# AQUINAS ON THE PRELIMINARY GRASP OF BEING

## I

IN NUMEROUS PASSAGES, which are to be found scattered throughout his works, Aquinas repeatedly insists that that which is first apprehended or conceived by the intellect is being *(ens)*.[1] But from these statements an initial problem immediately arises. When Aquinas affirms that being is that which is first apprehended or conceived by the intellect is he talking about a priority which concerns the logical order or the psychological order? I shall first of all explain what I mean by these two expressions.

By the "logical order" I intend to refer to the order of priority and posteriority which holds between different concepts on the basis of the relations of necessary inclusion and exclusion that hold between the *contents* of these concepts: between the *rationcs* that these concepts express. Certain concepts contain as a necessary part of their content the contents of other concepts which therefore need to be understood before they themselves can be understood: these other concepts which precede them in this manner are prior to them in the logical order.[2]

1 See *In I Sent.,* d. 8, q. 1, a. 3 c. and ad 3; *In I Sent.,* d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 2 and ad ult.; *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. I; *De Pot.,* q. 9, a. 7, ad 15; *S.T.,* Ia, q. 5, a. 2; *S.T.,* q. 16, a. 4, ad 2; *S.T.,* Ia-Hae, q. 55, a. 4, ad 1; *S.T.,* Ia-Hae, q. 92, a. 2; *In I Met.,* 1. 2, n. 46; *In IV Met.,* 1. 3, n. 566; *In IV Met.,* 1. 6, n. 605; *In X Met.,* 1. 4, n. 1998; *In XI Met.,* I. 5, n. 2211; *Sup. De Causis, Pr. VI,* I. 6, n. 174.

2 "Dupliciter enim dicitur aliquid non possit intelligi sine altero. Aut ita quod non possit intelligi si non ponatur alterum esse . . . Sive ita quod quandocumque intelligitur unum, intelligitur alterum, sicut quicumque intelligit hominem intelligit animal. Et hoc modo "esse" potest intelligi sine vero, sed non e converso: quia verum non est in ratione entis, sed ens in ratione veri - - - sed numquam potest intelligi intelligibile, secundum hanc rationem, nisi intelligatur ens. Unde etiam patet quod ens est prima conceptio intellectus." *In I Sent.,* d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 2.,

By the " psychological order " I do not intend to refer to the order of the temporal genesis within individual consciousnesses of particular concepts-as it might be studied, for example, by the developmental psychologist. This is a purely empirical matter and one which might well vary greatly from individual to individual. As such, I do not consider this perspective, whilst of great interest in itself,[3] to be of direct relevance to the present consideration. Rather, by the "psychological order " I intend to refer to the order of priority and posteriority which necessarily holds between the various intentional conditions of possibility which must be realized if an act of understanding or intellectual cognition, considered in general, is to be carried out at all.

If we now return to the initial problem its import will be immediately evident. After all, Aquinas would hardly identify the logical and the psychological orders, as I have characteried them, and what holds a certain position in one order might well turn out to hold a wholly different position in the other. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the course of this discussion, it seems that for Aquinas being is that which must be attained first in *both* the logical order and the psychological order.

It must be noticed, though, that this primacy or priority which is attributed by Aquinas to our attainment of being in both the logical order and the psychological order only rarely seems to be discussed by him within the one and the same context. Each context where Aquinas affirms that being is that which is first attained by the intellect needs to be considered separately and to be closely scrutinized if one is to arrive at a correct determination of whether the cognitional priority of being which is affirmed in that particular context concerns the logical or the psychological order.

Those passages[4] which affirm that being is that which is

[3] See, for example, J. Farrelly, O.S.B., "Developmental Psychology and Man's Knowledge of Being," *The Thomist,* XXXIX [1975], p. 668-695.

[4] For example, "Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit est ens ... Unde oportet quod

first known or understood by the intellect in the *logical* order *-ens est primum intelligible secundum rationem-present* no great difficulty of interpretation. These contexts simply indicate that being, taken in the sense of the content of the concept of being in general *(ens commune)* which expresses the "nature" of being *(ratio entis)* and which is the direct object or proper subject matter of metaphysic, must be understood before it is at all possible to attain a properly metaphysical understanding of the contents of certain other concepts-for example, the transcendentals, the transcendental perfections, and even the categories-when these are understood metaphysically as opposed to the pre-metaphysical understanding of them which is operative in natural science and in everyday life. That is, these various concepts, if they are to be understood in accordance with their properly metaphysical significations, are all posterior in the logical order to the grasp of the " abstract " concept of being in general; and this, because they can only be so understood insofar as they are " grounded " by the intellect, by means of the operation of *additio,*[5] in the *ratio entis.*[6]

On the other hand, those passages which seem to affirm that being *(ens)* is that which is first grasped or apprehended by the intellect in the *psychological order-ens est primum quod cadit in apprehnsione intellectus-give* rise to a far more complicated problematic. As I have already intimated, it is clear

omnes aliae conceptiones intellectus accipiantur ex additione ad ens." *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 1, "Ens secundum rationem est prius quam bonum. Ratio enim significata per nomen, est id quod concipit intellectus de re, et significat illud per vocem; illud ergo est prius secundum rationem, quod prius cadit in conceptione intellectus. Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens: quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu . . . Unde ens est proprium obiectum intellectus, et sic est primum intelligibile . . ." *S.T.,* Ia, q. 5, a. 2. Notice how in this second text Aquinas moves from the priority of being in the logical order to its priority in the psychological order and grounds the former in the latter.

