names to have been made") from the original, uncreated Heaven where God and the Angels dwell, and even goes so far as to describe the latter as "an eternall emanation of beams of glory, from the presence of God" which existed "infinite millions of generations before this [created] Heaven was made."[42] But the sermon says no more regarding the meta–physics of space and time in Heaven. Donne seems committed instead to answering questions of theological anthropology—who are "the upright of heart"?—and raising the stakes of living a joyful, praiseworthy life for those seeking eternal glory after death. For, in Donne's

[41] In his second Prebend sermon of January 1626, Donne speaks only heur–istically of Heaven's two "Hemispheres"—Joy and Glory—noting that one must first "crush Heaven into a map" before one can take the analogy of Hemispheres to good effect, c.f. *Sermons*, p. 69.

[42] *Sermons,* p. 242.

infralapsarian view, if God made Heaven and Hell, it is not as ends or spaces in themselves "that he might have some persons to put in them." It is rather for the sake of the edification of human persons that Hell and Heaven exist, an edification specifically defined in terms of good posture: "God did not first make a Heaven and a Hell, and after thinke of making man… First, he proposed Persons, Persons in being.... And in the qualification of these Persons, he proposes first a rectitude, a directeness, an uprightnesse."[43]

As in Donne's eschatological poems "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward" and "Hymn to God my God in my Sickness," his third Prebend sermon testifies to a fondness for mapping the spiritual life onto axial coordinates and the compass rose, figuring Death as the setting West, Christ's coming as the rising East. That sermon, however, comes to boldly defy the geometric conceits that he elsewhere sustains. It toys with and eventually breaks the bonds of a geometric paradigm of space, undoing the basic postulate of Copernicanism that assumes continuity between the ideal figures in Euclidean textbooks and the movements of the spheres. In so doing, Donne opens up room for a pastoral approach to the metaphor of moral "uprightness"—one that embraces humanity's "inevitable tentations," "infirmities," and "obliquities" rather than tightening the strings of straitlaced rigorism. Furthermore, Donne thereby reasserts the nascent conviction that the "foundation" of notions like verticality and horizontality, uprightness and declination, lies not in the strictures of the cosmographic order outlined by Copernicus but in the interpersonal relationship between each sinful subject and their redeeming God.

To get there, Donne's sermon, as in the *Devotions*, first eases its audience into familiar patristic interpretations of the upright topos, associating head-bent brutishness with sinful fallenness:

> To bend downwards upon the earth, to fix our breast, our heart to the earth, to lick the dust of the earth with the Serpent, to inhere upon the profits and pleasures of the earth, and to make that which God intended for our way, and our rise to heaven, (the blessings of this world) the way to hell; this is a manifest Declination from this Rectitude.[44]

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[43] *Sermons,* pp. 238-239.

[44] *Sermons*, pp. 243-44.

Unveiling the metaphorical and mathematical potential of the *uranoskopos*, Donne accounts for more than just the moral valences of "Rectitude." He details first its opposite, the "Declination" of the reprobates in its many forms ("a Diversion, a Deviation, a Deflection, a Defection from this Rectitude"); then its worst perversion, the Devil's circular, anti-progressive way of "compassing the Earth"; and finally its paragon, "the Angels way to heaven upon Jacob's ladder . . . a strait, a direct way."[45] Abiding by Euclidean rules, Donne finds his treatment of the moral life enriched further when he takes a rather teasing look back at classical geometry, contrasting the perfect forms described in textbook figures with the imperfect, fallen reality of this world:

> Upon this earth, a man cannot possibly make one step in a straight and a direct line. The earth it selfe being round, every step wee make upon it, must necessarily bee a segment, an arch of a circle. But yet though no piece of a circle be a straight line, yet if we take any piece, nay if wee take the whole circle, there is no corner, no angle in any piece, in any intire circle. A perfect rectitude we cannot have in any wayes in the world; In every Calling there are some inevitable tentations.[46]

His explanation for the existence of "inevitable tentations" and the impossibility of maintaining "a perfect rectitude" rests on recognizing that the circumference of the earth, rounded at every point, does not admit of straight lines, corners, or angles. Whoever walks along the outer edge of a sphere treads a curved path or "arch," and thus "perfect rectitude we cannot have." Learned yet unsophisticated, that metaphor reinforces a well-worn principle of Christian anthropology, available broadly to Donne's listeners but framed here in an especially consoling way, that not only human frailty (often imagined as a warpedness or a bending) but also the condition of Earthly life itself renders impossible the idealization or geometrization of moral perfection.

