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"Divine Stuttering": Revelation as Donation in Joan Maragall and the notion of a polity as intense patriarchal life[1]

Abstract:

This paper examines Joan Maragall's radical theology of divine immanence, locating God not only in nature but within human consciousness and the senses. Maragall redefines transcendence as a phenomenologically accessible reality mediated by spiritually understood senses, thereby challenging the apophatic bent of centralist Catholicism that relegated sensory revelation to paganism. In dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness, I argue that Maragall shifts divine epistemology from an exclusively transcendent model to immanent revelation, grounding authority and progress in a people's openness to divine presence. Revelation thus yields a political theology in which spiritual vitality—not institutional reason—structures communal life (poble) as receptivity to God in the world. The article concludes by tracing how this sensory-theological reconfiguration informs Maragall's vision of community and its institutions.

Key words: revelation — Joan Maragall — phenomenology — givenness — apophasis — authority

Resum:

Aquest article examina la teologia radical de la immanència divina de Joan Maragall, que situa Déu no només dins la natura, sinó també dins la consciència i els sentits humans. Maragall redefineix la transcendència com una realitat fenomenològicament accessible, mediada per uns sentits entesos espiritualment, i així desafia la teologia apofàtica del catolicisme centralista que havia associat la revelació sensorial amb el paganisme. En diàleg amb la fenomenologia de la donació de Jean-Luc Marion, l'article argumenta que Maragall desplaça l'epistemologia del coneixement diví d'un model exclusivament transcendent a una revelació immanent, fonamentant l'autoritat i el progrés en l'obertura del poble a la presència divina. D'aquesta manera, la revelació esdevé el principi d'una teologia política en què la vitalitat espiritual –i no la raó institucional– estructura la comunitat (poble) com a receptiva al diví en el món. L'article conclou mostrant com aquesta reconfiguració sensorial i teològica informa la visió maragalliana de la comunitat i les seves institucions.

Paraules clau: revelació — Joan Maragall — fenomenologia — donació — apofasi — autoritat

Nun achte wohl, und lass mich sehn:
bist du ein Tor und rein,
welch Wissen dir auch mag beschieden sein.

1 The expression "divine stuttering" ('diví barbosseig') is Joan Maragall's own, from *Elogi de la paraula* (Pr 3 288), where he defines poetic sincerity as the spontaneous rhythm through which speech becomes revelation: "that divine stuttering which springs forth through the poet with the original rhythm he felt in the natural form when it enchanted him with its revelatory power." The title cites this passage as the conceptual point of departure for the paper.

['Now observe well, and let me observe,
if you are a fool and innocent.
what knowledge may be divulged to you']
Richard Wagner*, Parsifal*

En el fondo, la llamada cuestión social moderna es una pura
cuestión religiosa.
Joan Maragall, «La alegría redentora»

I. "The most ignorant sees as clearly as the sun"[2]

Joan Maragall's theological vision posits not only the radical immanence of God in nature but also within human consciousness. As he writes, human consciousness "is Nature feeling its return to God the Father" (Pr 3 280 669). This immanence, however, is not confined to consciousness alone; it extends to the senses, though not in the traditional positivist sense. Ignasi Moreta explains that Maragall's understanding of God situates Him within a nature that does not conform to ordinary human perception but within "the same bodily senses, though with different perceptive capacities" (Moreta 232). In this way, Maragall follows a long tradition that traces back to Origen—and, in Catalan letters, to Ramon Llull—that posits the existence of spiritual senses ('sentits espirituals').

This theology of divine immanence must also be understood together with Maragall's notion of poetic sincerity, which he describes as "that divine stuttering ('diví barbosseig') which spontaneously springs forth through the poet with the original rhythm he felt in the natural form when it enchanted him with its revelatory power, and which, in the end, breaks through his very entrails, bursting forth as a living word, made poetry, made man, made God to the measure of the poet and his moment" (Pr 3 288). In this "divine stuttering," revelation passes through the human body as rhythm and speech, uniting sense perception, inspiration, and incarnation.

God's immanence to the senses, particularly in "Cant espiritual", thus becomes for Maragall the source of a radical denial of any otherworldly hope or of any measure of the divine beyond human measure. These saturated senses, open to the being-given of God (Marion), through which a celestial fatherland ('pàtria celestial') is constituted, are key to understanding Maragall's political theology.

Crucially, Maragall's notion of God's immanence in the world does not imply God's constant or automatic availability to those who seek Him. Rather, it denotes a state of phenomenological donation—an event in which the divine becomes perceptible to the gaze of those who, in their ignorance, remain open to the phenomenon in its full givenness. This receptivity, unmediated by authoritative knowledge yet grounded in a particular way of exposing oneself to nature, translates into a faith that neither aspires to transcendence beyond this world nor to intellectual comprehension, for God already inhabits it before judgment—and before the linguistic forms that arise from judgment. As Maragall writes: "This mystery of infinite love, the

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

world spends all the wisdom of its ages contemplating it without understanding it; but the faith of the most ignorant, without understanding it, sees it clearly like the sun (‘*clar com el sol’)*” (Pr 3 737).

In this sense, the most ignorant (‘més ignorant’) becomes, in Maragall’s thought, not a figure of exclusion or lack but a phenomenological category—one that designates the subject whose ignorance allows the divine to appear in its pure immanence. My aim here is to delineate, through an analysis of Maragall’s Elogis (“Elogi de la paraula”, *Elogi de la poesia*, “Elogi del poble”) and the “articles ideològics, socials i polítics”,[3] the contours of this figure of the “most ignorant,” who, for Maragall, constitutes the intersection where revelation and politics converge.

