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John Macmurray's influence on Thomas F. Torrance

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Abstract

The study of Thomas Torrance is undergoing a revival, but has neglected to highlight one significant influence: the insights of the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray. This article focuses on three respects in which Torrance affirmed Macmurray's work: in overcoming dualism, in creating an integrated realist philosophy and in expounding the form of the personal. This study will bring to light Macmurray's contributions to Torrance's thought, surveying the works of Torrance to reveal where Macmurray contributed key epistemic and systemic points to Torrance's developing scientific theology. This brief summary intends to reveal both Torrance's overt acknowledgement of Macmurray and the need for more exploration of their connections in order to enrich the study of both scholars.

Keywords: John Macmurray, scientific theology, T. F. Torrance, theological science

Thomas F. Torrance is widely regarded as one of the most significant English-speaking theologians of the twentieth century. The range of the resources in his writings span from the ancient church fathers, through the Reformers, and include the best contemporary scientists, philosophers and theologians, all of whom contribute to his own constructive theological explorations of the revealed life of the triune God. But although David Fergusson has asserted that John Macmurray made a significant contribution to Torrance's work that needs to be brought to light,[1] Macmurray's role has otherwise barely been noticed. In this article, we will demonstrate that this largely neglected Scottish philosopher made an overt contribution to Torrance's thought.

While Macmurray may not be as dominant in Torrance's work as Maxwell, Polanyi or Einstein, he is significant in framing and informing Torrance's thought. To uncover Macmurray's influence, we will discuss Torrance's published references to Macmurray as a mentor and thinker in general. We will also note Torrance's use of Macmurray's methodology in engaging the science of the personal, and explore initial connections to the work of Karl Barth.

[1] David Fergusson, 'The Influence of Macmurray on Scottish Theology', *Journal of Scottish Thought* 1 (2007), pp. 145–7.

Comparative biography

John Macmurray (1891–1976) preceded Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007) by a few decades, but their lives intersected at the University of Edinburgh, where their teaching careers overlapped from 1950 to 1958. Macmurray was Professor of Moral Philosophy from 1944 to 1958. Torrance started in 1950 as Professor of Church History and served as the Professor of Christian Theology from 1952 until his retirement in 1979.

Macmurray's writing career began in 1919 with an article; his first book was published in 1932 and his last in 1965.[2] Torrance's published work began in 1941 and was completed in 1999. He first mentions Macmurray in 1938 with some concern, but later offered more positive references.[3] There is little record of their meetings, but it is clear that Macmurray's writings significantly influenced Torrance.

Overall, Torrance refers to seven of the fifteen books that Macmurray wrote between 1932 and 1965.[4] Macmurray is first mentioned in Torrance's Auburn lectures from 1938–9 with a concern for his humanistic stance.[5] But in 1965 with *Theology in Reconstruction*, Torrance's books engaged Macmurray favourably. After that, Torrance mentions Macmurray in twelve books that include scientific and theological thinking.[6] Nevertheless, while

[2] See the bibliographies in John Costello, *John Macmurray: A Biography* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2002), pp. 242–5, and Esther MacIntosh, *John Macmurray's Religious Philosophy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 213–53.

[3] See complete bibliography in Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 249–96. Macmurray is first positively mentioned in the article 'Faith and Philosophy', *The Hibbert Journal* 45 (1948–9), pp. 237–46.

[4] *Freedom in the Modern World* (*FMW*, 1932), *Interpreting the Universe* (*IU*, 1933), *Reason and Emotion* (*RE*, 1935), *The Clue to History* (*CH*, 1938), *The Boundaries of Science* (*BS*, 1939), *The Self as Agent* (*SA*, 1957) and *Persons in Relation* (*PR*, 1961).

[5] T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: The Auburn Lectures 1938–39* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). Torrance caricatures those who minimise Jesus by holding a view that 'God chose this man [Jesus] to be the medium to convey certain ideas to mankind, so that when they learned these truths, the truth would set them free. Such, for example, seemed at one time at any rate, the basic principle behind the teaching of a man like John MacMurray [*sic*]', p. 66.

[6] *Theology in Reconstruction* (*TRst*, 1965), *Theological Science* (*TS*, 1969), *God and Rationality* (*GR*, 1971), *Theology in Reconciliation* (*TRn*, 1975), *Space, Time and Resurrection* (*STR*, 1976), *Belief in Science and in Christian Life* (*BSCL*, 1980), *Divine and Contingent Order* (*DCO*, 1981), *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (*RET*, 1982), *Transformation & Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge* (*TCFK*, 1984), *Reality and Scientific Theology* (*RST*, 1985), *The Christian Frame of Mind* (*CFM*, 1985/1989), *Preaching Christ Today* (*PCT*, 1994), *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: The Auburn Lectures 1938–39* (*DJC*, 2002).

acknowledging his long-standing relation with Macmurray as a colleague, Torrance was emphatic that he was never a pupil.[7]

Macmurray is sometimes portrayed as having nearly left Christianity, as the culmination of rejecting the strict Christianity of his early life. It is better to say he rejected the dogmatism, the idealism and the organisation of the church that was not following the Jesus he saw in the Bible. In 1969 he wrote to his mother: 'I am sure that my first loyalty is and always has been to the Lord Jesus. What I mean by a Christian has changed as I have studied Him, and now I mean simply that I am one of his disciples'.[8] Thus, Macmurray is best seen as a Christian philosopher who read the Bible and understood Jesus as the clue to history and the hope of humanity. While Torrance initially resisted Macmurray's humanism, he came to recognise that his philosophical thinking was facilitated by a Christian vision, pursuing a holistic engagement in knowing the world and persons, even while critiquing errors.