Donne's reassuring words for the not-quite-upright sinner already begin to imply that God-the-Judge, when he comes to mete punishment and weigh souls in eschatological scales, may not abide by

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[45] *Sermons*, p. 244.
[46] *Sermons*, p. 244.

the exacting metric standards with which God-the-Geometer, compass and protractor in hand, originally measured out the heavens and the Earth. Indeed, Donne's critique of impossible ideals goes further, prying into the largely unchallenged assumption that cosmography abides by the rules of idealized geometry. Introducing the technology of naval compasses, brought to renewed attention in Gabriel Harvey's popular, pro-Copernican treatise *De Magnete* (1600), Donne addresses how frail those assumptions really are:

> A compasse is a necessary thing in a Shipe, and the helpe of that Compasse brings the Ship home safe, and yet that Compasse hath some variations, it doth not looke directly North; Neither is that starre which we call the North-pole, or by which we know the North pole, the very Pole it self; but we call it so, and we make our uses of it, and our conclusions by it, as if it were so, because it is the neerest starre to that Pole.[47]

Radically, Donne unhinges the compass rose from the cosmic North-Pole, recognizing not only the frailty of human interpretation and intelligence, but the insubordination of instruments and geometrics models to their true originals. Evincing a modern engineer's pragmatism, he discloses a gap between idealized geometry and geocosmic reality. We "make our uses" and "our conclusions" only by rough estimations, knowing full well that there is no ideal continuity between geometry and cosmography, no subtending physico-mathematical reality tethering the "Pole it self" to "that starre which we call the North-pole" or to the direction the compass needle points.

With the premises of idealized geometric space left quietly in shambles, the pastor introduces his new "foundation" for a geometry of uprightness and verticality that would undergird the devotional teleology of the *uranoskopos*. First, shrugging his shoulders with a pastoral "close enough," Donne deduces—with appropriate sympathy for the ailing and the aged—that "he that comes as neere uprightesse, as infirmities admit, is an upright man, though he have some obliquities."[48] Having exposed earlier that what geometers presume to

[47] *Sermons,* p. 245.
[48] *Sermons,* p. 245.

be straight lines are only ever curved to begin with, Donne crescendos as he refashions the human body's sense of space upon the foundation of a new, divinely-ordained verticality: "To God himselfe, we may alwayes go in a direct line, a straight, a perpendicular line. For God is verticall to me, over my head now, and verticall now to them, that are in the East, and West-Indies; to our Antipodes, to them that are under our feet [i.e buried], God is verticall, over their heads, then when he is over ours."[49] Verticality, disentangled from its geometric regime in the *Devotions*, comes to signify for Donne a kind of relationality or relationship to God shared by all persons endowed with bodies—even those entombed "under our feet." In a later Prebend sermon, he will go so far as to describe it as a "new Mathematiques" where "I that live in this Climate, and stand under this Meridian, looke up and fixe my self upon God, And they that are under my feete, looke up to that place, which is above them, and as divers, as contrary as our places are, we all fixe at once upon one God, and meet in one Center; but we do not so upon one Sunne, nor upon one constellation or configuration in the Heavens."[50]

In brief, whether standing or lying down, right side up or upside down, above the earth or under it, Donne takes the body to be indissolubly upright, driven teleologically and insatiably to prayer through a verticality vis-a-vis of God that is inherent to the human body rather than geometrical or cosmographical. It is this teleological and relational verticality, inscribed in humanity's posture, that gives Donne leave to consider with mercy the plight of the bed-ridden, a plight he had so recently shared. The phrase "He that comes as neere uprightnesse, as infirmities admit, is an upright man"—by conflating discourses of infirmity, spatial approximation, and moral judgment—testifies that Donne continued to refuse to distinguish between the moral-metaphorical meaning and the literal-anatomical meaning of uprightness. He took them rather to be coextensive and mutually supportive hermeneutics for understanding that *imago Dei* inscribed textually in Psalm 64.10 and physically in the anatomical uprightness of the persons God fashioned.

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[49] *Sermons,* p. 245.

[50] *Sermons,* p. 307.