The significance of this theological stance on revelation extends beyond its metaphysical implications; it bears profound phenomenological consequences for Maragall’s political and social thought, particularly in his conception of the people’ (‘poble’). The purpose here is not merely to describe Maragall’s views on God but to extend his theology toward a more systematic phenomenological framework—one that interprets the category of the people through the logic of revelation and thereby allows us to articulate a distinctly Maragallian political theology.

The nature of divine revelation in Maragall’s works challenges the Catholic apophatic tradition, which historically relegated sensory access to God to the realm of the pagan[4]. By redefining the senses of the true peoples of the earth, Maragall articulates a conception of revelation that resonates with Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of donation, situating divine immanence within a political and theological framework grounded in the openness of the people to the divine.

This epistemic shift—the redefinition of sensory perception—has long been foundational in determining sources of authority, both intellectual and governmental. The boundaries of human sensory experience have historically functioned as the epistemic basis for shaping the authoritative structures that govern both religious and political communities. If we accept Maragall’s concept of spiritual senses (‘sentits espirituals)—faculties that, while not extending beyond the physical, nevertheless align with the immanence of God in a world open to the eyes of the innocent—then the question arises: what source of authority shapes this new concept of the people (‘poble’)?

This question is not merely theoretical but central to understanding how Maragall’s theology and philosophy—traced back to his writings, both essays and articles, on politics and religion—propose a radical

3 This section title does not originate with Maragall himself but was added posthumously by the editors of the 1940s *Obres completes* (Selecta). The author never established such divisions; these were editorial constructions introduced for organizational purposes.

4 Maragall wrote an article on popular poetry in which he describes the simplicity of the people’s poetic sentiment as being in a primitive, “pagan” stage. Yet this simplicity does not exclude the possibility of perceiving God’s presence through poetic pagan expression. He writes: “The people of the countryside and the coast know that, after three days of that dry, furious westerly wind that lifts the dust to the sky in great clouds and is called Mestral, the Levant wind usually turns, bringing heavy, desolating rain. And our people, who know this, poetically say, personifying natural forces with a still pagan simplicity: The Mestral wind has a daughter who is married to the Levant. When her father goes to visit her, he always returns crying” (Pr 1 738).

shift in the epistemology of authority. By reconfiguring the senses and redefining the channels through which divine immanence is perceived, Maragall opens the space for a new conception of community—one grounded in receptivity to divine revelation while inhabiting and conserving social institutions, and acknowledging the contingency of human experience. In doing so, Maragall envisions a people and a body politic ('poble') that is not merely political or social in its foundation but rooted in a transformed natural and theological understanding of the human relation to God and to one another.

The most immediate consequence is that politics, for Maragall's "innocent ones" ('innocents'), remains detached from the rationalist discourse of Enlightenment modernity: it is seemingly inarticulate—stuttering—and disassociated from intersubjective reasoning and from the spatial logic of the public sphere. This "stuttering" of politics echoes the "divine stuttering" (´diví barbosseig´) of revelation itself, suggesting that, for Maragall, political life partakes of the same rhythm of incarnation through which divine meaning becomes audible in the world.

II. The politics of revelation

In *Attempt at a Phenomenal Re-Appropriation of Revelation*, Jean-Luc Marion poses a critical question regarding the nature of divine self-revelation, paraphrasing the Book of Malachi:

> If God shows himself as God, who can stand before him, who can see him without dying, who can hear him? And if one could hear him, and see him without dying, and stand before him, would it be God we were dealing with, or an idolatry? (58)

For Marion, the question of how human beings may access God through creation exposes a central point of doctrinal resistance within the Roman Catholic magisterium, which historically claimed authority over the faithful's modes of knowing. This resistance is already evident at the Council of Trent, where the term *revelatio* is conspicuously absent and replaced instead by an emphasis on the "purity of the Gospels". Over time, this conceptual displacement led to an increasingly elaborate presentation of divine knowledge as mediated by revelation, with the implicit assumption that any access to God through creation was secondary to—and always preceded by—learned or doctrinal revelation itself.

This trajectory culminates in the *De Revelatione* document of the First Vatican Council, which distinguishes between two modes of knowing God without providing an epistemological account of the secondary mode beyond the primary one—namely, "the universal belief of the Church, declared by the sacred Council of Trent" (Marion 28). The *magisterium*'s reluctance to broaden the notion of revelation, particularly regarding the possibility of knowing God through creation, persisted well into the twentieth century. As a result, sensory revelation remained marginal, often relegated to the boundaries of paganism.

A major turning point arrives in 1956 with *Dei Verbum*, which clarifies that "knowledge of God on the basis of creation, even if it is exercised through the 'natural light of human reason' alone, does not pre-

cede revelation (which is thus called ‘supernatural’); instead, it ends itself preceded by and comprised in it” (Marion 29). The tension between Catholic dogma and the possibility of knowing God through the senses therefore remains unresolved—a tension still evident in the Second Vatican Council’s citation of the Letter to the Romans:

> What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown himself to them. Ever since the creation of the world, the invisible things of God are seen (*ta gar aorata apo ktiseōs kosmou tois poiēmasin nooumena kathoratai*). (28)

From the historical perspective of Catholic doctrinal morality, Maragall’s thought is undeniably subversive, for it mediates between what Jordi Bachs calls “vitalisme sensual i apassionat” [‘sensual and passionate vitalism’] (Bachs 36) and the profound spirituality of Christian faith. In this sequence of immanences—beginning with the divine presence in nature and continuing through human consciousness and the senses—Maragall does not stop at the radical immanence of God in sensory experience. Rather, he relocates the “profunda espiritualitat i fins de la mateixa fe cristiana” [‘profound spirituality, even of Christian faith itself’] (36) within a notion of the earth already contained in the expressive capacity of language. It is the immanence of God to language—but not to language in any ordinary sense: not to abstract discourse, but to the living, incarnate word through which the earth itself becomes articulate.

