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**Title:**

**Bruno Dumont and *Akademeia: The Place Iustitia Dei, Auto-exousia and Our Experience of Violence***

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The body is the beginning of the soul, the primal matter and substance of filmmaking.  
“The senses are the causes of the concepts, the body is the cause of the soul and precedes in  
the intellect (Philoxenus of Mabbôg).”<sup>1</sup>

**Bruno Dumont**

All is foreseen, freedom of choice is granted, and the world is judged in kindness.<sup>2</sup>

**Rabbi Akiba (Akiva) ben Joseph**

### **A Preamble: Theoretism and Political Economy in Contemporary Art/Media History and Theory**

There cannot be two more dissimilar contemporary directors than the Australian-American Mel Gibson and the self-taught French filmmaker Bruno Dumont. The former, a (sectarian) Catholic who adheres to the Tridentine theology of the pre-Vatican II period, is one of the most successful action film actors working in Hollywood in the past twenty-five years. The latter, an ex-teacher of Greek and German philosophy born in Bailleul, France, spent his early working years shooting commercial films for local businesses in North East France.

Released in 2004, Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* initiated an absolute fire storm of antipodal responses that ranged from unrestrained praise to outright public condemnation. The situation with the work of Bruno Dumont is no less antipodal, especially when it comes to the paroxysmal violence of his last film, *Twentynine Palms* (2003). His first feature, *La vie de Jésus* (“The Life of Jesus,” 1997) was awarded several prestigious prizes. Dumont’s second feature, *L’Humanité* (“Humanity,” 1999), one of the most brilliant albeit bewildering works of cinematic practice to be released in recent memory, was a highly controversial winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 1999 Cannes Film Festival.

Visceral reactions aside, a more revealing antipodal characteristic is the huge scale of published responses to *The Passion* in contrast to the dearth of material on Dumont's work. Worse is the critical quality of many of the published reactions to Gibson's work in comparison to the trivial quality of much, though not all, of the writing on Dumont.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, there are number of substantial reasons for this situation. Not the least of which is the severity of the allegorism that permeates the *contemporary* dramaturgy of Dumont's productions as opposed to the neo-Orientalist nature Gibson's production. Notwithstanding Gibson's use of an all Aramaic and Latin dialogue to lend the production a patina of historical accuracy, his film's representative tropes certainly fall into the film industry's traditional, neo-Victorian exploitation of nineteenth-century European historicism and orientalism. This accounts, in part, for the scale of the attending audiences, whose expectations have long been weaned on Hollywood's and, for that matter, many European-based orientalist productions.

Regardless of the importance of these and other factors, there is one rarely discussed socio-pedagogical determinant which, I would argue, also plays a role with regards to the nature of the writing on Dumont's films. It is a factor that is specific to the prevailing, if not dominant critical discourses, research methodologies, and pedagogies that are fostered within many university fine art/media art and communications programs. This is the near non-existence of a *contemporary*, definably theological framework for the critical meditation on *all* forms of cultural production.

By theology I am referring to three primary constituents: firstly, a systematic consideration of the ontology of the divine in relation to its *different* human manifestations, and the full implications of that study with respect to human experience. Secondly, an epistemological reflection on

humanity's relation to the spiritual. Thirdly, a theology of all cultural production and its mediative role in contributing to the explication of humanity's position with respect to the "divine". In all fairness to those persons who have had similar concerns, we must pose a Foucaultian question of all those disciplinary practices most directly implicated. Has not a time come for a curricular space to be opened up in these practices that will permit "another" voice to enter into the process of the explication of cultural activity and experience?

It might appear, on first read, that any difficulties which will inevitably arise when proposals are made to remediate the situation could, in the long term, be successfully negotiated. Nevertheless, the actual implementation of any proposed resolution may be far more contentious than it seems if we are to judge according to the critical reaction to Dumont's work. For some of the writing on Dumont exhibits a curious bewilderment about what the filmmaker is actually doing and, worse, a derisive antagonism which, in a few cases, becomes so openly hostile that it teeters on the edge of being patently offensive. Why? Perhaps it could be argued that some writers are so incognizant of the historical context that frames Dumont's work that we can understand some of their confusion.