It must be noted that there are significant differences between Macmurray and Torrance. While both were Christians, Macmurray was a philosopher whose study engaged the history and methods of philosophical thinking. Torrance was deeply engaged in theological traditions as they developed in the Christian church. Thus, Torrance focused on exploring the nature and life of the triune God, while Macmurray attended to the human field of the personal, including God, but not in trinitarian terms. Consequently, for Macmurray, Jesus was the clue to history and the meaning of human personhood in friendship, where Torrance's exploration of Jesus was a scientific investigation into the being and acts of the revealed triune God. For Torrance, this produced a detailed examination of doctrinal thinking and specific implications for the worshipping and witnessing life of the church. Additionally, he pursued a scientific theology that could also involve the natural sciences as a study of the contingent world given and sustained by God's divine ordering. Macmurray, contrariwise, resisted doctrine, and rather turned his attention to the political and social outworking of his proposals in a personalist realism that sought to answer the persistent issues of human arrangements, ranging from interpersonal development to the structures of whole cultures.

Both Macmurray and Torrance were deeply concerned that the nature of the study of persons be explored with rigour that included the personal

[7] In a personal letter from Torrance, 'With warm regards to Tom Noble. Tell him I enjoyed his article on me in the Dictionary of Church History Theology, but also say I was NOT a pupil of John Macmurray! John and I were colleages [*sic*] in Edinburgh from 1950'. Quoted with permission.

[8] Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 363.

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dimension of life beyond the material and biological in the process of discovery. Each allowed the nature of personal reality to shape their thinking, and finally to elaborate the consequences for how humans are to live in realistic, active terms. For Torrance, this meant to shape the life of the church participating in Christ's life. For Macmurray, this led to promoting the growth of persons in relations toward fulfilling friendships.

Mention of Macmurray as a person

Torrance developed a great respect for Macmurray as a philosopher of the personal. At one point, he refers to Macmurray and Polanyi as his two 'senior friends and mentors', preceding him and serving as guides; both are referenced as friends 'whose books continue to provide fresh thinking'.[9] Elsewhere, recounting the list of persons 'I have learned much from', including early church fathers as well as modern theologians and scientists, Torrance concludes the list with one philosopher: John Macmurray.[10] We cannot deduce too much, yet the next few pages of the text are laced with gleanings from Macmurray's ideas.

In 1975 Torrance wrote a letter to support Macmurray's inclusion in an Honours List.[11] Torrance states that Macmurray was 'the quiet giant of modern philosophy, the most original and creative of savants and social thinkers in the English speaking world'.[12] While Polanyi usually gets more of Torrance's attention, in this letter he says with reference to Macmurray: 'One other great thinker in our time can be compared to him in this respect [the integration of the natural and social sciences], Michael Polanyi'.[13] Torrance obviously held Macmurray near the top of his list of those whom he respected for their significant contributions.[14]

In light of Torrance's commendation, we can now begin to reflect on Fergusson's assessment that Macmurray is neglected in Torrance studies. Alister McGrath's otherwise thorough account of Torrance, which he specifically calls an intellectual biography, contains no mention of Macmurray. Elmer Colyer focuses on guiding readers in understanding Torrance, but has only one reference to Macmurray.[15] Paul Molnar is most

[9] *CFM*, p. 43; cf. the preface, where he describes Macmurray as an 'eminent thinker' (p. viii).
[10] *PCT*, p. 45.
[11] Cf. Costello, *John Macmurray*, pp. 422–3. The letter was addressed to Kenneth Barnes, who was seeking the honour for Macmurray.
[12] Ibid., p. 422.
[13] Ibid., p. 423.
[14] These include Maxwell, Einstein, Polanyi and Buber.
[15] Elmer Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), p. 20.

to be excused, in that, although his book specifically focuses on Torrance's trinitarian thinking, he still manages to get in one footnote: 'Torrance here is following the thought of Professor John Macmurray'.[16] Myk Habets's book is also missing any reference to Macmurray, even with a promising section title, 'The Architectonic Nature of Torrance's Scientific Christian Dogmatics: Essays in Method'.[17] Macmurray's influence is thus largely unacknowledged by Torrance scholars.

Three areas of Macmurray's contribution

In his Honours List letter, Torrance outlines three of Macmurray's significant contributions to modern thought: a philosophy that overcomes dualism and unifies human thought (i.e. a unified personal epistemology), the integration of human reflective activities grounded in experience (i.e. a unified architectonic philosophy) and an overturning of individualism through a well-articulated form of the personal that positively shapes human social existence (i.e. an ontology of the personal). I will note the value of each of these points in turn and utilise references in Torrance's writing to illustrate them in Torrance's scientific theology.