As Ardolino shows, this tension is refracted through Maragall’s Dantean poetics of the word, whereby Maragall consciously reappropriates and reconfigures Dante’s synthesis of the pagan and the Christian as the axis of his own theological poetics. In *Elogi de la poesia*, Maragall defines poetry as “the art of the word” (‘l’art de la paraula’), where art is “beauty passed through the human being” and beauty is “the revelation of the essence of things through form,” and where form is “the imprint that the creative rhythm has left in the matter of things” [‘l’empremta que en la matèria de les coses ha deixat el ritme creador’) (Maragall, as cited in Ardolino 28). Ardolino reads this opening definition alongside Beatrice’s explanation in *Paradiso* —where “all things” have an order that “makes the universe resemble God” and where higher creatures perceive in that order the “trace of the eternal value”—and through Torras i Bages’s Thomist gloss, which describes creation as a “radiance of the Word” (‘resplandor del Verb’) in all that exists. Crucially, Torras i Bages also stresses that this divine radiance does not appear with equal clarity in all things because of the indisposition of matter and the contradiction of secondary causes, a point that reinforces Maragall’s own emphasis on “matèria” as the charged site where divine rhythm is at once present and obscured.

Once this Dantean and Thomist matrix is in place, Ardolino argues that Maragall’s repeated use of the participle “transhumanat” is not decorative but technical: art is “beauty transhumanated closer to God, through the human expression of a term revealed in natural form”, and the “sincerity of expression” allows the poetic rhythm, as “transhumanat”, to coincide with the original rhythm by which natural form revealed God’s creative effort (Ardolino 31–32). For Ardolino, “transhumanar” thus names the privileged moment of intuitive poetic perception in which the divine creative rhythm inscribed in the world passes into human language: the imprint of the Word in matter becomes legible only as an event of the living word, rather than as a merely doctrinal proposition. It also becomes clear how Maragall’s opposition to

doctrinal theology does not stop in the pagan-Christian divide but informs his entire conception of intelligibility. Legibility now acquires a different definition, for it is conferred by matter itself rather than by doctrinal interpretation.

Thus, Maragall accomplishes two gestures that had seemed radically impossible within the long and unresolved history of revelation. First, he asserts that sensory experience can lead to divine revelation unmediated by learned doctrine. Second, he maintains that this same sensory experience is not condemned to silence or ineffability, as in much of the Iberian mystical tradition, but is instead capable of becoming word—living word—articulated within the very earthliness of language.

This is not the usual inverse conception in which language is immanent to the world (as in Wittgenstein), but rather one in which the world itself resides within the word and its thermal states ('*estats tèrmics*). Yet one point on which Bachs does not dwell—and which becomes central to our reading of Maragall—is the way the poet overcomes the apparent divide between the sensory and the spiritual. Bachs concentrates on the tension, but does not address how, for Maragall, the two are in fact imbricated, only superficially opposed. When Maragall unfolds the concept of spirit, he does so within the sensory, not against it; spirit and sense remain distinct yet mutually implicated. This dynamic of interpenetration, overlooked by Bachs, will occupy a central place in our reading of Maragall.

In terms of the politics of revelation—that is, this apparent and doctrinal "anguished confrontation between the God of Revelation and Nature as an experience of natural religion" (Bachs 23)—Maragall articulates a distinctive position: poetic language is simultaneously nature and God. If poetic language is physical, if it is composed of thermal states ('*estats tèrmics'*) (Pr 3 298), if it is earth, as Maragall suggests, then what most directly challenges patristic doctrine is his conviction that God is not external to the earth and its thermal states, but immanent within them. God's word, in this view, is a chthonic word—born from and resonant with the materiality of the world itself realized in the community. To speak of God, therefore, is not to introduce Him into matter, but to recognize that His being coincides with the very level of complexity of matter—that is, with an earthly state that manifests divinity from within a "chthonic community" (Chacón 146).

III. To say God (parler Dieu) with the mouth full of earth[5]

If we pay attention to the second clause of Maragall's definition of popular poetry, we see that the meaning of the phrase hinges, counterintuitively, on the idea that the earth as a thermic entity is contained within the human word: "The echo of the creative rhythm through the earth in human speech" (Pr 3 302). This idea does not merely associate language with the earth—it reduces the divine to the material

5 The expression "To say God ('parler Dieu') with the mouth full of earth" is intended as a philosophical gesture rather than a literal translation. The French parenthesis signals its conceptual link to Jean-Luc Marion's use of "parler Dieu" ("to speak God"), while the English phrasing emphasizes Maragall's theology of embodied speech, material language. The tension between the literal and the material-phenomenological is deliberate and untranslatable without loss.

vibration of the word itself, situating God as a phenomenon within the immanent field of human expression. From that moment, Maragall's response to the Church Fathers, and to the millennia-old apophatic tradition[6], is clear: God is not ineffable; phenomenally, He is only speakable as earth. What, then, is this pagan act of saying God with one's mouth full of earth?