5 For a discussion of the operation of *additio* see *De Ver.,* q. 21, a. 1.

6 For the *additio* of the transcendentals and the categories see *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 1. For the *additio* of the transcendental perfections [*vivere, intelligere]* see *Sup. De Oausis,* Pr. XII, 1. 12, n. 281.

from many passages,[7] that Aquinas is convinced that we must have a certain preliminary grasp or original apprehension of being if we are to understand or know anything whatsoever. But it is precisely at this point that the difficulties commence. As Cornelio Fabro has remarked in this regard:

A first clarification concerns the origin of the notion of *ens:* ·everyone realizes at once the importance of the problem. But it is just as necessary to recognize that the texts of St. Thomas are quite sparing of indications. If St. Thomas, as we have seen, is from beginning to end firm in the position that *ens* is the *primum* in every intentional sphere, he says on the other hand, almost nothing on *how* the human mind grasps such a notion ... how the *ratio entis* arises in the mind is not mentioned and one does not see how.[8]

Furthermore, one could well argue that it is precisely this situation that has been responsible for the state of affairs of which Joseph Owens has written:

... the current approaches to Aquinas in the knowledge of existence are at radical variance with one another. The divergencies cannot be explained away by patient comparison of the various ways in which each uses the same terms. They lie rather at the roots of the vital metaphysical thinking in each interpreter ...[9]

Just what is the set of problems that emerges from the situation indicated by Fabro? I would suggest that it can be formulated quite succinctly in terms of two questions.

1 For example, "Primo enim quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus, est ens, sine quod nihil potest apprehendi ab intellectu; sicut primo quod cadit in credulitate intellectus, sunt dignitates . . ." *In I Sent.,* d. 8, q. 1, a. 3; "... dicendum quod id quod primo cadit in intellectu, est ens: unde unicuique apprehenso a nobis attribuimus quod sit ens ..." *S.T.,* q. 55, a. 4, ad 1; "In his autem quae in apprehensione omnium cadunt, quidem ordo invenitur. Nam illud quod primo cadit in apprehensione est ens, cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit." *S.T.,* Ia-IIae, q. 94, a. 2.

s C. Fabro, C.S.S., "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics," *Internationai Phiiosophical Quartedy,* VI (1966), pp. 423-424.

9 J. Owens, C.Ss.R., "Aquinas on Knowing Existence," *The Review of Metaphysics,* XXIX (1976), p. 690.

The first question is whether the content of the preliminary grasp or original apprehension of being, which according to Aquinas must be first in the psychological order, is simply to be identified with the content of the concept of being in general *(ens commune; ens inquantum ens)* which is the direct subject matter of metaphysics. [10] But, surely, this could not possibly be the case. According to Aquinas the "abstract" concept of being in general has a content which expresses the *ratio entis:* "*ratio autem entis ab actu essendi sumitur* ";[11] " *ens dicitnr quasi esse habens* "; [12] " *ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse* ".[13] As such, this concept has a content which is not at all either readily orimmediately seized by the intellect.14 Rather, it has a content which, if it is to be seized at all by the mind, requires the performance of a highly sophisticated process of resolutive reasoning [15] a process of reasoning which involves, as its specific and constitutive element, the exercise of that properly metaphysical, third kind, of" abstraction " or *distinctio* which is the negative judgment of separation.16

The reply that I have just given to the first question gives immediate rise to the second question. If the content of this

10 "Unde oportet quod ad eamdem scientiam pertineat considerare substantias separatas, et ens commune, quod est genus, cuius sunt praedicta substantiae communes et universales causas. Ex quo apparet, quod quamvis ista scientia praedicta tria considerat, non tamen considerat quodlibet eorum ut subiectum, sed ipsum solum ens commune." *In Met., Prooemium;* "... est quaedam scientia de ente inquantum est separabile; non enim solum pertinet ad hanc scientiam determinare de ente in communi, quod est determinare de ente inquantum est ens ..." *In XI Met.,* 1. 7, n. 2259.

11 *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 1, ad 3.

12 *In XII Met.,* 1. 1, n. 2419.

13 *Sup. De Oausis,* Pr. VI, 1. 6, n. 175.

14 "Unde scientia, quae de istis rebus considerat, maxime esse videtur intellectualis, et aliarum princeps sive domina." *In Met., Prooemium.*

15 *Metaphysica,* in quantum considerat ens et ea quae consequuntur ipsum. Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis, sicut magis communia post minus communia." *ibid.*

16 "The best discussion of this theme still remains: L.-B. Geiger, 0.P., Abstraction et Separation d'apres S. Thomas," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiq1tes et Theologiques,* XXIII (1947), pp. 3-40.

preliminary grasp or original apprehension 0£ being, which we must have if we are to understand or know anything whatsoever, cannot possibly be identified with the content 0£ the concept 0£ being in general, with the *ens commune* which is the object 0£ metaphysics, just what is it then? Is the content 0£ this preliminary grasp 0£ being at all susceptible to conceptualization? Just what are the details 0£ the process whereby the intellect first grasps or apprehends this content?