Du Laurens' *Historia Anatomia* and "Lived Space"

While Donne's anthropological and relational approach to the problem of spatiality in Heaven may be *sui generis*, he was not alone in using Aristotelian anatomy to conceive of humanity's God-given posture as the basis for one's experience of "lived space." We can see similar innovations in the phenomenological impact of uprightness in the *Historia Anatomica* (1602) of the physician André du Laurens. The work of this French Royal physician was imported into England, not uncor–rupted, through the vernacular medical treatise *Mikrokosmographia* (1615) of Helkiah Crooke (1576-1648). Crooke's anatomical descript–tions, both salacious and elegant, caught the eye of poets such as Anne Bradstreet and Phineas Fletcher. Their relevance for Donne is unattested, yet there are striking similarities in du Laurens' and Donne's treatment of posture, notably in how uprightness creates a lived sense of space. Moreover, although du Laurens is usually assoc–iated with the Galenic tradition of Montpellier, where he taught before being summoned to the court of Henry IV, his preface *On the Dignity of Man* in the *Historia Anatomica* shares the Aristotelian eclecticism that marks Donne's own anthropology. In other words, the *Historia Anatomica*, like Donne's devotional writings, suggest how the Aristo–telian *uranoskopos* could be used to refashion an objective notion of space into a phenomenological one. These similarities suggest that Donne may have had access to the *Historia*, or that Donne and du Laurens were drawing on related sources, or that Donne and du Laurens were responding to spatial debates with a similar turn to phenomenology *avant la lettre*. My goal here is not to arbitrate between these options, but to raise them as possibilities in order to better situate Donne's thought within the history of Aristotelianism, or rather Aristotelian*isms*, in the 17th century and the history of philosophical anthropology thereafter.

Part of the difficulty in retrieving the phenomenological overtones of du Lauren's innovations lies in getting past Crooke's mistranslations and misrepresentations, beginning with his Copernican additions to key passages on uprightness. In addition to the original Latin edition, two French translations of the *Historia Anatomica* were available during Donne and Crooke's time—the 1610 re-edition by François Size and the 1621 edition of du Laurens' *Oeuvres Complètes* by Théophile Gelé.

Both versions alert us to the Copernican influence Crooke surrep–titiously added when he translated the French physician's statements:

> First, man had an vpright frame & proportion, that he might behold and meditate on heauenly things. [... T]he Eyes being as it were spies or Centinels, day and night to keepe watch for vs, & being beside giuen vs, that we should take view of those *infinite Distances and glorious bodies in them, which are ouer our heads*, did therefore require an vpright frame and composition of the body.[51]

Neither French translation makes reference to "infinite Distances," claiming more simply:

> les yeux, comme ainsi soit qu'ils servent de sentinelles, pour faire continuellement le guet pour notre conservation, & qu'ils nous ayent esté donnez *pour contempler les choses celestes* demandent une figure haute et droite.[52]

By equating those "heavenly things" (*choses celestes*) with "infinite Distances and glorious bodies," Crooke redefines the *telos* of upright posture, insisting on a rationalist/naturalist paradigm, wherein "glorious bodies" can only mean stars, moons, and planets circling "over our heads" at infinite distances, not angels and the Trinity. Du Lauren's Latin and French editions, however, eschew specific cosmological claims, preserving within the phrase "*choses celestes*" the ambiguity of the secular/sacred and heaven/Heaven. Du Laurens, in other words, shares what Guibbory calls the "liminal" quality of Donne's devotional writing, retaining that important hermeneutic ambiguity over heaven/Heaven,

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[51] Crooke, *Microcosmographia a description of the body of man. Together vvith the controuersies thereto belonging. Collected and translated out of all the best authors of anatomy, especially out of Gasper Bauhinus and Andreas Laurentius*, (London: William Iaggard, 1615), p. 5 (emphasis mine).

[52] du Laurens, *L'Histoire Anatomique* trans. François Size (Paris: Julien Bertault, 1610) p. 6; du Laurens, *Toutes les Oeuvres de Monsieur André du Laurens,* trans. Théophile Gelée (Paris: Raphaël du Petit Val, 1621), p. 2. Even the third 1650 French translation, with additions by Lazarre Meyssonier, eschews Crooke's Copernicanism.

which the likes of Valentin Weigel found increasingly impossible to uphold.