A preliminary answer to this seemingly rhetorical question can be found in the second part of *Elogi de la poesia*, where Maragall, while maintaining a joyful, festive, and optimistic attitude toward the divine, identifies the sole tragic aspect of human existence: "to be earth ['terra'] in the supreme degree of the penetration of God's panting within it" (Pr 3 281). This tragedy, which precedes the elevation of the lower instincts—instincts that, in Maragall's view, do not yet belong to an earth that leads toward God, since his notion of the earth differs from that of animal nature[7]—consists, quite literally, in beginning to speak of love with the earth in one's mouth, that is, with a consciousness of death and disintegration as an individual:

> […] Foresensing my disintegration through personal earthly death, love, also instinctive, arises in me, for the moment, to perpetuate my species, and with it the infinite ascent of the earth to God: 'Brothers, at once love and death — generated by fate (Pr 3 282).

However, a second answer allows us to resolve the dichotomy of the senses, which we have already anticipated with reference to Bachs. According to Bachs, the basis of Maragall's profound spirituality, and even of his Christian faith itself, lies in the body, with all its senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching), the crucible of elemental passions (Bachs 36). Yet an analysis of God's manifestation through the senses in Maragall's verse reveals a more complex tension: through them one may reach God—but not in a hedonistic or positivist sense. Rather, as Moreta suggests, these are spiritual senses ('sentits espirituals'), capable of overcoming positivism (231).

This becomes abundantly clear in the examples Maragall invokes in "Elogi de la paraula". For in his view, it is not the natural entities, bodies, or beings themselves that grant the people the capacity to speak with the rhythm of the universe in their mouths, nor is it an intrinsic property of the individuals who observe them—an interpretation that would amount to a naturalistic determinism of the political entity, the people. Rather, what distinguishes them is the way they are exposed to nature, a form of openness that differentiates them from the "vain people who go around with their empty words ['paraules vanes']" (Pr 3 74). The vanity that traces the graph of dead words consists in depositing perception into an object without performing a "liturgy of perception"—a sacramental act through which the very operation of seeing is transformed.

6 "From the perspective of Christian morality, Maragall's thought—both dissenting and progressive—connects directly with the most advanced moral theology of the second half of the twentieth century and with the boldest interventions of certain participants in the Second Vatican Council" (Bachs 36).

7 This has particular implications for the politics of revelation: *heaven through (not on) earth* does not signify the vindication of a state of nature, nor the hedonistic exaltation of the earth through the artificial intensification of sensory capacities, but rather the socialization of that lower nature through civil institutions—family, factory, church, marriage, and the state.

V. The innocent fool

In "La última lamentación de Núñez de Arce" ['The Last Lamentation of Núñez de Arce'], an article that appeared in *Diario de Barcelona* in 1901—where there are already subtle hints suggesting a strong reception of Wagner's *Parsifal*[8]—Maragall writes about the act of closing one's eyes to positive understanding in order to open them to communion (community) with the humble. This category of the humble, in the 1901 article, immediately opens up the possibility of ascending, now upon the spiritualized earth of Maragall's vision, to a place where only the "dazzled" can enter. Contrasting this fragment to "Cant spiritual," it becomes clear that Maragall's reference to the closing of human eyes in death is nothing more than the opening of the eyes to the community of the innocent—a political revelation:

> And when this moment is the supreme moment of life, rest in Him is only found by closing the eyes of understanding and communing in the faith of the humble; because compared to the infinity of the mystery of life, at such moments all intelligences are equal. By closing the eyes, the inner light appears, and once imbued with it, man may open them again to the earth to continue the ascension whose path is only clearly visible to those who are dazzled. (Pr 1 884–885)

Parsifal revelation" scene: Event saturated with political symbology. Depicting revelation as the stepping out of nationalist history into the Christian community of saints. by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg (Wagner: *Parsifal*).

8 Catherine Macedo documents this Wagnerian event—one that both overshadowed and illuminated Catalan modernism—and shows how, particularly in Maragall's case, it reached such a degree of intensity that it came to encapsulate the Catalan political project through the lens of Wagner's final sacred opera. As she observes: "Problems arose when they began, like Maragall, to drift in and out of reality or, worse still, to anchor themselves inside opera. By evaluating the world from an artistic viewpoint, one could create moral and social expectations that could never be fulfilled and were therefore doomed to failure. One such unpromising hope was that someone, real or fictional, would be called upon to become a Hero and rescue good Catalans from Castile's defilement and a troubled *esperit nacional*. In July 1902 this Messianic shadow chose *Parsifal*: Miquel Domènech Espanyol—critic, composer, and musicologist—gave a short seminar series to the Wagneriana entitled *Parcival considerat com Apoteosi musical de la Religió Catòlica*, later expanded into the book *L'Apotheose musicale de la religion*" (Macedo 103–104).

What is distinctive in this event of sight or listening that Maragall's innocents share in the Elogis? Why does it constitute at once a moment of solitude and of political awakening? Here it is worth building a bridge with Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of donation. In his discussion of painting, Marion explains that "the nonontic coming forward of the painting is confirmed by the following property (shared with music): it is not so much a matter of seeing (or hearing) it as it is of re-seeing (or re-hearing) it again and again. This liturgy of re-seeing, which compels us to make a trip to re-see this or that canvas (re-visitation), suggests that the painting does not consist in its being (then it would be enough to have seen it just once), but in its mode of appearing (which can be repeated each time in a new way)" (48).

The humble people who inhabit Maragall's poetic world exemplify this same disposition toward revelation: they are not exposed to nature as being—this is no naturalist philosophy, nor a praise of unpolluted landscape—but as to liturgy. Their encounter with the world unfolds through repetition and receptivity, through the rhythm by which perception itself becomes a form of devotion.