We are, in effect, back at the problem as it has been formulated by Fabro, but with the addition 0£ the all-important clarification that the content 0£ the preliminary grasp 0£ being is in no way to be confused, let alone identified, with the content 0£ the concept 0£ being in general which is the subject matter of metaphysics. [17] There is indeed a wide, though by no means discontinuous, chasm between our original apprehensiion 0£ being and the metaphysician's conceptual seizure of being in general a chasm which can only be bridged by the transition from everyday, pre-metaphysical, thinking to explicitly metaphysical thinking through a process 0£ *resolutio secundum rationem* [18] as well as *secundum rem,* which can only be effected by means of the negative judgment 0£ separation.

17 " This first concept of being is not the being of the science of meta· physics, but rather the most imperfect, confused, potential of all concepts." M. A. Glutz, C.P., "The Formal Subject of Metaphysics," *The Thomist,* XIX (1956), pp. 64·65. "That our first knowledge of being is not the being of the metaphysician is surely a point of common agreement. St. Thomas stated this as his position on many occasions. Furthermore, it is agreed that mediation is necessary if we are to arrive at a knowledge of being as being, of that common being which is the subject of metaphysics." *J. Reichmann,* S.J., "Transcendental Method and the Psychogenesis of Being," *The Thomist,* XXXII (1968), p. 456.

18" Ratio enim ... Quandoque vero procedit de uno in aliud secundum rationem ... resolvendo autem quando e converso, eo quod universalius est simplicius. Maxime autem universalia sunt, quae sunt communia omnibus entibus. Et ideo terminus resolutionis in hac via ultimus est consideratio entis et eorum quae sunt entis in quantum huiusmodi." *In Boet. de Trinitate,* q. VI, a. 1.

## II

If one is even to attempt to resolve the issues that arise within the second question, I would suggest that it is imperative to notice that Aquinas, to the very limited extent that he does so, almost always discusses the preliminary grasp of being, which is first in the psychological order, within contexts where he is primarily concerned with another, but intimately connected, matter. This is the problem of the genesis in the mind of the knowledge of the first principles of the understanding. For Aquinas, knowledge of the first principles is itself necessary as a condition of possibility in the psychological order. They also must be known if we are to understand or know anything at a]l. Furthermore, their emergence in the intellect is founded upon, or derived from, the content of the preliminary grasp of being.[19]

In several places Aquinas tells us that our knowledge of the first principles, and, by implication, of the content of the preliminary grasp of being from which they are derived, is attained *naturaliter.*[20] The epistemological status of the propositions which .formulate the first principles is that of being *per se nota,* or self-evident, to the intellect: in the terminology of modern and contemporary philosophy we would say that they are all " analytic " propositions.[21] The truth of the first principles is self-evident to all who comprehend the meanings of the terms which appear in the propositions which formulate

19 "Naturaliter igitur intellectus noster cognoscit ens, et ea quae sunt per se entis inquantum huiusmodi; in qua cognitione fundatur primorum principiorum notitia, ut non esse simul affirmare et negare, et alia huiusmodi. Haec igitur sola principia intellectus noster naturaliter cognoscit . . ." *0.G.,* II, c. 83, n. 1678.

20 For example, ". . . primas affirmationes quae naturaliter intellectus cognoscit, ut sunt dignitates . . ." *In I Sent.,* d. 19, q. V, a. I.

21 " Ex hoc enim aliqua propositio est per se nota, quod praedicatum includitur in ratione subiecti . . . si igitur notum sit omnibus de praedicato et de subiecto quid sit, propositio illa erit omnibus per se nota: sicut patet in primis demonstrationum principiis, quorum termini sunt quaedam communia quae nullus ignorat, ut ens et non ens . . ." *S.T.,* Ia, q. 2, a. 1.

them. First and foremost among these terms is the term "being" *("ens").* Clearly, the meaning of the term" being", which we must know if we are to have any knowledge of the first principles and their truth, corresponds to the content of that preliminary grasp of being with which this discussion is concerned.

When Aquinas characterizes as *naturaliter* our manner of knowing the first principles, and the content of the preliminary grasp of being that they presuppose, does he mean that this knowledge is either innate to the intellect or, in some way or other, *a priori* to the operation of sensibility·--at least in the sense that it is not derived from it? Is it a knowledge that the intellect, on the occasion of the operation of sensibility, derives from itself and imposes upon, or at least actualizes within, the synthetic sensible image, or "phantasm", which is the product of the cooperation between the external and the internal senses? In other words, is, for Aquinas, the content of our preliminary grasp of being and the knowledge of the first principles derived from it, something akin to a Kantian *a priori,* purely formal, category: a necessary, "transcendental", condition of possibility which must be postulated if we are to give any satisfactory account at all of the fact that we can perform acts of understanding and knowing?