At one stage we see Pharon from behind, and he appears to be hovering about a foot off the ground. Levitation - or is he just standing on a small mound of earth? Transcendence, or mundanity? . . . but we're undeniably disconcerted. Perhaps it was nothing, a throwaway shot.<sup>4</sup>

Dumont himself supplies at least one possible answer when, in an early scene in *La vie de Jésus*, Freddy and his friends are visiting the brother of one of his buddies who is lying in hospital slowly dying of AIDS. As they are standing around his bed one of Freddy's friends turns his head to see a small, cheap reproduction of Giotto's *The Resurrection* on the wall. Then he turns back

around and asks Freddy who the person in the reproduction is, to which he responds, “some guy who came back from the dead.”

The confusion, then, may have less to do with ignorance and more to do with the sheer vacuousness of the cultural trappings of religious experience, so that a work by Giotto is reduced to being nothing more than cultural wallpaper. Nonetheless, this “vacuousness” is certainly not enough to explain the bewildered, hostile nature of some of the writing on films that so *openly confront the viewer* with scenes containing, sometimes, horrendous levels of human suffering and violence. However, “vacuousness” does go a long way in clarifying the situation if the term is interpreted to refer to the viewer’s recognition of the ineffectuality, or worse, the inappropriateness of the ethos that frames Dumont’s own response to the suffering and violence in his films. It is, I would suggest, the theological grounding of that ethics that many in the audience neither recognize, hence their bewilderment, nor countenance, hence their hostile derisiveness.

One foundational reason for this situation is that for many commentators, any theologically grounded proposal that steps beyond the confines of the socially acceptable, discursive and *institutional* domains of “Religion/the religious”, to participate in a socio-political debate with regards to *non*-religious issues is challenging a central structural component of Modernity/Post-modernity – the primacy of the secular. In 1846, the English free thinker and co-operator George Jacob Holyoake first used the terms “secular/Secularism” in his work *Principles of Secularism*. Holyoake’s term is defined as follows:

Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or

inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) The improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the novelty of Holyoake's use of the term "secular," his appeal to the providential use of "science" has the all too familiar ring of early English scientific modernity that is canonically represented by the triumphant scientism of Francis Bacon's *The Great Instauration* (1620). By Holyoake's time the Christian eschatological dreams of Bacon's triumphalism had been reduced to an quasi Theistic, if not de-Christianized utilitarian humanism.

Needless to say, any lingering post 19<sup>th</sup> century belief in the renovative possibilities of science of the type that imbues Holyoake's *Principles of Secularism* has certainly *not* gone *uncontested*. The dogmatic assertion that the correct formulation of the actual nature of Human "thinking" and "action" can *only* successfully occur from within the overarching framework of the metaphysics of theoretism in Western thought has been repeatedly challenged. As Rev. Father Joseph S. O'Leary S.J. notes,

Heidegger's project of overcoming metaphysics was the strongly influenced in its initial form by Luther's polemic against the distorting objectification of Christian truth in medieval scholasticism. . . there is considerable truth in his {Heidegger} claim that the dominance of the theoretical concern in the West has repressed other forms of thinking, and blinded us to phenomena which do not come into view in the perspectives of scientific reason. Many nineteenth-century theologians, notably Ritschl and Harnack, pursued the topic of the repressing or distorting role metaphysical reason has played in Christian tradition. Heidegger's sensitivity to the inadequation of metaphysics to the properly philosophical task of thinking being *was nourished by this theological climate*.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, irregardless of the numerous salvos directed against theoretism the primacy of secularity still mark's of a critically *uncontested* dualism that underwrites many of the responses to Dumont's work . As Holyoake states, "*Secularism* is . . . intended mainly for those who find *theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable*." If the theoretic/scientific ground

that sustains the primacy of the secular are, *at least in principle* challengable, then why not the secular/theological dualism?

What is truly fascinating is that when we consider some, though not all, of the various philosophical challenges to the claims of theoreticism there is little corresponding willingness to consider that Theology could, *outside* of its proscribed socio-institutional domain of the “Religioun/the religious”, also provide an substantive contribution to the debate over Theoretic/Technological Modernity and the question of the nature of Human “thinking“ and “action” *in* the world. This reticence is hardly surprising given the deeply entrenched nature of Secular/Theological duality. An important rider here that may also help to explain many of the reactions to Dumont’s work is the ever present, prejudicial assumption that anyone who espouses a Theological position is, by definition, politically and ethically conservative. Consequently, to even consider the *contemporary* possibility, as Dumont does, that the “sacred” and the “profane” may form a unity that permeates the life-world of *humanité* is to mark his, or anyone else’s arguments as having a suspicious provenance.