Overcoming dualism

Macmurray was persistently anti-dualist. Thus, Torrance begins his affirmation of Macmurray by saying:

> First, he has destroyed the old dichotomy between reason and experience, theory and practice, throwing greater light than anyone else on what we mean by reason and rationality, and the search of the truth for truth's sake. In all this it is the practical relation between reason and empirical reality that has been predominant, which Macmurray has explored and developed in such a way so as so [sic] reveal the deep intrinsic coherences which hold together science and religion within the structure of human thought and society in man's continuing exploration of the universe.[18]

Since 1913, Macmurray pursued the unity of knowledge.[19] He began by studying the foundations of Western civilisation in the Greek, Roman and Hebrew-Christian roots of philosophy and society. The ancient world displayed the outworking of dualism: the Greeks emphasised ideas of the

[16] Paul Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 191.
[17] Myk Habets, *Theology in Transposition: A Constructive Appraisal of T. F. Torrance* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), p. vii.
[18] Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 422.
[19] Ibid., p. 129.

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mind, and the Romans focused on control in the material world. By contrast, the Hebrew culture was unitary, having its identity and its knowledge of the world shaped in relation to the personal God who created and sustained a personal universe.

Macmurray also assessed the early modern period, where he found the deepest problem of Western society was its attempts to establish unity of thought through a mechanical conception of reality. This resulting focus on an objective science of inanimate matter, Macmurray argued, neglected the personal. By Macmurray's estimation, this period was followed by the Romantics, who proposed a biological conception of the unity of reality. For them the world was explained through organic processes and functions, but this also ignored the personal.[20] For Macmurray, a more adequate epistemology required attention to the field of the personal, with particular focus on personal engagement in action. All human reflection is developed upon this intentional activity. For Macmurray, this epistemology was exemplified by the Hebrews, who interpreted reality within the concrete story of the Bible as a people in personal engagement with God and consequently called to establish community with one another through meaningful action.

Macmurray's starting point provided coherence for Torrance in exploring the universe with the form of the personal. Torrance argued that the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as the only non-dualist culture in history, provided a unified divine context for human exploration of the world, and of God as a given.[21] Macmurray delivered a deeply biblical undergirding for understanding the negative impact of dualist cultures and the benefit of the Christian frame of mind. As Torrance states: 'Israel has come down to us from history as (what John Macmurray has called) the only developed civilization that is religious and the only great culture that is basically non-dualist, whereas the culture and thought of the great Hellenistic as well as the Oriental traditions are radically dualist'.[22] This distinction positioned the Christian God as the providentially active agent in whom coheres the personal, contingent universe. In this unitary view there is no need to disregard material and organic elements. They are included in the personal. This view establishes the epistemological unity of the divine and contingent orders, insofar as God, as the ultimate personal Other, is central in the human interpretation of the world. In this context, persons act in and reflect on their

[20] Ibid., pp. 129–30.
[21] *TRn*, p. 28.
[22] *STR*, pp. 41–2.

actions, and this creates science; knowledge is shaped by encountering what is other.

Torrance regularly builds on the distinctions between the Roman, Greek and Hebrew categories, echoing Macmurray's insights in order to disclose errors in the history of thought and to affirm the value of Hebrew-Christian thought in all scientific endeavours.[23] Beyond abstractions, including those of idealism or materialism that fracture the world, he insists that we must interpret the universe in immediate experience, pursuing an intentional, reflective knowing from which extends the logic of life.

This deep coherence of knowledge from immediate experience, grounded in a Christian perception of the world as the act of God, ultimately makes accessible God's intention in a determined, patterned world. Human interpretation becomes a discovery, an interaction with reality that leads to reflective experience – especially formulated in religion, art and science. Thus, through active engagement with the world we create our modes of knowledge as a secondary act. But knowledge must be gained in a manner appropriate to the thing known, whether material, biological or personal. Fergusson sees this method of thinking as foundational for Torrance: 'The claim, presented tirelessly, that the mode of knowledge must be appropriate to the nature of the object as it discloses itself to us, is again drawn largely from Macmurray'.[24]

Macmurray's explanatory methods are explicitly featured in Torrance's book *Theological Science*, where he argues for the integration of science and theology.[25] In the preface, Torrance lays down a bold directive that reveals Macmurrian underpinnings: 'It is always the nature of things that must prescribe for us the specific mode of rationality that we must adopt toward them, and therefore it is a major part of all scientific activity to reach clear convictions as to the distinctive nature of what we are seeking to know in order that we may develop and operate with the distinctive categories demanded of us'.[26] This approach requires the abandoning of dualistic forms of thinking dominated by a concern for either material existence or theoretical thinking, and acknowledgement of the unique nature of personal knowing and the knowing of persons. Early in *Theological Science*, Torrance turns to Macmurray as a philosopher who guides us to an active knowing of the world over against abstract critical thought. Following Macmurray, he warns that to divide the knowing process with a priority given to

[23] For extended example, cf. *TRn*, pp. 26–30.
[24] Fergusson, The Influence of Macmurray, p. 146, referring to *TS*, pp. 3–4.
[25] Fergusson, 'Torrance as a Scottish Theologian', *Participatio* 2 (2010), p. 85.
[26] *TS*, p. xii.

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thinking, which is only subsequently followed by action, is to sabotage the theory of knowledge.[27] That division creates a disconnection from the reality of the world. When separated from action, thinking becomes an abstract, egocentric idealism. Instead, contact with reality must precede reflection in order to establish legitimate knowledge. Thus, Torrance affirms 'a new logical form of personal activity', here referring to Macmurray's focus on active practical knowledge, followed by the subordinate place of our reflective theoretical knowledge. Knowledge is then open to the possibility of verification in action as our knowledge adjusts in discovery.[28] Torrance's warning reflects the first point in the Honours letter: we act to know the unity of world and persons in the forms of science and religion. Both allow for the exploration of personal existence in a cohesive context. Through active involvement in the world, both science and religion are rational reflections on reality appropriately engaged with the nature of what is encountered.