As is well known, this question has been much discussed in contemporary Thomistic circles. Yet, in a way, it is somewhat bewildering that this situation ever came about. Certainly there are a few texts, which are to be found exclusively in the earlier works of Aquinas, which, at first reading, might lend themselves to being so construed as to enable one to argue for a "transcendental" interpretation of the thought of Aquinas on the issue of the original apprehension of being. But do they do so at all at a second, and closer, reading? Let us consider some representative texts:

1. ... just as from the truth of the divine intellect flow into the angelic intellect those innate species by which it knows all things; so from the truth of the divine intellect proceeds in an exemplary

way into our intellect the truth of the first principles by which we judge everything ... *(De Veritate,* q.l, a.4, ad 5) [22]

Now, no matter what might appear to be the case at first sight, and no matter what some authors have made of this text, [23] it hardly supports any kind of "transcendental" interpretation. To see this, it suffices to recognize the precise import of the term *e;vernplariter* which is used to describe the manner in which the truth of the first principles proceeds from the divine to the human intellect. The point, of course, is that everything in creation may be said to proceed in an exemplary way from God [24]-and this quite irrespective of the actual manner of generation in the natural order proper to any one thing in particular. If we bear this in mind, then it becomes obvious that in this context Aquinas is not really telling us anything at all about the actual process whereby the first principles, and the preliminary grasp of being from which they are derived, emerge in the intellect. An argument for a "transcendental " interpretation which bases itself on this text simply carries no logical force at all.

Quite possibly all that Aquinas is doing in this text, by the use of exemplarist terminology, is to attempt a degree of reconciliation, on the purely verbal level, with the various illuministic explanations of the first principles which were widely current in his time and were ultimately Augustinian in inspiration. It is interesting to note that this text presents an accommodating exegesis of a text of St. Augustine. [25] It is even more interesting to notice that this seems to be invariably the case with

[22] My translation. For an alternative, freer, translation see, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Truth,* transl. R. W. Mulligan, S.J., Chicago: 1952, p. 19.

[23] See for example, J. Donceel, S.J., "Editor's Preface" to E. Coreth, S.J., *Metaphysics,* New York: 1968, p. 8.

[24] "Deus est prima causa exemplaris omnium rerum ... Manifestum est autem quod ea quae naturaliter fiunt, determinatas formas consequuntur. Haec autem formarum determinatio oportet quod reducatur, sicut in primum principium, in divinam sapientiam, quae ordinem universi excogitavit, qui in rerum distinctione consistit. Et ideo oportet dicere quod in divina sapientia sunt rationes omnium rerum ..." *S.T.,* Ia, q. 44, a. 4.

[25] See *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 4, ob. 5.

similar early texts where exemplarist terminology is applied to our knowledge of the first principles.[26] I would suggest that an analogous situation holds with respect to the frequent use made by Aquinas of innatist terminology in the tenth question of the *Q. D. De Veritate,*[21] a terminology which simply does not appear in Aquinas's later, and less occasional, works.[28]

2. The same is to be said of the acquisition of scientific knowledge; that certain seeds of the sciences pre-exist in us, namely the first conceptions of the intellect which are known immediately by the light of the agent intellect through species abstracted from sensible objects, be they complex, as the axioms, or simple, as the notion of being, of one and the like, which the intellect apprehends immediately *(De Veritate,* q.11, a.I) .[29]

3. Indeed, some men thought that the agent intellect does not differ from our *habitus* of indemonstrable principles. But this cannot be the case, because we certainly know indemonstrable principles by abstracting them from singulars . . . the agent intellect must exist prior to the *habitus* of first indemonstrable principles in order to be the cause of it. Indeed, the principles themselves are related to the agent intellect as certain of its instruments, because the intellect makes things actually intelligible by means of such principles ... *(Q. D. De Anima,* a.5) .[80]

Both of these texts lend themselves even less to a "transcendental" interpretation. Certainly in the first Aquinas affirms that the content of the preliminary grasp of being and the first principles *praexistunt* in the intellect. But this pre-existence is not meant in any absolute sense. Rather, it is a relative pre-existence: they pre-exist in the intellect only with

2a See for example, *Q. Quodlibet.,* q. X, a. 7.

21 See for example, *De Ver.,* q. 10, a. 6, c. and ad 6.

2s I would suggest that it is important to notice that the text of *De Ver.,* q. 10, represents the report of a live disputation held in Paris in 1257-58 (see J. A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas d'Aquino,* New York: 1974, pp. 362-363. To what extent is Aquinas's innatist terminology an expression of not only the Augustinian theme with which this question deals but also a desire to employ a terminology acceptable to his co-disputants?

29 My translation.

ao Cited from St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Soul.,* transl. J. P. Rowan, St. Louis: 1949, p. 62. See also, *Q. D. De Anima,* a. 4, ad 6.

respect to the acquisition of scientific knowledge. In this context Aquinas is simply affirming what we have already recognized: they are prior in the psychological order. Thus, in the second text, we are told that the agent intellect both precedes in existence and is the cause of the knowledge of the first principles and, by implication, of the preliminary grasp of being. Furthermore, in both texts, we are told a little as to the manner whereby we attain the first principles and the content of the preliminary grasp of being: " *cognoscuntur per species a sensibilibns abstractas* "; " *abstrahendo a singularibus*." Once again, though, Aquinas tells us nothing about the details of this process. Just *how* do they come to be abstracted from singulars? But on one point there is no doubt. Whatever might be the manner of their emergence in the intellect they are certainly not furnished by the intellect itself, and from itself, in the manner of an *a priori* formal category. Somehow or other they are derived from, and not just imposed upon, the data furnished by sensibility.