I think that there is something profound in human beings, something mysterious, bound to the sacred. The sacred is also in the profane.<sup>7</sup>

Dumont dares to de-*segregate* the sacred from the {political} boundary that has been set between the divine and the politics of the *everydayness* of our lives. It is because of the political segregation of the divine from the secular that there *must* be a place for the former within disciplines like Art History so that any faculty or student may also comes to grips with the possibilities that a Theology of all cultural production might provide.

### ***La vie de Jésus* and “The Quest for the Historical Jesus“**

Many reviewers have remarked on the Christian elements in Dumont’s three films either by way

of expressing perplexity or by acknowledging their presence, but leaving it at that without understanding or addressing their axiological importance to his work as a filmmaker. Dumont responds as follows to one of Philippe Tancelin's questions:

The films I make confront evil. They do not respond to it. . . . In other words, they do not engage in *reasoned discourse*. . . . The question of evil, of love, of instinct, of freedom and of fate. The question is: what freedom do we have?<sup>8</sup>

It comes as no surprise that the textual source upon which Dumont drew to title his first film was Ernest Renan's *La vie de Jésus*; moreover, in Dumont's *The Work of the Filmmaker*, he quotes from the work of the greatest of Syriac writers, the Monophysite theologian Philoxenus (Bishop) of Mabbôg. As Philoxenus declares in *The Letter of St. Mar Aksenaya, to the Pure Monks of Beth-Gaugal*, "[f]or we do not despise His humanity, and we do not deny His divinity, and *we do not divide Him into two.*"<sup>9</sup>

Renan held the Chair of Hebrew and Chaldaic Languages at the University of Paris. Renan's work was of enormous popularity; it sold over 60,000 copies in little under six months and eventually went into seventy re-editions and was translated into fifteen languages. As A.D. Howell Smith notes in his preface to the 1935 English edition of *La vie de Jésus*: "Here for the first time was a *purely naturalistic* biography of one whom Christendom had so long adored as God manifest in the flesh . . ." <sup>10</sup> Regardless of its popularity, traditionalist Catholics were infuriated by this naturalism and forced the government to suspend Renan from his duties.

The "biography" marks a point in a far larger debate that was, in part, set in motion when, in 1678, the French Oratorien priest Richard Simon published the *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, one of the earliest attempts at applying emergent modernist, critical hermeneutic

methodologies to review the scriptural corpus. Typical for early attempts at critiquing biblical documents, Simon's work initiated a public scandal which led the Council of State to order its destruction. Exactly one hundred years later, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing published, between 1774 and 1778, a series of posthumous "fragments" (essays) by the German philosopher and man of letters Hermann Samuel Reimarus. The most important fragment is the seventh one, entitled *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger* (On the Intention of Jesus and His Disciples). Reimarus launched a historical critique of the canonical texts comprising the Christian Bible in that he postulated a fundamental difference between who Jesus was, in actuality, and what his disciples proclaimed him to be. The seventh fragment initiated what one hundred twenty-eight years later Albert Schweitzer would name "The Quest for the Historical Jesus."

The Catholic traditionalists who forced Renan out of his position would have, I suspect, both understood and utterly hated the implications of the scene in *L'Humanité* when the police detective Pharon de Winter slowly levitates above the ground while he is working in his small garden plot. One of the most endearing, gentle, and greatest depictions of a redemptive figure ever to appear in film, this character is presented by Dumont as being raised by the flowers in his beloved garden. This scene is the narrative consequence of an earlier one where we are shown a close-up shot of Pharon squatting and very gently massaging the petals of his flowers between his thumbs and forefingers as he inaudibly talks to them.

### **Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 3:15 and Dumont**

It is not possible, I would argue, to comprehend the full import of Dumont's axiology without taking into account the determinative role of the filmmaker's own articulation of the tension

between freedom and determinism as it is announced in Pirkei Avot 3:15. “All is foreseen, freedom of choice is granted, and the world is judged in kindness.”<sup>11</sup>

Certainly among the prominent characteristics of Dumont’s work is the *seeming* arbitrariness and irresolvableness to the event structure of his films. Worse, there is a disturbing *aporia* of motivation with regards to people’s behaviour that is, at times, contraposed with acts of impulsive, materialized sexuality and violence. What is more, this behaviour is pervaded by a lack of any (obvious) sense of interiority that we would presumably expect to accompany persons involved in difficult social interactions. There is also the brevity and mundaneness of the dialogue and, most profoundly, the implication that “*reasoned discourse*” is ineffectual. At the level of the institutional framework of the social world of *La vie de Jésus*, this ineffectuality is mirrored by the inability of the hospital to do anything for the brother of Freddy’s friend who is dying of AIDS. Moreover, Freddy himself suffers from epilepsy, which the hospital cannot cure; a disease that has the ever present potential of rendering him helpless. In *L’Humanité* there is also the seeming failure of the unionized workers in the factory where Dimino works to achieve anything when their strike fizzles out. Moreover, we are presented with the police’s frustration because they appear not to be able to solve the crime that occupies them. When asked by David Walsh about *La vie de Jésus* Dumont answered:

The man of the people has a truth that the man of the city, the intellectual, has lost. Freddy has something that I’ve lost, that I must find again; I don’t know what exactly. I find that our culture, our civilization, has failed politically, socially, morally.<sup>12</sup>

In the introductory comments to the English translation of *The Explanation of the Gospel of St. Luke* written in A.D. 1100 by the Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria, the

reader is advised that the Greek term *auto-exousia* is to be understood as meaning “self-authority” or “self-determination,” rather than the more typical Latin concept of *liberum arbitrium* or “free will.” The closest related term to *auto-exousia* is the Latin concept referencing the condition of personhood, *sui iuris*, “of one’s own right.” While the Hebrew concept *Bechirah Chofshit* is normally interpreted as “free will,” it would be more accurate though to interpret it as *auto-exousia* rather than as *liberum arbitrium*. Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon, in his commentary on the Hebrew term “tzelem” for humanity’s “image” or “likeness” of G\_d, notes that such a term cannot be interpreted as referencing a materialized, anthropomorphic entity. Rather, “tzelem” is to be interpreted as referring to G\_d’s *essentia*.

In his *Supplicatio (A Plea for Christians)*, the second-century Christian apologist Athenagoras of Athens said of God’s *essentia*: “for created things are like their patterns; but the uncreated are unlike, being neither produced from any one, nor formed after the pattern of any one . . . but God is uncreated, and, indivisible, invisible, incomprehensible.”<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding his Neo-Platonism, Athenagoras marks out what is fundamentally unique about the oneness of the G\_d of Israel—G\_d’s *unnameability* and absolute *a prioriness* in relation to humanity. This also circumscribes a further distinctly Judaic ontic duality, namely, the relative autonomy or *auto-exousia* of humanity in contrast to G\_d’s absolute autonomy. Judaism locates the *essentia* of each person’s *auto-exousia* in their originary potential for transgression, and their constitutive potential of free choice. As the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson notes in his *Torah Studies*, “evil has no real existence . . . it is only a potential state of being that appears to have a real existence so that man might have free choice.”<sup>15</sup>

There is though a profound *aporia* at the centre of the Doctrine of the Freedom of Choice: the seeming paradox or, more precisely, the seeming tension between G\_d's absolute omnipotence—the question of determinism—and our free choice. As Rabbi Akiba states, “All is foreseen, freedom of choice is granted, and the world is judged in kindness.” One strand of Rabbinical Judaism proposed that G\_d's omnipotent knowledge could not be causal in nature, for then the principle of *auto-exousia* would be abrogated insofar as all past, present, and future decision events would be eternalized. Rather, G\_d has *a priori* foreknowledge of all *possible* “causative/creative” decisions as opposed to “accidental” ones made by humanity. The French philosopher and Talmudist Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides) countered that this position still goes too far in infringing on humanity's *auto-exousia*, insofar as G\_d knows only the possible range of decisions open to persons, not which of these possible alternatives each person actually chooses. With the later emergence of Christianity proper out of the Jewish sectarian group that formed around Joshua ben Joseph (Jesus of Nazareth), the Doctrine of Free Choice and the problematic of the “tension” passed into Christian hands. At the core of this “tension” is the Christian doctrine of *Iustitia Dei*—the righteousness of God with respect to humanity's “justification.” Within the Augustinian tradition “justification” is that which “designates a process of being made righteous.” The earliest Christian formulation of the doctrine is historically identified with Paul. His formulation of justification is: “divine action (grace) . . . is both the inauguration of the life of faith, and also its final consummation . . . which anticipates the verdict of the final [eschatological] judgement” at the end of time.<sup>16</sup>

Elaine Pagels notes in her important though controversial work *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*:

. . . for nearly the first four hundred years of our era, Christians had regarded freedom as the primary message of Genesis 1-3—freedom in its many forms,

including free will; freedom from social and sexual obligations such as marriage and business; freedom from tyrannical government and from fate; and self-mastery as the source of such freedom.<sup>17</sup>