Secondly, when we look past its overt Copernicanism and its rationalization of the devotional teleology of human posture, Crooke's translation introduces a more anthropological misrepresentation of what is arguably the French physician's most important innovation to the classical topos. Of upright posture, Du Laurens claims it is not merely unique to humans, but that it makes humans the only animal species able to distinguish right from left, top from bottom, anterior from posterior. Yet Crooke's translation, as Laurie Shannon has recently pointed out, takes superior, inferior, anterior, posterior, right, and left "parts" to mean "bodily specifications," insisting on the singularity of humans over animals simply on the basis of their "bodily order."[53]

> For this cause also, onely man amongst all other creatures, was framed according to the fashion of the whole vniuerse, because he hath his parts distinct, the vpper, the neather, the fore, the backe parts, those on the right hand, and those on the left hand; the rest of the Creatures either haue them not at all, or very confused. The right parts and the left, are altogether alike, sauing that the left are the weaker, but the fore parts are very vnlike the back parts: the lower in some sort carrie a resemblance of the vpper.[54]

I agree with Shannon's reading of Crooke, but would insist that Du Laurens' idiomatic expression for making distinctions (*avoir distinctes*), while it gets translated into Crooke's translation literally into "possessing" or "having" distinct parts, is akin to Descartes's later idiom "*avoir les idées claires et distinctes.*" For du Laurens, "distinct" operates more adverbially than adjectivally, qualifying the manner or mode in which the left and right, etc., are conceived and comprehended by the

[53] Shannon argues that "Crooke's ideological blinkers on this point lead him, further, to defy Aristotle's formulas for bodily specifications in animals and defend bodily order itself as singularly human." c.f. Laurie Shannon. "Shakespeare's Comedy of Upright Status: Standing Bears and Fallen Humans." *Shakespeare Survey* 68 (Oct. 2017): 4 n12. See also similar comments with notes on Donne in Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 89-90.

[54] Crooke, p. 5

human subjectively, rather than describing the objective order of the biological parts themselves. It signals conceptual and noetic dis–tinctions rather than anatomical ones. Otherwise, were we to abide by Shannon's reading, we would have to explain what bizarre animals du Laurens (and Crooke) were thinking of, whose "fore parts are very unlike the back parts" yet whose "lower [parts] in some sort carrie a resemblance of the vpper." Instead, if we read the passage in its local context, as an element within du Laurens' larger claim for humanity's higher rational capacities, then superior, inferior, anterior, posterior, right and left signify not a bodily order but an ability to make spatial-cognitive distinctions. What among humans is understood distinctly (namely, axes of orientation) is understood among animals "not at all" or in a "very confused" way.

The impact of this spatial and perceptual rereading of the notion of uprightness is difficult to measure for the history of anatomy—du Laurens' fellow physicians took neither note of nor umbrage at this phenomenological innovation, and Crooke wildly miscommunicated it to his English readers. It remains nonetheless noteworthy for John Donne's theological anthropology insofar as du Laurens' notion of posture reorganizes the microcosm-macrocosm, body-world analogy on which Donne relied so frequently. The phrase "onely man amongst all other creatures, was framed according to the fashion of the whole vniuerse," in light of du Laurens' spatial phenomenology, suggests *not* that the world and the upright body are coordinated according to the same axes, North-South-East-West, much less to the mandates of Copernican heliocentrism, but that they are both organized and oriented *tout court*. Rather than map the human body onto a compass rose, or onto any pre-existing ontological grid, du Laurens suggests much more radically that a person's upright posture allows for that person's own, distinct coordinate field to emerge, independently of preconceived mathematical or cartographic spaces. David Morris points out that such concepts of phenomenological spatial perception, or "lived space," based entirely on the movements enabled by upright posture, flourished only in the 1940s and 50s, in the writings of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the psychologist Erwin

Straus.[55] For Merleau-Ponty in particular, the terminology of up and down seemed so tied down with cultural connotations relating to Earthly orientation that our actual experience of orientation could not be caught "in the ordinary run of living because it is then hidden under its own acquisitions." To catch the up/down distinction at play, he suggested examining "some exceptional case in which it disintegrates and re-forms before our eyes."[56] Merleau-Ponty used the famous optical-inversion experiments of perspective-psychologist George M. Stratton; David Morris, more recently, uses Lackner's experiments with weightlessness in space; Donne's "exceptional case," so I've argued, may well have been the sickness of the *Devotions* and the disorientation of the Copernican revolution. The claim is not that he thereby preempted phenomenology as a philosophical method, nor that he shared Hamlet's romantic presumption of being "king of infinite space," but that intuitions of space as subjectively lived from within rather than objectively imposed from without clearly lie in the *Devotions* and in du Laurens' *Historia Anatomia* as a result of their creative engagements with the Aristotelian understanding of upright posture. The question remains: what happened to those intuitions? Or in other words, why has Donne not played a larger role in the history of philosophical and theological anthropology? One response to that question would be to doubt whether an unsystematic preacher best known for his coterie verse ever really did hold a place within the history of ideas to begin with, especially given that discipline's penchant for a kind of intellectual systematicity Donne never pursued. My contri–bution to what must inevitably remain an open question, however, is that, tethered to the mast and sails of Aristotelianism writ large, Donne's anthropological ideas likely went down with the burning ship.