Admitting already that these spiritual senses in Maragall are signs of a revelatory event, we can also define his "living word" as a saturated intuition. This formulation opens a new way of framing the discussion of the people ('poble') in Maragall. The state of dazzlement is characteristic of the saturated intuition: "because the saturated phenomenon cannot be borne, on account of the excess of intuition in it, and by any gaze cut to its measure ('objectively'), it is perceived ('subjectively') by the gaze only in the negative mode of an impossible perception—of bedazzlement" (Marion 204). Dazzlement and community are, as Marion notes, seemingly antagonistic terms, yet in Maragall they become siblings.

It is thus crucial, for the argument concerning the rare openness of the people to the phenomenality of revelation, to observe how Maragall's description of the humble man who speaks with living words is almost entirely pagan: a simple man, by the side of a channel, seized by ecstasy and revelation, convulsing as if possessed—"the man, who was like stone, turned his eyes in his ecstatic face, slowly raised his arm tracing a vague path, and moved his lips. In the thunderous roar of the wind that swallowed every voice, only two words floated, which the shepherd repeated stubbornly" (Pr 3 75).

The key criterion here is not the channel itself, but the singular channel, endowed with a physiognomy of its own. This notion of physiognomy reappears in Maragall's writings to distinguish the tumult from the people, and the natural body that awakens ecstasy within them from the mere fragment of the world devoid of spirit. The channel's physiognomy, like that of the earth, signals that nature speaks through those who transform perception into liturgy. To make this possible, Nature must first be emptied of Being—and therein lies Maragall's radical difference from paganism, and the reason why his theology, while daringly immanent, remains unmistakably Catholic. This theological gesture—the nonontic coming forward of nature—is also key to understanding Maragall's non-naturalistic defense of the rural peoples and their exposure to nature, which, far from being deterministic, expresses their capacity to dwell phenomenally in revelation.

The 1901 article by Maragall also raises the issue of the precedence of revelation—or the moment of dazzling—in relation to the subsequent constitution of that land ('pàtria celestial') ascending toward God as a community of innocents. For Marion, the phenomenology of dazzling suggests that "the givenness of the gift does not depend on ethics, but inversely, ethics no doubt supposes the givenness of the gift" (Marion 88). In *Elogi de la poesia*, Maragall leads us in a similar gesture toward what he calls the higher aesthetic emotion, yet before even contemplating the possibility of an ethical or moral moment (which constitutes the land), he evokes an ecstasy without thought, a total state of illuminated ignorance: "I have a great, but peaceful well-being: I think nothing; it is an ecstasy" (Pr 3 282). In both Maragall and Marion ethical life supposes revelatory dazzlement before nature.

The independence of ecstasy from ethics and thought is crucial for Maragall, just as the independence of poetry from the dead words of empty moralism—humanitarianism, charity, and philanthropy—is essential to his understanding of the living word. In "Elogi del poble"—a text that remains unedited—Maragall declares: "Humanitarianism, philanthropy, charity—thus in the abstract—are, I confess, dead words to me" (Pr 3 418). For Maragall, the moral moment follows the aesthetic emotion, but the latter's essence precedes all other dimensions—the philosophical, religious, and ecstatic—while remaining entirely independent of them: "Here is the aesthetic emotion that has transcended, not to prayer, nor to reflection, nor to curiosity, nor to industry, nor to piety; but solely to a desire for expression with no other interest than expression itself" (Pr 3 284).

Noble words—of justice, warmth, or efficacy—remain non-poetic, for in poetry there is no morality other than its formal and expressive purity. This absolute independence defines what we may call, with Marion, "donation" or "givenness": "the measure of the excess of intuition over intention, which is no longer defined in terms of what the concept or the horizon assign to it but can be deployed indefinitely. The concept no longer foresees, for intuition fore-comes—comes before and therefore, at least once, without it" (Marion 226). This productive negation of will and understanding (Pr 3 289) that opens the body politic to an indefinite deployment of aesthetic intuition not only liberates revelation from the patristic establishment but also from the State and from a facile liberal individualism. In this way, Maragall's intersection of politics and revelation becomes clearer— as a negation of mainstream moral judgment, as a redefinition of judgment itself in terms of open liturgical perception, and as the refusal of noble, empty words as the foundation of political life.

V. Electricity, city-life and the conservative appearance

We have been careful to emphasize that the apparent paganism of Maragall's illuminated figures—including Maragall himself—is only an appearance: "because, while writing this speech, more than once a delirious fever made my pulse tremble, and my eyes became clouded" (Pr 3 82). This caution arises because it is only from within the apophatic tradition—precisely the one Maragall contests—that such figures could be perceived as pagan. His illumination is not heretical enthusiasm but rather the theological consequence of a distinct conception of divine immanence.

These illuminated figures, and their integration within a Christian symbolic order, have far more to do with the particular spirituality of Bishop Torras i Bages than with any pagan inheritance. In "L'Iglesia és regionalista" [´The Church is Regionalist'], a text that profoundly nourishes Maragall's conception of religion, Torras i Bages declares that religion "is a supernatural perfection of nature" (Torras i Bages 34). For this reason, religion remains closer to natural entities—such as the channels, seas, and mountains that populate Maragall's innocent landscapes—than to the State. According to Torras i Bages, religion "is divinely naturalistic" (36), and therefore, so too is his Church:

> Very often, politics, the work of men, disturbs religion; always nature, the work of God, lovingly aligns itself with the Church of Christ. Many national councils or ecclesiastical assemblies have been inspired by devotion to the monarch more than to the Church; in contrast, provincial and diocesan communities have made the life of both religion and civil society flourish in all kinds of excellences. (36)

Maragall writes in "La eterna afirmación" ['The Eternal Affirmation'] that he read Torras i Bages[9] as his first reading of the century (Pr 1 867), and by 1901—the same year the Wagnerian Association was founded—he had already published opinion pieces fervently aligning himself with the regionalist theses of the Bishop, whom he later described, in 1911, in the article "Catalunya i avant" [´Catalonia and Beyond'], as one of the intellectual sources of the resuscitated Catalan Word (Pr 2 827).