Notwithstanding the controversy surrounding Pagel's work, it is not contentious that by the fifth century a major doctrinal struggle erupted in the Christian world between St. Augustine of Hippo and the English monk Pelagius over the issues of *auto-exousia*, justification, and the omnipotent role of God's divine grace in a person's salvation. In particular, the controversy centred on the salvic tension between each person's *active* inauguration of their justification through the performance of good works and the Pauline doctrine of "justification by faith" in the Christ. The phrase "in the Christ" is profoundly important, insofar as the Pelagian position appeared to strike at the heart of the Soteriological Doctrine of Antonelement. The definitional core of the Christian, eschatological narrative is the Principle of Antonelement; the reconciliation of the world and God via the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. An act that is embodied in Christ's Crucifixion and *agonia* {Greek}, "the suffering, the struggle"; the taking on of the suffering and sinfulness of an unreconciled world – of "being *acted upon*" - in order to expiate the sinfulness of humanity.

The principle of "justification by faith" as formulated by Augustine implies that regardless of whether one has or has not performed good works or committed acts of sinfulness, one is, through one's confession of faith in Christ, "made righteous." Augustine was famously suspicious of the claim that persons, in and of themselves, could intentionally overcome their impulses, especially when it comes to the issue of *porneia* (which is the loss of control and/or the defilement of a person through sexual lust). The Pelagian argument responds that this position abrogates the doctrine of humanity's *auto-exousia*, thus removing any possibility of the sinner assuming *active* responsibility for participating in the process of salvation. Regardless of whom

one sides with when it comes to Pagel’s critique of the nature and role of Augustine’s argument in the defeat of Pelagius, it is without question that historically, the Augustinian position emerged as victorious. Augustine argued that “the correct motivation for a righteous action can come only through the operative grace and *interior action* of the Holy Spirit *within* the believer.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Dumont’s Achievement: A Contemporary, Remediated Augustinian Soteriology**

The central question with regards to Dumont’s work is how evil—suffering, pain, violence, racism, sexism, homophobia, and loveless sex —is redeemed when the individuals in his films and, most significantly, the viewers themselves, can no longer appeal to existing socio-political, legal, or cultural frameworks. Dumont offers us both a remediated Augustinian Soteriology and a contemporary variant of Monophysite Christology. By “remediated” I am referring to Dumont’s critique of all existing institutions, including the church, and to what I argue is his own form of Pelagian Humanism. Consider the following two pronouncements by Dumont:

I had the desire to tell the life of Jesus. Not to repeat what everybody knows. It is the significance of that life that interests me. I invented a story to regenerate the meaning, to show that *there is a humanism in Christianity that they don’t teach in the Church, in the schools. It is concerned with the power of man.*<sup>19</sup>

I am trying to be a filmmaker. . . I am not a Christian. I above all am someone in doubt, I despise the religious, the clerical. I think that there is something profound in human beings, something mysterious, bound to the sacred. *The scared is also in the profane.*<sup>20</sup>

Thus, against the Augustinian position, redemption for Dumont occurs through *our* willingness, *our* “power” “Not to stay low . . . (but) . . . to be able to go higher morally . . . That’s the sense of Jesus’ life.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there are scenes in Dumont’s *L’Humanité* that are in keeping with the doctrine of the “*interior action*” of Grace, the *interne illuminatio*; these are always signalled by a

peculiar act on Pharon's part, such as his gentle sniffing of a suspect's head region when he "interrogates" him.

The pivotal scene of redemption<sup>22</sup> in *L'Humanité* occurs when Pharon, on learning that an arrest has been made, enters the room in the police station where his friend Joseph is being held for the rape and murder of Nadège. A shocked Pharon sits in front of a hunched up and fearful Joseph, and asks him if it is true that he committed the crime. Joseph collapses into an almost uncontrollable fit of crying as he nods his head in response. Pharon then rises with Joseph, hugs him, and then gently rubs his face and head against Joseph's face to gain a sense of his friend's interiority. Then, without any prior warning, he kisses Joseph intensely on the mouth and leaves the room without saying another word. In the closing scene of the film Dumont gives us a static, wide-angle shot of Pharon sitting motionless in an empty room of the station with his hands clasped together as he faces a window. To the surprise of many viewers, it also appears that there are handcuffs around Pharon's wrists. This, however, is only implied because we cannot see if both wrists are handcuffed, given the point of view of the shot (Pharon is seen from behind and off to the side).