4. . . . all the consideration of the speculative sciences is reduced to certain principles that man does not necessarily have to learn or find out, lest he be thereby bound to an infinite process. But of these principles he has a natural knowledge and of this order are the indemonstrable principles of demonstration . . . also the first concepts of the intellect as those of " being " and of " one " and the like . . . objects of this natural order of cognition are made manifest to man by the light of the active intellect, which is natural to man, by which light things are manifested to us only inasmuch as through phantasms they are made intelligible in act . . . phantasms, moreover, are received from the senses, wherefore the source of our knowledge of the aforesaid first principles is from sense and memory . . . (*In Boet. de Trinitate,* q.VI, a.4) .[31]

*5.* . . . it is not acquired by demonstration or by any similar method, but it comes in a sense by nature to the one having it inasmuch as it is naturally known and not acquired. For first principles become known through the natural light of the agent intel-

31 Cited from, St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Trinity and the Unfoity of the Intellect,* transl. R. E. Brennan, St. Louis: 1946, p. 195.

lect, and they are not acquired by any process of reasoning, but by having their terms become known. This comes about by reason of the fact that memory is derived from sensible things, experience from memory, and knowledge of those terms from experience. And when they are known, common propositions of this kind, which are the principles of the arts and sciences, become known *(In IV Met.,* 1.6, n.599) .[32]

In these last two texts that I shall consider we are told, first of all, precisely what Aquinas means when he characterizes both our original apprehension of being and our knowledge of the first principles as taking place *naturaliter.* By this term he intends to do no more than to insist that they are attained immediately in the sense that their seizure by the mind cannot be the result of a process of demonstrative, or in any way syllogistic-deductive, reasoning. There is no question of either innateness or any other kind of subjective *a priori.* To see this it is important to notice his extremely cautious terminology: *"quasi per naturam* "; *"quasi ut naturaliter* ". Secondly, in both texts we are told just a little more about how we come to know the meaning of the term " being " from which the first principles are derived. We acquire this knowledge by means of an experiential procedure which relies on the interaction of the senses and memory. Nowhere else in his works does Aquinas treat this crucial matter in any greater detail.

But just *why* did Aquinas fail to pay more attention to this issue? The answer, I suspect, is that he was convinced that there was no real need to do so. This, not so much because his philosophical preoccupations were so different from those of our own (post-Cartesian and post-Kantian) times, as because, for him, there might well have been something supremely obvious about that original grasp of being whose content corresponds to the meaning of the term " being " from which we derive our knowledge of the first principles. But if this is indeed the case, what is it that has been neglected and has

[32] Cited from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysios of Aristotle,* transl. J. P. Rowan, Chicago: 1961, vol. I, p. 242.

thereby brought about the endless controversies over this issue which have so occupied, and so divided, contemporary Thomists?

I would suggest, at least as a tentative hypothesis which can serve as a point of departure for discussion, that the problematic concerning the preliminary grasp of being has arisen because of the quite understandable desire, on the part of twentieth century Thomists, to defend, against competing philosophies, the validity of the Thomistic doctrine of the total abstraction of the universal from particulars. This amply justified concern with the vindication of total abstraction might well, nonetheless, have caused too much emphasis to have been placed on one particular epistemological perspective with respect to the sensible object. That is, the sensible object might well have been considered, quite correctly but possibly far too exclusively, only insofar as it appears to sensible consciousness through the phantasm as *potential* with respect to intellection.

What might have been neglected, if not altogether overlooked, is that the potentiality which characterizes the sensible object is a wholly relative one. The sensible object is only to be characterized as potential with respect to the understanding, by the possible intellect, of the quiddity or nature which is realized within it. A nature becomes actually capable of being understood only insofar as it is abstracted from the phantasm by the agent intellect which impresses it (as the *species intelligibilis impressa)* on the possible intellect which, once actualized and informed by it, is rendered actually capable of understanding it through the formation of the universal concept (the *species intelligibilis expressa* or *verbum)* . But the actually perceived sensible object, as such and of itself, which appears to consciousness through the phantasm, is not at all merely potential but actual.[33] It is this actuality, this being-in-act, of the perceived sensible object as such which, in the psychological order, *first* confronts the intellect and which,

[33] " --- sensus fit in actu per sensibile in actu." *B.T.,* q. 79, a. 3.

indeed, "moves" it.[34] What is *first* encountered by the agent intellect through the phantasm is not the sensible object as endowed with a potentially intelligible quiddity but, rather, the sensible object as actual in sensibility: *primum enim quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus est ens.*

The first encounter between the intellect and extra-mental reality-or, more correctly, between the intellect and any part of that reality of which it is itself a part-is not an encounter with a mere potentiality. It is an encounter between two actualities: [35] the agent intellect and the perceived sensible object in act. Could it not be that it is precisely the grasp of this actuality, this *entitas rei,*[36] which pertains to the perceived sensible object as such and of itself, and *before* it is in any way quidditative by intellected, which constitutes the content of our original apprehension of being? Could it not be this very actuality, [37] this being-in-act of the perceived sensible object, which is first excised by the agent intellect and by it impressed on the possible intellect as its primary actualization or *informatio-as* the very "dawn" of its cognitional vitality, a primary " information " whose content corresponds to that initial and most primitive meaning that the term " being" does and can have for the intellect, a meaning which, no matter how rudimentary, still enables the agent intellect to derive from it those first principles of the understanding by whose instrumentality it can *then* abstract the potentially intelligible aspect of the sensible object-its quiddity or specific nature. If this is indeed the case then there is no great difficulty in seeing just why Aquinas, in the texts that I have considered, repeatedly insists that our original apprehension of being is