In this confluence of revelation and politics, Maragall adopts seemingly conservative traits (the defense of catholic cooperative organizations) that coexist, unresolvedly, with his dissenting ideas on the popular phenomenology of revelation. What, on the side of revelation, constitutes a subversion of millennia of ecclesiastical doctrine, in the political realm becomes a defense of the family and of private property. Yet this collision of ideas—which, as we argue, is only a collision in appearance—reveals the very subversion implied in Maragall's defense of the institutional character of family and property. His reaction, as contained in the political writings analyzed here and based on the *Obres completes*, is not directed against the idea of progress but against the economic forces that, on the plane of the body politic, reduce every aspect of social life to its economic factor. This position becomes explicit in his denunciation of what he calls the "tumultuous promiscuity of public squares" (Maragall 683), which does not refer to religious tradition itself but to the degeneration of its communal and liturgical dimension under the pressure of economic speculation and the dissolution of individual physiognomy before the masses.

To read the Maragall who defends rural life alongside the Maragall who supports urban vitality in his political and social writings requires understanding this articulation as a politico-theological one. His critique is not of urban modernity but of its desacralization—the positivization of technology and the market's colonization of perception. For Maragall, speculation and technological materialism are threats only when they interrupt the liturgical relation between perception and the divine; for if it is not the objects

9 "Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Emerson spoke to Maragall the poet, but Torras spoke to Maragall the patriarch—the middle-class *rentier* with thirteen children, a private income, and a deep Catholic education, tormented by the crisis of Spanish identity that came in the wake of 1808" (Hughes 497).

themselves but the mode of perception that grants access to God, then technology, like nature, can also become a medium of spiritual life.

Already in the 1893 article "Movilización de la propiedad" ['Mobilization of Property'], Maragall foresaw this danger: opposing the institution of private property and the figure of the "pater familias" rose a new figure—the enterprising and restless speculator. Against the institution of property, he observed, emerged a decadent notion of property understood merely as an economic element (Pr 1 180). For Maragall, property and social institutions formed an essential part of spiritual life; they were, therefore, integral to the conscious poetic pursuit of the divine. To read Maragall's poetic enterprise apart from his politico-theological thought is limiting, insofar as it severs the living foundation of poetic creation itself: the people (the innocents).

For Maragall, these institutions are not linked to social classes, for aggregation into classes produces only the loss of individuality—the erosion of personal physiognomy. There is no other justification for being social, for engaging in the contingency of social life, than the pursuit of a spiritual end. Any other purpose causes human groups to obscure the goodness of the individual—its distinctive physiognomy, a term he also uses to describe the singular character of natural bodies. The irreflexive masses, formless agitations driven by collective passions, are repugnant to the senses (Pr 3 417). Their senses, likewise, are closed to perception; they perceive only the repugnant: earth before its ritualization. The unreflective masses embody for Maragall a form of sensory closure: their perception remains trapped in immediacy, unable to perform the liturgical transformation through which the earth becomes sacred.

In *Elogi de la poesia*, the internal divine reflex that he calls consciousness, and its divine qualities arises from the social, but through the individual: "I help my fellow beings and help myself for the spiritual purpose that is common to us (I am social)" (Pr 3 282). Without a spiritual end, Maragall insists, there can be no humanity. In "Una carta solemne," a 1902 article on Torras i Bages, Maragall addresses the intrusion of politics into religion, condemning the imposition of civil restrictions upon the most essential element of Spain—religious sentiment—as anachronistic (Pr 2 46). Yet the anachronism, for Maragall, lies neither in religion nor in the preservation of institutions such as family and private property, but in the reduction of these to mere instruments of political control.

For Maragall, the people are never a sum of individuals organized into classes, masses, collectives, or unions: "The people are not this or that group of people, but a collective state of the human spirit in which we all find ourselves at one time or another" (Pr 3 301). The most comprehensive and complex definition of the people ('poble') appears when Maragall frames the historical development of theater as a reflection of the earliest stages of humanity:

> And the truth is that when one says: the people, in the best sense, this is what is meant: the sum of individual moments of grace from anonymous humility (which may come equally from the palaces as from the quarries, from the wise as from the shepherd), filtered, over time, from trivialities and vulgarities". (Pr 3 301)

To stand out amid the formless masses, to seek distinction, is for Maragall the opposite of true individuality: it is the creation of a false difference designed to attract the masses. Anonymity, on the contrary, is achieved only when individual physiognomy is preserved—when the singular remains visible within the collective. The downfall of a people capable of reaching consciousness and art (poetry) is, for Maragall, the triumph of its merely collective dimension, the reduction of spirit to number.

When writing on the national level, Maragall opposes the imposition of political interests upon religion. When writing on the regional level, in line with his fidelity to Torras i Bages's "regionalisme espiritual", his critique narrows to the tumult of the modern city. Yet, for Maragall, technological innovation is not in itself decadent. His concern lies with economic forces that reduce every institution and form of life to utilitarian or speculative ends. Technology, like language or ritual, may also serve spiritual life, provided perception—not the object—remains the site of revelation.