We never are provided with any *explicit reason* for why Joseph commits the horrific crime, nor do we see the magistrate articulate his/her social role. A number of commentators have interpreted Pharon's impulsive kiss as having connotations of sexual *lust*. This is very doubtful, for Pharon is, throughout the film, the ever present *witness* to the violence and *porneia* that permeates the world. Correspondingly, Pharon is never presented as a participant in any scenes of sexual lust, and when there is the potential for participation, he refuses it. Pharon's kiss is the

kiss of his love and signals his forgiveness of his friend who, through his sobbing and confession, accepts the monstrosity of what he has done. Pharon sitting in the room alone with his wrists handcuffed is his *agonía*.

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#### Notes

1. Sébastien Ors, Philippe Tancelin, and Valérie Jouve, *Bruno Dumont*, trans. J. Ames Hodges, Paul Buck, and Catherine Petit (Paris: Dis voir, 2001), pages, 11-12.
2. Rabbi Akiba (Akiva) ben Joseph (A.D. 50–135). *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)*. CHABAD.ORG LIBRARY, <http://www.chabad.org/library/article.asp?AID=2165>, Chapter 3:15.
3. In my research, I came across three exceptions to this situation. Sébastien Ors's "The Poetics of Fatality," in *Bruno Dumont*, op. cit.; Brett Bowles's "The Life of Jesus (La Vie de Jésus)," in *Film Quarterly* 57.3 (Spring 2004); and Darren Hughes's "Bruno Dumont's Bodies," in *Senses of Cinema* 19 (March–April 2002); [http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/19/dumont\\_bodies.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/19/dumont_bodies.html).
4. Neil Young. L'HUMANITÉ, on Website, Neil Young's Fim Lounge, 2005, p. 1.
5. George Jacob Holyoake. Principles of Secularism. 3<sup>rd</sup> Revised Edition, Austin & Co, 1870, p. 30.
6. O'Leary, Rev. Father Joseph S. "Origen's Metaphysical Interpretation of the Johannine Logos," on Spirit of Vatican 11. [http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my\\_weblog/index.rdf.,p.1](http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my_weblog/index.rdf.,p.1).

7. Bruno Dumont, "Enquiries on Reality" (Interview by Philippe Tancelin), in Bruno Dumont, op. cit., p. 75.
8. Ibid., 44.
9. See Adolphe A. Vaschalde, *Three Letters of Philoxenus* (Rome: Tipografia Della R. Accademia Dei Linchi, 1902), 21. Emphasis added. Philoxenus was a defender of the Monophysite doctrine of the Incarnation. According to Philoxenus, Christ is just *one person*, insofar as there "is only one person in Him, but in the sense also that, after the Incarnation, there is only one nature (as opposed to two distinct natures) in Him, a nature consisting of *the divinity and the humanity*."
10. Ernest Renan, *Life of Jesus*, trans. A.D. Howell Smith (London: Watts & Co., 1935), 3.
11. Rabbi Akiba (Akiva) ben Joseph, op. cit., Chapter 3:15.
12. David Walsh, "Interview with Bruno Dumont, Director of *The Life of Jesus*," *World Socialist Web Site*, 20 October 1997; <http://www.wsws.org/arts/1997/sep1997/freddy.shtml>.
14. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Torah Studies*. Rebbe. Brooklyn, New York, Kehot Publication Society. 1992. P.29.
16. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 22.
17. Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 77.
18. McGrath, op. cit., 49.
19. David Walsh, "Interview with Bruno Dumont, Director of *The Life of Jesus*," *World Socialist Web Site*, 20 October 1997; <http://www.wsws.org/arts/1997/sep1997/freddy.shtml>.
20. Bruno Dumont, "Enquiries on Reality," in *Bruno Dumont*, op. cit., page. Emphasis added.

21. Brandon Judell, “French Director, Bruno Dumont Updates ‘The Life of Jesus’”;

[http://www.indiewire.com/people/int\\_Dumont\\_Brian\\_980515.html](http://www.indiewire.com/people/int_Dumont_Brian_980515.html).

22. Dumont is quite clear that personages such as Pharon are not the presence of Jesus in the contemporary sphere: “Christ is the man who’s spiritually and morally . . . the higher. I don’t know how to explain that. Nobody, spiritually or morally, has been higher than the Christ.” See Judell, op. cit. Rather, like the redemptive figures of the Arabic-French lad Kader in *La vie de Jésus* and Katia Golubeva in *Twentynine Palms*, such characters mark an eschatological dualism that runs through Dumont’s three features insofar as they embody the human possibility, and actuality of redemption.