Aristotle at Stake

Donne's theological anthropology—with its careful consideration of

[55] Morris, *The Sense of Space*, vii-viii; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2002), ch. 2; Erwin W. Straus, "The Upright Posture," *Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. Maurice Natanson (Springer, 1966), pp. 164–92.

[56] Morris, pp. 132-133. Morris' citations are from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Humanities Press), p. 244.

providentially-designed anatomy—evinces not only an avid reader of the human body but a philosophical mind in solidarity with the reformed school of Aristotelianism inaugurated by Philip Melanchthon. Despite Luther's attempts to wipe Aristotle's writings on nature from school curricula lest they prove a breeding-ground for Catholic metaphysics, many Protestant universities in Germany employed Aristotle's *libri naturae* as the cornerstone of new disciplines and new curricula. In the *gymnasia* of Stade and Marburg, Philippist scholars and school-teachers like Otto Casmann and Clemens Timpler inaugurated the sister-disciplines of psychology (or *scientia de anima*) and anthro–pology (a combination of *psychologia* and *somatotomia*), publishing widely within Germany and internationally on their curricular reforms. That Donne was aware of and reading these Lutheran Scholastics in Germany is attested to by the considerable marginalia in his personal copy of Otto Casmann's anthropology textbook, *Biographia, Sive de Vita Hominis Naturali* (Frankfurt, 1602).[57] His familiarity with that school raises the possibility that he was reading widely in popular Lutheran writers of the era, perhaps including the Spiritualist Valentin Weigel, but the relative

[57] For Donne's copy of Casmann's *Biographia*, see Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 266. I have not been able to consult the marginalia in Donne's copy and leave that work to future scholarship. For Protestant understandings of anatomy and its relationship to psychology and anthropology, there is an increasingly expanding body of literature. I have not aimed to summarize it here, but one interesting, albeit controversial place to begin is Andrew Cunningham, "Protestant Anatomy" in *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 44-50. See also Vivian Nutton, 'Wittenberg Anatomy' in *Medicine and the Reformation*, ed. O.P. Grell and A. Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 11-33. For Melanchthon's role in shaping the Aristotelian curriculum of Lutheran schools, see Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* Cambridge University Press, 1995). For the development of psychology, anthropology and anatomy, see Davide Cellamare, "Confessional Science and Organisation of Disciplines: Anatomy, Psychology, and Anthropology Between the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries," *Quaestio* 17 (Jan. 2017), pp. 461–80; Fernando Vidal, *The Sciences of the Soul: The Early Modern Origins of Psychology* (University of Chicago Press, 2011); and Simone de Angelis, *Anthropologien: Genese und Konfiguration einer "Wissenschaft vom Menschen" in der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).

obscurity of these thinkers in today's accounts of the history of ideas asks us also to consider just how maladaptive Donne's eclectic Aristotelianism was to prove in the shifting tides of intellectual history. Whereas Melanchthon's Aristotelian curricula remained the ground–work of much of German schooling late in the seventeenth century, England saw a much harder turn against Aristotle, both for philosophical and theological reasons. As Ann Blair reports, many thinkers felt a need to either make Aristotelian physics "pious" by the standards of the Reformation or else replace it with something new and overtly Christian, such as Descartes' mechanist dualism, Gassendi's Christian–ized atomism, Comenius' "Mosaic" physics, or Boyle's virtuosic empiricism.[58] The implications of Aristotle's decline in popularity for the reception and longevity of Donne's thought have yet to be drawn out, and I offer here only a first and necessarily cursory attempt by focusing on specifically English anti-Aristotelian criticisms of the topos of upright posture.