Torrance builds on this vantage point. In scientific theology, he avers, we must come to the actuality of God as scientists approach their objects of study. God's acting, in disclosure and declaration, disciplines our minds to be shaped by God's self-giving. A theological rationality, based on the acts of the personal, revealing God, forms in us as a responsive reflection. Once again, Torrance turns to Macmurray to clarify what happens in shaping a rational theology – integrating the communication of God and the response of humans.[29] Torrance quotes from *Interpreting the Universe*: 'The rationality of thought does not lie in the thought itself, as a quality of it, but upon its reference to the external world as known in immediate experience'.[30] Herein lies Torrance's understanding that all rationality is shaped by actual engagement with the reality of the world. Further, Torrance quotes *Reason and Emotion*: 'Reason is the capacity to behave consciously in terms of what is not ourselves. We can express this briefly by saying that reason is the capacity to behave in terms of the nature of the object, that is to say, to behave objectively. Reason is thus the capacity for objectivity'.[31] This opens the door

[27] *TS*, pp. 3–4.

[28] Ibid., cf. *RST*, p. 63, n. 30, where Torrance says, 'The place of action and the model of active agency in science are recurring themes in the philosophy of John Macmurray'. Cf. *RST*, p. 57, for the discussion of how this orientation opens us to, or at least does not exclude, 'a God who interacts with us and our world'.

[29] *TS*, pp. 11–12.

[30] *TS*, p. 11; *IU*, p. 131.

[31] *TS*, pp. 11–12; *RE*, p. 19. This was previously asserted in Torrance, 'Faith and Philosophy', *The Hibbert Journal* 45 (1949), p. 243, the earliest positive utilisation of Macmurray. Having applied this axiomatic principle from Macmurray, Torrance begins

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for theological science expanded beyond the world of objects. To facilitate our fullest rational experience, we must expand to the world of subjects – persons. We are most fully persons when in appropriate correspondence to the personal other. Thus, Torrance cites Macmurray in the footnote, affirming: 'The capacity to love objectively is the capacity which makes us persons. It is the ultimate source of our capacity to behave in terms of the object. It is the core of rationality'.[32] This capacity lays the necessary foundation for objective thinking that includes both science – study of the world of objects – and religion/theology – the world of persons. Others may echo this thought, but Macmurray instilled this methodological process of rational thought that permeated Torrance's theological science.

As Torrance builds his case for what it means to know God, he critiques inadequate means of building a rationality of God. Western philosophical traditions have depended on visual perception rather than the Hebraic auditory experience of hearing God. This approach led to a theoretical framework in which detached human subjects observe a world of objects. Even our interior world is then conceived as an inner vision – the symbolic internalised thought-world of the Greeks. This results in an improper basis for knowing the actual world. Torrance echoes Macmurray's assessment of the scope of Western philosophy's holding the primacy of vision 'not only as the model of all sense-experience, but for all knowledge'.[33] Knowledge thereby became a function separated from the world and our active participation in it. This reference to the Greek and Hebrew traditions hints at Macmurray's broader discussion of cultural apperceptions.[34] Torrance conceptually builds on this distinction between the Greek and Hebrew ways of knowing to distinguish the more adequate, indwelling manner of Hebraic/biblical traditions over against the abstracting/dualistic modes that have dominated the history of philosophy (and theology). Torrance's theological project affirms that the actuality of God, rather than

the next paragraph: 'That is the point at which we can begin to understand Christian Faith'. Todd Speidell recounted to me in personal correspondence, 'J. B. Torrance told me that he shared with T. F. John Macmurray's theme that reason is the capacity to behave in terms of the nature of the object. James said when he shared this insight, Tom's eyes lit up and he then went on to formulate one of his key axioms: The nature of the object determines the mode of rationality'.

[32] *TS*, p. 12, n. 4; *RE*, p. 32. He repeats the footnote on p. 208 in affirming the logic of love. I take repeated footnotes as a sign of permeated thinking.

[33] *TS*, p. 22, He also makes this point in *BSCL*, p. 1, a book about Polanyi! This 'opticizing of thought – thinking with our eyes' is also revisited in *RET*, p. 75; both times Macmurray is named in association with Buber, affirming the Hebrew/Christian tradition over the Greek and Roman models.

[34] *FMW*, pp. 74–5; *CH*, pp. 20–1; *RE*, p. 168.

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human-originated ideas, must shape the patterns of our rational thought: 'to add idea to idea, to organize ideas and systems and to expand these systems without end, brings us no nearer to reality'.[35] We must begin with the actuality of the Word of God. In a manner reminiscent of Barth's rejection of natural theology as a human projection onto the idea of God, Torrance follows Macmurray in demanding that our knowledge maintain fidelity in our encounter with the divine Other with whom we engage.