34 " --- phantasmata se habent ad intellectivam partem animae, sicut sensibilia ad sensum. Unde sicut sensus movetur a sensibilibus, ita intellectus a phantasmatibus." *In III De Anima,* 1. 12, n. 770.

as Is not this the "Prima ergo comparatio entis ad intellectum est ut ens intellectui correspondeat ..." of *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 1?

36 *De Ver.,* q. 1, a. 1.

37 " --- unumquodque cognoscitur per id quod est in actu et ideo ipsa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius." *Sup. De Oausis,* Pr. VI, 1. 6, n.168.

derived *from* sensibility. Nor is there any great difficulty in seeing just why, as I suggested, the entire matter was no great problem for him.

## Ill

I shall now present, in the form of a number of points, some general conclusions and a few further reflections which seem to me to follow from the interpretations that I have proposed of the texts that have been considered:

1. There most certainly is, for Aquinas, a preliminary grasp or original apprehension of being. Upon its content is founded our immediate, "natural", knowledge of the first principles of the understanding. Both this content, which corresponds to the most primitive meaning of the term " being ", and the knowledge of the first principles which is derived from it are necessary conditions of possibility for the performance of any act of understanding or knowing whatsoever. They are thus first and second, respectively, in the psychological order.

2. These two necessary conditions of possibility are presupposed by all instances of reasoning-no matter whether it be reasoning in the theoretical sciences, in the practical sciences, in the mechanical arts, or in any aspect of everyday life. Most significantly, as indispensable preliminaries to the mind's performance of its two most fundamental acts of simple apprehension and judgment,[38] they are presupposed by the various types of "abstraction " or *distinctio* which are constituted by the dynamic interplay of these two acts: the operations of total abstraction, formal abstraction, and nega-

as" .. , cum duplex sit operatio intellectus: una, qua cognoscit quod quid est, quae vocatur indivisibilium intelligentia: alia, qua componit et dividit: in utroque est aliquod primum: in prima quidem operatione est aliquod primum, quod cadit in conceptione intellectus, scilicet hoc quod dico ens, nee aliquid hac operatione potest mente concipi, nisi intelligatur ens. Et quia hoc principium, impossibile est esse et non esse simul, dependet ex intellectu entis --- ideo hoc etiam principium est naturaliter primum in secunda operatione intellectus, scilicet componentis et dividentis." *In IV Met.*, 1. 6, n. 605.

tive separation which are operative within, and specific to insofar as they alone can yield to them their proper objects, the theoretical sciences of physics, mathematics, and metaphysics.89

3. Neither the content of the preliminary grasp of being nor the knowledge of the first principles derived from it is in any way some kind of " transcendental " formal element, analogous to a Kantian subjective *a priori,* category, that the intellect derives from itself and imposes upon, or at least actualizes within, the phantasm. Rather they emerge in the mind, in a non_,demonstrative manner, as the primary actualization of the possible intellect which results from the agent intellect's first encounter with the actuality of the perceived sensible object as such. An actuality, or being-in-act, which manifests itself primordially through the phantasm which presents the sensible object to consciousness.

4. The content of the preliminary grasp of being is not as yet explicitly metaphysical. One is neither a metaphysician, nor is one engaged in metaphysical thinking, solely in virtue of this original apprehension of being which is common to all men.[40] This is because the content of the preliminary grasp of being does not correspond to, and cannot simply be identified with, the *ratio entis* which is expressed by the concept of being in general *(ens commune)--which* is the object of metaphysics and can only be attained through negative separation. In other words, the *apprehensio* of every man must be kept quite distinct from the *conceptio entis* achieved by the metaphysician.[41] Now, undoubtedly, the content of the preliminary grasp of being will serve as the point of departure for that process of resolutive reasoning whereby the

39 See *In Boet. de Trinitate,* q. V, a. 3.

40 " --- quaedam communia quae nullus ignorat ... " *S.T.,* la, q. 2, a. I.

41 For a contrary opinion, "Non senza ragione l'Angelico usa indifferentemente i termini *apprehensio* (che sta per percezione intuitiva) e *conceptio."* L. Bogliolo, S.D.B., "Realismo Moderno e Realismo Tomista," *San Tommaso e ii Pensiero Moderno* (Studi Tomistici, 3), Rome: n. d., p. 46.

metaphysician is enabled to seize that concept of being in general which is the object of his science-but this matter is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

*5.* The preliminary grasp of being does not involve any strict conceptualization of being. Its content represents no more than what might be designated as a vague and confused *notion* of being. That imprecise notion of being which is common to all men who, despite its lack of clarity, make constant use of it as is indicated by their ready utterance of the term " being ". This vague and confused notion of being corresponds quite simply to the everyday meaning of the term " being " when it is taken as having the grammatical form of a noun-a meaning which, for obvious reasons, cannot be formulated precisely but can only be indicated descriptively by such phrases as: "that which is present"; " that which is given "; "the factual "-and, most commonly," that which I can touch and see and smell ... "