In 1646, hardly fifteen years after Donne's death, the topos of uprightness on which he had rested his theological convictions of the afterlife received a major blow from the pen of Sir Thomas Browne. The English physician and essayist opens the fourth chapter of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* by unleashing the full force of his surgical and Galenic training against what he calls the "double assertion" of upright posture "whose first part may be true, if we take Erectness strictly, and so as Galen hath defined it . . . . But if Erectness be popularly taken, and as it is largely opposed unto proneness, or the posture of animals looking downwards, . . . it may admit of question."[59] In their pro-Galenism, Browne's contentions aim straightforwardly at Aristotle and his intellectual progeny, including Donne. Yet the substance of Browne's argument is less anatomical or cosmological than zoological. As circumnavigating sailors brought back news of fleshy fatty birds around the straits of Magellan that stood upright like humans, cartographers seldom resisted depicting the *Anser Magellanicus* in suggestive contrast to the natives of those regions. Browne seized on the opportunity:

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[58] Ann Blair, "Mosaic Physics and the Search for a Pious Natural Philosophy in the Late Renaissance," *Isis* 91.1 (2000): 32-58.

[59] Browne, *Pseudodoxia* p. 212

> [I]f that be true which is delivered of the Penguin or *Anser Magellanicus*, often described in Maps about those Straits, that they go erect like men, and with their breast and belly doe make one line perpendicular unto the axis of the earth; it will make up the exact erectnesse of man. [...] As for the end of this erection, to look up toward heaven; though confirmed by several testimonies, and the Greek Etymology of man, it is not so readily to be admitted; and as a popular and vain conceit was anciently rejected by Galen; who in his third *De usu partium*, determines, that man is erect because he was made with hands, and was therewith to exercise all Arts, which in any other figure he could not have performed.[60]

On the basis of similar zoological evidence, such as the stargazing species of fish named *uranoskopos* and the praying mantis (*Prega Dio*) that he had witnessed during his medical training in Montpellier, Browne stood convinced: humans cannot rightly claim the exceptional status Aristotle gives them. On hermeneutic matters, moreover, Browne was insistent. The ancients, Aristotle especially, ought to be understood the way Galen had read them, that is not "literally" nor with regard to teleology, but "figuratively."[61] What Donne and du Laurens had hoped to leave ambiguously on the border between literal and metaphorical, Browne, like Helkiah Crooke before him, divided and even opposed.[62]

Despite those disagreements over how to read the topos of upright posture, Browne himself may have agreed with Donne on his phenom–enology of space and his vision of the body in Heaven. Browne's decision to admit of the Copernican cosmos led him closer to Weigel's notion of heaven as an expanse of God's presence, but it did not guard him from expressing reservations about the kind of body one might then inhabit. Heaven, Brown conjectures, might after all exist within the soul itself and therefore "within the circle of this visible world . . . even within the

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[60] Idem, pp. 212-213

[61] Idem, p. 215

[62] For a fuller account of Browne's hermeneutics, see Kevin Killeen, *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern England: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Ashgate, 2009).

limits of [one's] owne proper body."[63] Browne's personal confession of faith, *Religio Medici*, echoes Donne's spell of dizziness in the *Devotions*, when he states: "Men that only look upon my outside, perusing only my conditions and fortunes, doe erre in my altitude; for I am above Atlas shoulders, and, though I seeme on earth to stand, on tiptoe in heaven."[64] That the ancient topos of upright posture needs must be read "figuratively" according to Browne did not necessarily discount Donne's Aristotelo-phenomenological account of standing upright, nor its implications for the afterlife.

Browne's critique of Aristotle was hardly a death-blow to the topos of human uprightness, which persisted well into the next century, but it did become a point of reference for later, more strident opponents of Aristotelian anthropology. When Walter Charleton, England's leading popularizer of Gassendian atomism, tried to dismiss arguments for hylomorphism in his treatise on physico-theology *The Darkness of Atheisme* (1652), he chose to rehearse Browne's argument *verbatim*, penguins, mantises, and all.[65] As one of the most active members of the Royal Society, a partaker in the Cavendish Circle, and late in life a president of the Royal College of Physicians, Charleton's opinions traveled widely.[66] One trace of their impact is visible in the shift of opinion in the writings of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. Her *Worlds Olio* (1655) asserts that what "makes Man seem so Excellent a Creature above other Animal Creatures, is nothing but the Straitness and Uprightness of his Shape," while her later *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666) admits that other four-legged animals can achieve uprightness after all, not in spite of the fact but precisely because, as Browne asserts, their hind-legs can form a perpendicular angle to the

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[63]Browne, *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia, The Garden of Cyrus, A Letter to a Friend, Christian Morals. With Selections from Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Miscellany Tracts, and from MS Notebooks and Letters*. Edited by Norman J. Endicott (Norton, 1972), p. 105.