In hearing the Other – the Word of God – we are opened to genuine knowledge. Faith is not a self-originated desire to conceive or seek this Other, but is the reasonable response created in us. Macmurray calls this 'love' – the relating of reason to its object in a personal mode.[36] For Torrance, God's reality shapes the objectivity of our thinking and loving. All other claims to knowledge of God must be excluded as human projections, inappropriate to knowing this self-giving God. Theological science attends to the personally revealed nature and purposes of God with intent listening.

Torrance holds that any method of investigation that is inappropriate to the nature of the self-communicating God will fail to be scientific or theological. Thus, Torrance again quotes Macmurray: 'If we are to know the world we must see to it that it really is an external world'.[37] This affirms the basic principle of not building knowledge from ideas in the head (as in idealism or rationalism), but humbly submitting to the world in which we are participants. By obediently engaging the focus of our knowledge (i.e. listening), we allow other, lesser voices to diminish. Only then can the clarity of the Word that speaks be heard and encountered for faithful participation as a response to the free, loving grace embodied in a person who reveals the triune God. This is a bridge to Barth. Torrance is well-prepared to adopt Barth's articulation of the actuality of God made available for human knowing in God's revealing and reconciling action. Macmurray's epistemology points the way for humans to be transformed as they engage this Other, who for Torrance is known in the actuality of Jesus the Word, who is very God and very man.[38]

Proper study of God also leads to appropriate knowing of the world and our place within it. Echoing Macmurray, Torrance believed that the love of

[35] *TS*, p. 31.

[36] *TS*, p. 33, n. 2. Torrance thinks this is faith and notes that St Paul said that faith works through love. One might say that loving God is the reasonable response of faith to the gracious revelation of God in Christ.

[37] *TS*, p. 35; *BS*, p. 85.

[38] Macmurray missed this in Barth, thinking that crisis theology was an abstraction, speaking of a Wholly Other God who was not in this world, *SA*, p. 18; but Torrance made the connection.

the truth in the heart of Christianity gave rise to science. Torrance cites Macmurray:

> It was Christianity that gave us science by its insistence on the spirit of truth. . . . Science is sustained by the love of the truth. Apart from a passionate belief in the supreme value of truth, and the willingness to sacrifice the pleasant illusions to that faith in truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, science could neither begin nor continue.[39]

For Torrance, this not only allows for collaboration between science and faith, but also calls for theological thinking to develop with attentiveness as to the nature of the material world within the context of the One who made it and moves it toward its fulfilment.

When used as an instrument void of theological insight, Torrance argued, modern science becomes corruptible, abstracting into unreasonable fields of thought, a myopic knowing process that misses the whole. When conceiving the world defined in many parts, it fractures reality in our mind. This method of study will especially miss the nature of the human in relation to the complexity of fields in which we are embedded. We operate with illusions of comprehension while missing the big picture. Therefore, good scientists must be willing to 'uncover all deception or unreality in ourselves to open up to learn what is new, and to make our thinking as real as possible, that is, in accordance with the reality of the object'.[40]

Torrance found in Macmurray a strategy to explore the unity of the world and discover the place of persons within the whole. Using Macmurray's spirit of open investigation as acting persons, he proposed appropriate, constant questioning of both physical science and religion, and willingness to be taught by the reality of all we encounter in service of a reintegration of the material, organic and personal worlds. We must commit to be honest questioners, not sceptical doubters.[41] For scientific study to neglect the unique nature of persons is to leave a void. Further, when we desire to study God but allow only anthropological answers, we merely echo our own ideas and miss authentic knowledge of God.[42] Thus, by its own self-limitation, the traditional science of objects misses the scope of possible knowledge.

[39] *TS*, p. 76; *FMW*, pp. 33–4.

[40] *TS*, p. 121. Here Torrance references Macmurray's *FMW*, pp. 120ff. and 130ff. with a discussion on 'the sources of unreality' and 'on being real in our thinking'. This was a constant quest to restore Christianity and science to their proper tasks.

[41] *TS*, p. 123. In making this critique of Cartesian quests for certainty, Torrance refers the reader to *SA*, p. 76.

[42] *TS*, p. 124; *SA*, p. 21.

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Both Macmurray and Torrance were scientific and personalist pioneers, arguing that scientists must be taught by the object of study, whether in the natural world or with persons. One ought not to configure knowledge to fit within already generalised knowledge that neglects the particular. Both vigorously committed to the view that persons could only be adequately known when encountered and considered as particular beings with a relational constitution. Persons, human or divine, cannot be understood merely as objects, organisms or ideas. Torrance found in Macmurray's epistemology an intrinsic coherence of human knowing, a basis for the form of the personal that expanded into his scientific theology for knowing God.

Integration of science, art and religion

Torrance continued his affirmation of Macmurray by focusing on his integrative work in the formulations of human knowledge. Having discovered a whole, integrated world, Macmurray could then clarify the intent and scope of the various modes of human rational reflection. Macmurray saw reason and emotion as integrated in human experience and reflection, restoring a possible congruence for spiritual and scientific investigation to collaborate in serving the good of humanity. Thus, Torrance continues his Honours List letter:

> In the second place, Macmurray has opened up for us modes of rational behavior in the unity of the physical and the spiritual in which we transcend the cultural split between the arts and science. He has brought to light the destructive tendencies in European thought at work in its hitherto predominantly analytical methods and sought to replace them by essentially integrative methods in which art and emotion and the great virtues of personal and social being are free to develop in such a way that far from being reactionary, so far as science is concerned, they contribute essentially to the scientific spirit of western civilisation. He has shown that science is possible only within a larger framework of non-scientific issues and concerns, for the activity of science is necessarily embedded in a much deeper realm of human experience. Science itself must have a non-scientific basis in a fullness of human and social experience; but this also means that the non-scientific modes of thinking have a validity greater than we have been able to accord them in the eras of positivism and reductionist analytical thought. In other words, Macmurray has made, in my view, one of the greatest possible contributions to the development of human culture and civilizations.[43]

[43] Costello, *John Macmurray*, pp. 422–3.