6. Being, as it presents itself to the mind through the vague and confused notion which is the content of our preliminary grasp of it, reveals itself as endowed with a certain intrinsic structure. It discloses itself as questionable or analyzable in terms of the two acts of simple apprehension and judgment. These two acts represent the intellect's initial response to this *intrinmc* [42] structure rather than operations whereby the intellect would impose upon particular instances of being initially empty categories which, somehow or other, it derived o.f itself. Of particular instances of being the intellect has no hesitation as to the possibility of addressing them in terms of some initial questions: what is it?-how is it?-is it, does it exist? The first question is answered through simple apprehension which grasps the *quod qitid est,* or "whatness ", of any particular

42 " --- duplex est operatio intellectus. Una, quae dicitur *intelligentia indivisibilium,* qua cognoscit de unoquoque, quid est. Alia vero, qua componit et dividit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmativam vel negativam formando. Et hae quidem duae operationes, duobus, quae sunt in rebus, respondent." *In Boet. de Trin.,* q. V, a. 3.

instance of being. The second question is answered by the judgment which, in its formal-copulative or "predicative" employment, either affirms or denies certain attributes of any particular instance of being. The third question is answered by the judgment which, in its existential employment, either affirms or denies existence or being of any particular instance of being. It must be noticed that this affirmation or denial of being of particular instances of being is in no way tautological. It represents the affirmation or denial of being, in the sense that the term " being " has when it is taken as having the grammatical form of a participle [43] (the vague and confused notion of being taken dynamically), of being in the sense that the term " being " has when it is taken as having the grammatical form of a noun [44] (the vague and confused notion of being taken statically).

7. The point that must be stressed at this stage is that, as long as the particular instances of being which confront the mind are understood *merely* in terms of the vague and confused notion of being which is the content of our preliminary grasp of it, the answers which will be given by the mind in simple apprehension and judgment will be of little, if any, *explicitly* metaphysical import. That is, no matter what these answers will later, from a metaphysical point of view, be discerned as having implicitly attained, simple apprehension and judgment, carried out solely in the light of the vague and confused notion of being, are just not capable of yielding to the performer of these acts anything more than merely everyday, pre-metaphysical, grasps of " whatness ", attributes, and existence.

For example, the nature or " whatness " grasped, as pertaining to any particular instance of being, will not as yet be seized as the essence which is related as potential to, and is really distinct from, the participated *esse ut aotus essendi*

[43] " --- ens ... ab esse quod pertinet ad quaestionem an sit." *Q. Quodlibet.*, q. II, a. 3.

[44] " --- ens secundum quod importat rei cui competit huiusmodi esse."

which it receives, determines, and contracts. Similarly, attributes or properties will not as yet be fully understood as accidental forms which inhere in, or adhere to, the substance which is the composite of essence and the *actus essendi.* Finally, and most importantly, the existence or being (in the sense indicated by the term "being" taken as a participle-the vague and confused notion of being taken dynamically) which is affirmed by the judgment in its existential employment will not as yet represent the seizure, on the part of the performer of the judgment, of the *actus essendi* in the full richness and originality of its properly. Thomistic understanding. [45] At this, pre-metaphysical, stage the judgment in its existential employment will simply not be capable of yielding to its performer anything more than existence in its everyday sense of " givenness", "presence", "facticity "-as that which will later, foom a properly metaphysical viewpoint, be recognized as being no more than mere *esse in actu, existentia.* [46]

In other words, as long as being is understood solely in terms of the vague and confused notion of being which is the content of our original apprehension of being, it is simply not possible to attain any properly Thomistic metaphysical insights. Their attainment requires much more than that preliminary grasp of being which is readily accessible to, and the common possession of, all men. The attainment by the mind of these insights will only be possible after the seizure of that concept of being in general *(ens commime)* which, by being " grounded " in the profounder appropriation of *esse commune,* can do full justice to the *ratio entis.*

To conclude, I should like to insist upon the point that the very viability or possibility of the science of meta.physics, as it was conceived by Aquinas, does not depend merely on

[45] See it, for example, *De Pot.,* q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.

[46] "Thus the authentic notion of Thomistic participation calls for distinguishing *esse* as act not only from essence which is its potency, but also from existence which is the *fact* of being and hence a *"result"* rather than a metaphysical principle." C. Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutic of Thomistic Philosophy," *The Review of Metaphysics,* XXVII (1974), p. 470.

whether we do or do not have a preliminary grasp of being. For Aquinas, that this is indeed the case and that this original apprehension of being is derived from sensibility, and is not furnished by the intellect from itself in some *a priori* manner, is really beyond reasonable dispute. It can be confirmed by a straightforward appeal to the experience of any man. Rather, the very possibility of the Thomistic science of metaphysics will be dependent upon whether, by means of a process of resolutive reasoning effected by negative separation, the mind can have access to that concept of being in general which is the object of this science. But I shall not consider this matter in the present context.

MICHAEL TAVUZZI, O.P.