This vision emerges most clearly in a prophetic passage where Maragall reads in electricity the promise of a future reconciliation between progress and spiritual life, imagining a worker freed from the factory and reunited with his family in a home that resembles "a domestic church":

> Tomorrow, the electrical distribution of power at a distance will free the worker from the slavery of the factory; it will remake the family around the home. Eventually, the tumultuous and unhealthy city will no longer serve any good purpose for social life, and it will be considered an imperfect and monstrous organization of the past, compared to the new city founded on an intense patriarchal life, a more vibrant and spiritual social relationship, purer, more highly human. (Pr 3 426)

For Maragall, the spiritual renewal of the people therefore depends not on rejecting modernity but on its transfiguration—on the conversion of technological progress into a liturgical form of perception, where human labor, domestic life, and divine revelation converge.

The defense of the family and of religious practice in Maragall is surrounded by elements of innovation, futurity, and hope. The centralist civil impositions against them, by contrast, are portrayed as anachronistic. For this reason, Maragall's so-called conservatism has often been misread when viewed solely through the lens of liberal democratic and utilitarian conceptions of the State. Maragall situates himself in opposition to the prevailing models of political constitution, and, in doing so, does not consider himself a conservative.

In a clearly political section of "Elogi del poble", he is categorical on this point, despite later critical attempts to classify him otherwise. He observes that progressivism always emerges from the upper classes, "since every idea of novelty springs from the heights" (Pr 3 416). The upper classes (addressing explicitly the appearance of conservatism we pointed to in reference to his defense of traditional institutions), he writes, only appear to act as conservatives because they resist the immense force that, through their ideas, they themselves have conferred upon the lower classes. Similarly, the people,

beyond their apparent progressivism, are by nature conservative: "Thus, in the people, understood in that way, primarily reside the conservative elements of the human spirit, and in the upper classes, the progressive ones" (Pr 3 415).

Just as Maragall is radically progressive in matters of revelation—especially in his reconfiguration of the apophatic tradition—so, too, in political thought he belongs to the progressive vanguard. This political progressivism, however, arises not from any secular liberal lineage but from his theological radicality. As Moreta notes:

> [...] In his context, some of Maragall's attacks against democracy and parliamentarism turn out to be more progressive—if we are to use such a poor terminology—than they seem, as shown by the reaction of Alexandre Cortada, a contemporary of Maragall who wrote for the most advanced press of the time". (159)

When Maragall's reflections on institutional life are read alongside his subversive stance toward the centralist Catholic magisterium, it becomes clear that his political theology cannot be subsumed under any conventional form of conservatism. Clarifying the ambiguities surrounding his complex notion of the people is essential for understanding, in fuller terms, what he means by "living word."

Moreover, without situating Maragall's conception of innocence in relation to Torras i Bages's theological influence, one risks overlooking the foundation of his poetic anthropology. For Maragall, only the innocent can utter the "living words"—those that emanate from the rhythm of divine creation itself:

> Words that carry a song to the innermost being, because they are born in the rhythmic pulsation of the Universe. Only the innocent people can say them, and poets can say them again with an innocence more intense and with greater song, with more revealing light, because the poet is the most innocent and the wisest man on earth. (Pr 3 76)

Who, then, are not innocent? Who are outside of the poetics and politics of revelation? Those who speak with dead (noble) words—those who do not speak (stutter) as children do. Maragall reads Torras i Bages's interpretation of Matthew 11:25, and in 1902, in an article on humility, he explicitly identifies the people and its poet with the figure of the innocent child. The men of the best spirit, Maragall writes there, are those who preserve a childlike disposition; those of the worst spirit, by contrast, are those who despise simplicity under the pretense of a false wisdom.

The political theology of innocence in Maragall thus goes back not only to the reception of biblical tropes through Torras i Bages, but also to the early reception of Wagner's Parsifal, whose politico-theological resonance profoundly shaped the Catalan poet's understanding of revelation and purity. In Parsifal, as in the Gospel, redemption is inseparable from the logic of unknowing: knowledge must be renounced so that grace may appear. This Wagnerian Christology—already central to Maragall's reflections on the people and on poetic revelation—reconfigures innocence as a form of action within the world, not as moral passivity or ignorance. It is, rather, the modality through which revelation enters history.

Before Parsifal falls into a deep trance and proclaims that his vision has been clarified by the Grail, Kundry seduces him with the hedonistic promise of nature, knowledge, and eternal life. Yet Parsifal remains innocent even after the sinful kiss and declares: “may the Spear crush your lying splendor into mourning and ruin!” (Wagner, *Parsifal*, Act II, Scene 1). Similarly, the innocents of Torras i Bages, in “De la humilitat,” are not naïve or passive innocents but active participants in the revelation of simplicity itself. They resist the intellectual arrogance that despises what is given, and they embody the paradoxical knowledge of those who know through unknowing:

> Thus, the current world must disdain the sublime simplicity of the Gospel, and the false wise men must abhor the Catechism of Christian Doctrine, which, in a small volume, contains a higher and more luminous science than the countless books of philosophers. (Pr 2 41)

For both Torras i Bages and Maragall, then, innocence is not ignorance but a luminous form of understanding—one that reintroduces revelation into the world by returning knowledge to its poetic and incarnate rhythm.