Macmurray and Torrance reorient the world of thinking. Macmurray moves philosophy from the egocentric, theoretical thinking subject to an activity of the relational agent.[44] Torrance expanded this development, acknowledging God as the relational, acting agent whose creation we indwell and interpret. The actual, revealing God has given a context for a knowing human response, whether in science or theology. Both disciplines interpret God's ongoing work, whether in the physical or personal aspects.

When Torrance delves into the truthfulness of theological thinking in *Theological Science*, he gives the reader Macmurrian ways of speaking of God. He argues that a statement's truth is grounded in its reality, referring to the objective world beyond the statement. Thus, to be true, statements must have a reality to which they point. 'If God is really God, He comes first, and is the ground of their truth, the determinant of our knowledge of Him as well as its referent'.[45] For Torrance, this truth is the truth of God in the personal being of Jesus Christ, the personalising person who brings God and humanity together for actual knowledge.

In Jesus we engage one who actualises our knowing of God, the world, and ourselves as persons addressed by him. But we do not learn a set of facts; instead, we come to immediate experience with the embodied logic of love in person. A personal logic develops from this experience. It 'comes to view in our theological knowledge as we learn to behave according to the nature of the Object, Jesus Christ, that is, as we learn to love Him objectively'.[46] Here Torrance brings forth the theological implications of Macmurray's epistemology. Our unitary knowing of the world is seen to be grounded in a person, through whom we also access our knowledge of God. Our fullest knowledge as humans is as active participants in the life of God and the physical world, and we must learn to interact with both. No longer can we submit to a form of philosophical thinking that is lost in the world of abstract thought. We cannot be sustained through detached lives that orbit anthropocentric concerns in an inadequate science; instead, we must think through our personal relation to the world and its maker.[47] Thus, the reality of the universe is personal, with God as the ultimate reality; the universe is not an impersonal event. We can therefore understand the unity of human investigation within God's world in the activities of science, art and religion, that is, as grounded in the personal universe under God's providential care.

[44] This is the argument of *SA* and *PR*.
[45] *TS*, p. 174, echoing *FMW*, pp. 130ff.
[46] *TS*, p. 208.
[47] *PR*, pp. 216–24.

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Macmurray believed Christianity fulfilled the possibility of reintegrating science, art and religion. With a philosophy of love-motivated action, humanity could be restored to the place that God intends for humans – to be embodied beings who exist in personal relation. In this unified vision, science could pay attention to and care for the physical. The arts could symbolically reflect on the world to better engage personally within it. Religion could fulfil the goal of facilitating freedom, saved from forming societies of fear, and thus create communities based in love. Therefore, for Torrance, Macmurray provided a way of understanding a proper basis for a reconstructed theology to finally reconcile the world. But Torrance improved this transformation of knowledge by converging on the incarnation of Jesus: he grounds our grammar and thinking in the life of the God who creates and cares for the physical world, renews our thinking and facilitates the divine–human relation in restored friendship – participation in personal communion.

In the modern world, science and religion had parted ways, leaving humans in a power struggle, alienated from God and each other. Macmurray attributed the detachment to the Romantics, who had divided emotion and reason, opposing faith and feeling against scientific reasoning.[48] But Macmurray insightfully discerned that reason must include feeling; reason is highly developed feeling becoming habituated, based on immediate experience of the world. The active feeling-self utilises a form of 'faith seeking understanding' to equip the reflective reasoning-self for further appropriate action. Thus, on a grander scale, artistic and scientific activities must be understood as investigative undertakings. They prepare for and sustain personal communion within an integrated life in the real world. But religion is even prior to these other activities. In its core intent, not its institutions, religion engages the essential form of our relational nature, enabling us to live together as intentional persons.

Torrance seeks to build an inclusive, relational science that engages all of reality. In expanding beyond the merely physical, he appeals to Macmurray, asserting the unity of the physical and spiritual in human knowing. This is seen in Torrance's expansive call to engage life with a rational reflection in order to have appropriate relational action in the world:

> in every field of experience, as John Macmurray has shown us so clearly, we behave rationally when we act in accordance with the nature of the object, and allow it to prescribe to us the specific mode of rationality we

[48] Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 135.

have to adopt toward it as well as the kind of demonstration appropriate to it.[49]

As Torrance goes on to clarify in distinguishing between natural sciences and theology, the worlds of objects and persons are not identically known. In the objective world, we 'discover' as we interrogate reality in order to supposedly let it 'reveal itself'. But in actuality, nature cannot hear or speak; we frame our questions to it as well as its answers to us. Not so with theological knowledge or the knowledge of persons. There, the Other 'acts upon us and addresses us in His Word, where the expression "reveal itself" and "declare itself" are really in place'.[50] Building on Macmurray, Torrance positions us to comprehend that the divine revelation is consistent with, but more honest than the natural sciences. Both sciences discover and verify the truth of what is claimed. But the science of the personal, including theology, uses the term 'revelation' because of the nature of persons in relation, who necessarily transcend as agents who engage the Other through language – a being-in-going-out-to-meet-the-other, who also is capable of acting with a similar intentional response. This is how God has acted in order to facilitate human knowing through the act of personally coming to us. God acted and continues to communicate through Jesus, facilitated by the Spirit who enables our relation and makes present the objectivity of our theological knowledge. This paracletic work of the Spirit – coming alongside to help – becomes the context for science and the arts, as these disciplines engage and reflect on the contingent order as servants of God, pursuing human wholeness within God's personalising purposes.