[64] Cited in Gisela Hack-Molitor, *On Tiptoe in Heaven: Mystik und Reform im Werk von Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682).* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2001), p. 7.

[65] Patrides (1958), p. 4; Patrides (1982),p. 89.

[66] John Henry, "Charleton, Walter (1620–1707), physician and natural philo–sopher," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2010), date of access 23 July 2019.

earth.[67] Later in the eighteenth century, in his new dictionary of the English language, Samuel Johnson would make sure to rectify the "vulgar errors"of Guy de Miège and other lexicographers by ensuring that definitions of "erect" and even "zoographer" referred directly back to Browne's *Pseudodoxia*. As it were symptomatically, allusions to "uprightness" in eighteenth century devotional literature come to specify "upright *in heart*," often delimiting a subset of the elect and eschewing the universal claims Donne was making about "every man every where."

At stake, then, in Donne's *Devotions* is a defense of Aristotle's relevance for reformed Christian thought that was already unusual within its Jacobean context and only became more antiquated as the seventeenth century continued. As Craig Martin reports, seventeenth century Protestant England saw the rising condemnation of Aristotle's atheism not only by Charleton but by the likes of Richard Bostocke, Francis Bacon, Thomas Lydiat, and many others on the continent as well. By the time of Pierre Bayle's encyclopedia, Aristotle's impieties were a matter of frequent accusation, especially his allegations regarding the beginning-lessness of the universe, his denial of divine providence for sublunary bodies, and his failure to recognize the immortality of the soul.[68] In Martin's account, it is religious zeal, and not solely the rise of proto-Enlightenment empiricism, that fueled the decline of Aristotelianism among the leading circles of the Royal Society and in academic curricula across England. In light of how fraught his project should have seemed to him in the 1620s, we can only be left wondering why and how Donne felt empowered to write and preach with such considerable aloofness from the natural-philosophical debates to which he elsewhere, especially with regards to Copernicanism, proved so highly sensitive. We have only begun to consider what Aristotle's decline may have implied for the reception of English writers on the outskirts of traditional accounts of the history of ideas who, still wedded at least in part to scholastic ideas, now find themselves doubly

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[67] Margaret Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio*, (London : Printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye 1655), p. 138 and *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy to Which Is Added, The Description of a New Blazing World*, 2nd edition, (London: Printed by A. Maxwell, 1668), p. 31-32.

[68] Martin, p. 171 et passim.

marginalized. Donne's *Devotions* stands as an exceptional instance in which reformed Christian anthropology acknowledged and embraced its troublesome debts to a pagan past, rather than trying to trample them under foot. Together with his sermons, also stands as a remarkable case-study of how an anthropological commonplace deemed defunct by new models of space, new discoveries in zoology, and new critical attitudes towards ancient philosophy nonetheless generated an insight that only twentieth century phenomenology later independently recuperated.

Conclusion: Donne's Posture

Of course, of Donne's own posture, we know very little. His earliest biographer, Izaak Walton, specifies only that he was "of stature moderately tall." But Walton also emphasizes twice that Donne stood "at his just height" when he posed famously on a fake wooden urn in a smoke-filled room while an unnamed "choice Painter" sketched his portrait. According to Walton's account, the sketch served first as Donne's bedside *memento mori*, then as the model for a frontispiece to a printed edition of Donne's final sermon "Death's Duell," and finally as the inspiration for the posthumous marble monument in St. Paul's Cathedral. It was erected after Donne's burial in 1631 with due attention paid to his posture—upright, yet oblique, on account of his half-bent knees. Sadly, we have lost the original sketch by the anonymous "choice Painter," and the frontispiece cuts off at mid-riff, so whatever Donne's "just height" really was, it is lost in the romance of the marble for whose sake Walton may have concocted the entire genealogy.[69]

In ways he could not have intended, Walton points to a different relationship between posture, space, and eternal justice when he considers Donne's "just height." Among sepulchers and altar tombs of uniform horizontality, patiently awaiting the resurrection, Donne's monument stands out for its subject's upright stance. In Ramie

[69] See Richard S. Peterson, "New Evidence on Donne's Monument: I." *John Donne Journal: Studies in the Age of Donne*, 20 (2001): 1–51. As inspiration for Targoff and Peterson's readings, see Helen Gardner's meticulous study "Dean Donne's Monument in St. Paul's," in *Evidence in Literary Scholarship: Essays in Memory of James Marshall Osborn*, ed. R. Wellek and A. Ribeiro (Oxford, 1979), pp. 29-44.