“The seduction of Kundry” by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. (Wagner: *Parsifal*)

VI. “Because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Matthew 11:25)

What, then, is the revelatory event for humankind? It is to become children once again—innocent, free from the mental refinements of the age. After this moment of revelation, they will babble like children, yet within this babbling there will be meaning: “Their features seem enchanted, and they speak rarely;

but when they do speak, their words are full of meaning" (Pr 3, 75). "Rarely," not only in the sense of "seldom," but rather in the sense of a speech that emerges otherwise—outside the worldly conventions of discourse and animality, in a rare, possessed state of illumination:

> Returning to innocence is a great delight," continues the Pastor of Vich, "it is the greatest of delights, and all talented men have experienced it as an ecstasy and as an intimate revelation. To free oneself from worldly conventions, to rise above the coarse tastes of animality, to be stripped of all vanity, to despise the relativity of the temporal, to attain the freedom of the spirit, and to gaze directly at the Absolute Truth—which is God—even under the veil of mystery—is the sum of happiness and glory. (Pr 3, 42)

"Your slavery lies in your collectivity" (Pr 3, 463), wrote Maragall in a manuscript, a fragmentary work that was only published in the 1953 edition of l'edició dels Fills. Here the implications of the spiritual senses become explicit, articulated through their contrast with the positive senses and tied to a clear rejection of collectivism. Acting collectively, the senses are oriented toward the physical world; acting individually, they open toward the spiritual. Collectivism remains bound to the forces of fatality, which are in no way divine:

> Whenever you act through the collective spirit, you are more subject to the laws of physics, closer to lower nature, more within the realm of fatality: you become more like cloud, plant, stone, chaos. But as you free yourselves from the multitude—as you act more by yourselves, by your personal impulse, by your small light, by your soul—you emancipate yourselves from those laws, becoming more human, more divinely human, more humanly divine. (Pr 3, 463)

To paraphrase this state of attending to social roles without sacrificing individuality—without conserving merely for the sake of conservation—we can once again turn to Maragall's own words. To be social, and to attend to the moment of revelation, is to appear within contingent activity with blurred eyes. The precedent for the constitution of a society, and for the word of that society (the living word), is ecstasy. The constitution of society does not precede the moment of ecstasy, nor do knowledge, the world, or nature. Ecstasy is the guarantee of God's gift through the *spiritual senses* and thus anticipates the emergence of a society in which individuality responds to the spiritual height it deserves. There is no society—only tumult—where there has not first been a moment of gift that purifies the senses from their vulgar, positivistic attachments. Society exists only insofar as it has first closed its eyes to the world.

In his "Gremios agrícolas" (1893), Maragall envisions this dynamic within the history of the agricultural guilds, which he regards as a material embodiment of the spiritual vitality of Christian communal life. He describes the medieval guilds as a model worth both preserving and emulating:

> In those past times of the Middle Ages, guilds were truly something alive, something integral to that social organism, something that spontaneously arose from the soul of that society: they did not emerge from any prior assumptions, and for this reason, they were viable and meaningful within the reality of that life. After centuries

> of struggle and work, Christianity had achieved its supreme aspiration: to create the Christian State. Christianity was the blood of that living body, flowing through all its veins, filling even the most remote and subtle capillaries; nothing was foreign to it in that world, which was Christian in the living and real sense of the word. The guilds were among the many manifestations of that general spirit: they were Christian institutions. (Pr 1, 81–82)

In this effort to materialize innocence and to make it a political reality, revelation is granted to childlike spirits—those far from cerebral refinements, invested, like Nietzschean souls, in their faithfulness to the "meaning of the earth": "I conjure you, my brethren, remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak unto you of super earthly hopes" (Nietzsche 7). To conclude by uniting these two dimensions—Maragall's subversive political theology regarding the apophatic, and his socially progressive thought—it becomes necessary to arrive at a notion that integrates both in the most concrete way possible.

One of our aims has been to demonstrate how Maragall's theology of revelation informs his politics, particularly through his social and political writings. We began by tracing the boundaries of the intersection between revelation and politics, and for Maragall, this intersection—constituted by the people—is called progress. In his conception, politics and spirituality converge in their shared progressive dimension, despite the appearance of conservatism that old institutions may bear. For Maragall, the true measure of progress lies in what he defines in 1895 as *"*the indefinite spiritualization of matter*"*. (Pr 1, 341)

On this threshold between spirit (revelation) and matter (society), material progress is not rejected but embraced: man becomes more deeply united with Nature—not in a positivistic or utilitarian sense, but in a ritual, almost chthonic, nonontic (Marion) divine naturalism. In this sense, man remains true to the "meaning of the earth".

VI. Conclusion

This paper has examined Joan Maragall's radical theology of divine immanence, which challenges traditional conceptions of transcendence by affirming that God's presence is not only in the natural world but also within human consciousness and sensory experience. Maragall's redefinition of the senses as conduits of divine revelation parallels contemporary phenomenological approaches, particularly those of Jean-Luc Marion. Marion's reflections on the "phenomenality of divine self-revelation" resonate deeply with Maragall's emphasis on the accessibility of God to the "ignorant" or innocent, thereby intensifying the link between the spiritual and the sensory.

By shifting the epistemology of divine knowledge from an exclusively transcendent model to one grounded in immanent revelation, Maragall articulates a new progressive framework for understanding both theology and politics. In his Elogis and political-social writings, he develops a political theology that this essay has only begun to systematize—a project that necessarily depends on a deeper comparative analysis of his extensive corpus.

For Maragall, authority emerges not from institutional dogma but from the people's receptivity to divine revelation. This theological reconfiguration transforms the concept of community, defining it by its openness to God's immanent presence in the world. Maragall's thought thus advances a transformative vision of social and theological engagement, in which the divine becomes incarnate through the "saturated senses", reshaping both political and religious structures—as seen in his apparently paradoxical writings on the preservation of medieval Christian corporations and the promise of electrified modern cities.

It remains the task of future scholarship to account fully for the *sui generis* character of this political theology—a theology in which revelation is not merely received but lived, as the pulse of a people who see, hear, and speak (stutter) the divine within the earth itself.

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