As *Theological Science* draws to a close, Torrance makes a final clarification based on Macmurray's distinction between the physical, biological and personal. While the sciences appropriately distinguish both material and organic features of nature, he argues, they have failed to acknowledge the personal dimension beyond the organic. Thus, the sciences have been unable to deal with the unique wholeness of personal beings. By not understanding personal nature, humans are reduced to something that can be seen only as an object, void of personhood. The Creator God is entirely dismissed for lack of a physical and biological objectivity. Tragically, an integrated understanding of persons is lost through forms of science that fragment persons into categories and use methods that cannot capture their wholeness.[51] Torrance's theological science adds a final step to Macmurray's

[49] *GR*, pp. 199–200. Colyer calls this the fundamental axiom of Torrance's theology (*How to Read T. F. Torrance*, p. 232).

[50] *GR*, p. 200.

[51] *TS*, pp. 300–1, and *RE*, pp. 185ff.

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foundational critique of dualism and integrates the scope of human knowing within God's order and for knowing God.

Overturning individualism and integrating science and social existence

Macmurray's corrective to dominant philosophies provided direction for the integration of the sciences and humanities that could transform social existence. In a final pronouncement, Torrance celebrates Macmurray's unique contribution to the form of the personal, testifying:

> In the third place, Macmurray has not only exposed the damaging dualisms that have fragmented our western ways of life and thought, but has thrown all his weight into getting behind and overturning the essentially individualistic and atomistic ways of regarding the human person which stem from Descartes and Locke and which have been built into the foundations of modern psychology and social science. While therefore he has appreciated to the fullest the whole development of socialist thought, he has shown that genuinely social ends cannot reach fulfilment without a restructuring in our basic notion of personal existence. This means a renouncing of the Lockean notion of society in which persons are organized through their external relations (ideas that are as deeply embedded in American as in Marxist political philosophies), and the finding of a new way of transmuting society into community through an essentially relational rather than an atomistic or particulate notion of the human person. The implications of this were early evident in his attack upon the ruinous individualistic notions embedded in Freudian psychology and his attempts to restructure psychology in terms of mother love; but he has developed this way of thinking, above all in his great Gifford Lectures, in such a way that, in my view, it makes the most distinguished contribution yet given in our times to the philosophy of society. The way in which Macmurray has shown the profound integration between science and social existence will prove, I am sure, the most creative ingredient in future change in our social existence.[52]

Torrance clearly states that serious problems face modern society. His commendation of Macmurray acknowledges that this insightful mentor had engaged these issues and provided answers in the 'restructuring of our thought and life'.[53] In a nutshell: our minds are still dualist, our understanding of society is individualist and our relations are mechanical and exploit nature. Hope is found in understanding personal relations: for

[52] Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 423.
[53] *TRn*, pp. 270–1.

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Macmurray, this comes in regarding humans, and for Torrance, in investing in personally knowing the triune God.[54]

Macmurray's approach was important for Torrance in that he never departed from his Christian convictions while pursuing philosophy for the good of humanity. Macmurray's objective rationality offered Torrance tools to discover God's divine and contingent order within a field of great thinkers. Maxwell contributed field-thinking, but Macmurray specifically expounded the field of the personal.[55] Polanyi provided language and tools for indwelling the world with personal knowledge focused within our subsidiary awareness, but Macmurray unravelled the whole intentional development of persons in relation.[56] Einstein discovered relativity in the physical world, but Macmurray gave deep insight into relationality in the personal world. Buber opened awareness into the dynamic of 'I and Thou' with poetic language, but Macmurray flipped the formula and gave us 'You and I', affirming the priority of the other in philosophical language that echoes Christian thought. Barth was the genius in the science of the acting, self-revealing God, but Macmurray explored the acting of humanity in fulfilling God's intention to humanly love within a Christian orientation. All of these comparisons need clarifying distinctions with additional sustained arguments, but for now we can only assert the valuable contribution of all, noting they are not duplicates of Macmurray, who contributes at every point.

Macmurray's development of the form of the personal helped Torrance build his magisterial work regarding the trinitarian God. This was true even as early as 1949, when Torrance, combining the thinking of Macmurray and Barth, stated:

> Faith is the capacity of reason to behave in terms of a unique object that is also subject. It is the nature of God always to be Subject. When, therefore, reason thus understood behaves in terms of the nature of this Object, reason takes on itself the nature of subjectivity (or personality) in relation to the Divine Subject or Person.[57]

Stated concisely, personal knowing encounters the personal Other to form our scientific theology. This science is not merely study of an object, but is

[54] Macmurray saw the proper theological starting point early on. To escape the subjectivism of idealism, Macmurray contended in 1925 that we need 'an objective revelation of God in a human personality' (Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 137). Thus, implicit in Macmurray is a directive towards a Christ-centred objectivity that would characterise the work of Torrance decades later.