Targoff's opinion, the statue epitomizes what she considers to be Donne's overarching anxiety, his central aesthetic, metaphysical, and eschatological preoccupation: the valediction of the soul from the body. The Dean of St. Paul's is portrayed as anticipating excitedly on the reunification of body and soul; he is posing not at the moment of death, nor at "the moment that he will open his eyes and be reanimated, but the moment preceding this, when his very body is filled with joy and anticipation."[70] In this essay, I have followed Ramie Targoff in one way and departed from her in another. Like Targoff, I have tried to pay attention to the close connections Donne draws between anatomy and eschatology, between the earthly body and the glorified body; unlike her, I have looked *not* for what gave Donne anxiety but for what gave him that joy and eagerness for the afterlife she notes but does not explain. I hope to have shown that a major risk Targoff takes in her interpretation of the statue in St. Paul's is that of assuming such things as horizontality and verticality, orientation and posture, bear any meaning for Donne when he imagines what is on the other side of the eschaton. I hope also to have shown Targoff was right to assume they do, although not in their usual sense. If Stanley Spencer's 1911 oil canvas "John Donne Arriving in Heaven" may be read as an argument for what Donne imagined he would find at the resurrection, then perhaps I have no claim to originality in this essay. In that calm, almost sedate painting, Donne stands barefoot in a Brueghel-esque country–side, upright but with his whole frame unnaturally angled against the flat ground, supported only by the thinnest of walking sticks. His obliqueness stands out not only because of the hard black shadow it casts against the sun, but also because his peers—some kneeling, some standing, all oriented in various directions—pray to a deity whose verticality to them bears no allegiance or resemblance to the verticality between the flat earth they stand on and the celestial sun they entirely ignore. It seems Spencer and I agree that, when John Donne arrives in Heaven, what he finds is not so much a space into which God puts upright persons, but upright persons whose verticality to God defines their state of bliss.

Yet despite the best efforts of these two posthumous artworks, we remain faced with a gaping hole when dealing with Donne's

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[70] Targoff, p. 183.

eschatological imagination, for he never pictures Heaven. In his eschatological poems like "Goodfriday, 1613: Riding Westward" and "Hymn to God my God in my Sickness," the spiritual realm is certainly apprehensible, even mappable by metaphors. Death is figured as the setting West, the Resurrection as the rising East, and the narrow straits of Magellan and Gibraltar where merchant ships risk their freight are themselves the very straits of fever and disease: "*per fretum febris*, by these straights to die." But we are never sure whether or when Donne's metaphors, least of all his spatial metaphors, stand to be literalized and activated. As Lyudmila Makuchowska puts it, Donne's *Hymn* "continuously re-conceptualizes spatiality in an unavailing effort to locate the terrestrial Paradise among the disparate interpretations of space: the space structured by the Christian faith, the space of burgeoning capitalist order, and space understood as a mathematical function of the grid."[71] (46). Amongst all these notions of space, I have aimed to show that Donne—in pondering whether Heaven will be a Weigelesque expanse, a "Holy Room" with extension, verticality, horizontality, and orientation, or merely a void—turned to his own posture not only for answers, but as an answer. He found there a providential design that did not merely assert the uniqueness or excellency of humankind over other animals but that moderated the impact of the most unsettling cosmographical revolution Christianity had yet to face, setting God's vertical relationship to every individual human being over and above the infinite and impersonal geometry of Copernican space. Robbed of his "just height" during his illness in 1621, Donne thereafter roamed the boundary separating figural and literal meanings of the very uprightness in which he has since been in-marbled and in which, in spite of his obliquities, Heaven or Hell-fire, he was certain he would be immortalized.

University of Notre Dame

[71] Ludmila Makuchowska, *Scientific Discourse in John Donne's Eschatological Poetry* (Newcastle: UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 46.