[55] PR, ch. 1.

[56] PR, chs. 2–5.

[57] 'Faith and Philosophy', p. 243. Cf. Barth, *CD* II/1, §25.1, *Man before God*.

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a dynamic engagement with persons who shape our thinking and being. The form of the personal stands over against all dualism, rationalism and idealism. We are positioned as people of faith who, in the act of accordance with the Other (faith), receive the capacity to behave in terms of this Object (theological rationality) and are prepared for transformation in obedience to this unique Subject-Object (scientific knowledge of God). Thus, 'Faith is reason acknowledging something transcendent of itself, and behaving in accordance with it'.[58] This is the Christian frame of mind, prepared for theological science within the divine and contingent order of the world, meeting the triune God and transformed through the mediation of Christ.

Theological science was to further inform and transform the life of the church as the body of Christ. Consistently, Torrance affirmed that churches must move beyond the dualism of spiritual and temporal power – a political form of the dualism that fragments everywhere. Temporal use of power leads to suppression of people through external control. Spiritual power controls from within and dampens the evangelical spirit. Torrance utilises Macmurray for clarity, saying: 'as John Macmurray has argued so trenchantly, "The will to power must always destroy itself and accomplish the reverse of its own purpose"'.[59] For Torrance, only the creative power of Christ can transform humanity and realise a community coming to Jesus Christ in the unity of obedience.[60] This is not far removed from Macmurray's vision of a community of free persons.

Conclusion

Macmurray provided a filter, a lens and a prism for Torrance's work that still provides insight for ongoing theological studies. Torrance found in Macmurray a *filter* for modern philosophical agendas, especially dualist and idealist agendas, which brought a fresh critique of ancient problems revealed in their contemporary forms. Macmurray gives a deep assessment that

[58] 'Faith and Philosophy', p. 244, cf. *TRn*, p. 232, 'In the language of Professor John Macmurray, reason is our capacity to behave consciously in terms of the nature of what is not ourselves, that is to say, the capacity to act in accordance with the nature of the object'; then, 'Persons must be treated as persons if our thoughts of them are to be properly objective'. The whole page reflects on Macmurray's implications for appropriate relating to other persons. Finally, 'That is why love occupies such an essential place in these inter-personal relations, for the capacity to love objectively is the capacity for which we live as persons'. Macmurray develops this in the human realm and Torrance takes us to the divine; we need them both.

[59] *TRn*, p. 80.

[60] Ibid., p. 81.

helped Torrance in his rejection of inappropriate philosophical assumptions needed to sharpen the critique for an ongoing critical realism.

While Torrance found in Polanyi the vital epistemological role of personal knowing in the pursuit of scientific investigation, Macmurray gave Torrance a *lens* to understand the ontology of the field of the personal, akin to the field theory of Maxwell and Einstein. Macmurray still has much to contribute to an understanding of Torrance's onto-relations discussion and its implications for human beings as persons in relation. Having started with the richness of Torrance's exploration of the triune God, Macmurray's conceptions expand scientific thinking to focus and clarify the task of theological anthropology in understanding the ontology of human personal interaction in a manner not developed in Torrance.

The *prism* for theological study results from looking once again through Macmurray's corrective and constructive conversation about meaningful knowledge to see what is yet underdeveloped in the working out of personal relations with God, fellow humans and the particularity of our own human being. Torrance himself said that Macmurray's thought 'will prove . . . the most creative ingredient in future change in our social existence'.[61] Torrance felt that Macmurray brought a fresh and practical investigation to personal existence that could provide significant resources for the church and ultimately the world. This has yet to happen, although educational and therapeutic research have looked to Macmurray. Perhaps the greatest contribution will be made to analytic and scientific theology as a quest for application of theological discussion in lived relationships. Macmurray's insistence that meaningful knowledge was for the purpose of action opens an important role in the validation of the investigation, reflection and clarification of theology. Macmurray's methodology might facilitate the exploration of appropriate actions as the proper outcome of Torrance's theological knowledge.

This brief survey has traced the systemic influence of Macmurray on Torrance from direct references. To clarify all the implicit threads of thought will require more investigation. Many sources, both ancient and modern, contributed to Torrance's thinking. These must be distinguished from Macmurray to enrich our understanding of each. This article validates the claim that Macmurray was an important figure by outlining from Torrance's own work Macmurray's profound contribution in method and structure.

On the final page of his introduction to *The Christian Frame of Mind*, W. Jim Neidhardt offers this astonishing culminating statement: 'Torrance's life and thought is a unity grounded in the realization that "all meaningful

[61] Costello, *John Macmurray*, p. 423.

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knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship" (John Macmurray – Scottish theologian-philosopher)'.[62] This statement aptly captures the life and thought of Torrance as someone who rigorously pursued meaningful knowledge. Additionally, it reveals that Macmurray's thought is inherent in the construction of Torrance's overall framework.

Macmurray's formative mentoring launched Torrance as he engaged the triune God. Both thinkers were committed to the life of persons. Each contributed in his own way to a friendship originally established by the incarnate God, who came to restore the intended communion that brings wholeness to persons in relation.

[62] CFM, p. xli.

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