*Yarra Theologiaal Union*
*Melbourne, Australia*

# IS GOD ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM HIS CREATURES? RAHNER'S EXPLANATION FROM REVELATION

## INTRODUCTION

IN THIS PAPER we shall discuss two questions concerning the doctrine of God in the theology of Karl Rahner. What is it? On what is it based? In the process, we shall critically examine the relationship between the doctrine of God and Rahner's view of Christian revelation, focusing on the nature of theological method. Analysis will proceed in two ways: comparison of Rahner's method with what I see as the method of scripture (faith seeking understanding) and with that of traditional Thomism as represented by Etienne Gilson.

In *Foundatians of Christian Faith,* Chapter "Man in the Presence of Absolute Mystery," *Theological Investigations,* volume 4, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," and *Theological ln1Yestigations,* volume 11, "The Experience of God Today " Rabner develops his doctrine of God from his concept of absolute mystery which is drawn from human experience of reality according to his transcendental method. This method itself establishes the foundation for answering the first question, as we shall see. In answering the second question it is important that we examine carefully the foundation and determining element for any concept of God and of the creature's relation with God. The following issues will have to be discussed also: the nature of and need for Christian revelation, the role of faith and the kind of relation which exists between the Creator God and creatures. We shall discuss how Rahner deals with the free grace of God's revelation and presence in history while synthesizing creaturely self-tran-

scendent experience with grace and revelation according to his transcendental method. Such synthesis perceives the reality of God according to the constructs of natural theology and eliminates any practical need for revelation and faith in the triune God as the only true God. Moreover, we hope to show that the starting point for Rahner's transcendental method [human experience] is the very £actor which causes irreconcilable conflicts for a theology which claims to be a theology based on revelation.

Rahner's analysis of experience is profound and has been useful for many in describing the creature's relation with the Creator. *But* as long as it is thought that our self-transcending experiences provide a point of departure for knowing the true God, Christian theologians will always have difficulty actually distinguishing God from their ideas about Hirn. For scriptural faith the point of departure for knowing the reality of God was and remains God's own *free* self-manifestation in His historical interventions within the realm of experience. As we shall see, this very point is what Rahner seeks to uphold. But in fact his method causes him to be inconsistent. While he would insist that this historical intervention is what happened in Israel, in Christ and in the Church; his method cannot a11ow him to hold consistently that the only point of departure for knowing the *truth* about our experiences is the Word of God revealed and active in Christ and the Spirit. Thus, true knowledge of God for Rahner is simultaneously ascribed to the grace of God and to our *innate* knowledge of absolute being. This claim is actually indebted to the Cartesian method and, as we shall see, it causes logical and theological problems for a theology that claims to be a theology of revelation.

Concerning Rahner's doctrine of God, then, we return to the opening questions: What is it? On what is it based? Following Rahner's own outline in *Fottndations of Christian Faith* these questions can only be answered together by tracing the development of his own logic based upon the transcendental experience of our" horizon." Rahner's doctrine of God begins

from the assumption that an experience of one's "horizon " is an experience of God. And this assumption dictates what it is. Therefore, in Rahner's thought, these two questions cannot in fact be separated.

Rahner provides no other foundation for this assumption than the idea that man must think and act in light of this horizon. Instead of pointing beyond the circle of human experience to show us that he has in fact spoken about a reality which totally transcends it, he directs us back to our experiences. While Rahner knows God is totally transcendent, his method ascribes even to the philosopher a knowledge of God which would follow a recognition of God's grace revealed in Christ. So, instead of consistently holding scriptural faith as the norm of his theological ontology, Rahner holds that being as experienced within and without the bible is "graced."

My suggestion is that a scripturally grounded theology begins and ends in faith. It would allow God the freedom to be the originator as well as the one who completes the process of true knowledge. This would explain why theology has been described as *fides quaerens intellectum.*[1] *Faith* in the triune God would be a necessary prerequisite to philosophical reflection for this kind of theology. For Rahner it must be said that, in all three pieces under consideration, the word faith rarely appears.[2] And the idea that the truth of human knowl-

[1] Perhaps the most renowned theologian to use this expression was .Anselm. Karl Barth's book entitled *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme,* (Richmond: John Knox, 1960) displays a continued interest in this expression as it relates to theological method.

[2] See, for e.g., K. Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," *Theological Investigations.* Vol. 4. (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 36-73, p. 60. This series, which now includes 20 volumes with several different publishers, hereafter will be abbreviated *TI;* the publishers, where different, will be indicated. Where Rahner does mention faith, the meaning of the word is defined by his transcendental method. Thus, its biblical meaning is distorted. Since Rahner deduces the meaning of faith from the "primordial mystery" which everyone always experiences (our term or whither or absolute being) he thinks that we must nnderstand biblical faith too as pointing to this experience and not to something outside it. This, of course, distorts the very

edge is determined *solely* by the object of the Christian faith would be unworkable in his system. In fact, Rahner's identification of the immanent and economic trinity [3] illustrates his

meaning of biblical faith, since what determines truth for Rahner is our experience of our "whither" and faith in *it* as something that is always present. What determines truth for Paul (whom Rahner cites here) is the risen Lord *alone.* For Paul faith is true faith when it points to Him *alone.* Cf., e.g., 1Cor.12:3.

a Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery," pp. 70-71. For more on the dogmatic problems involved in this identification see Paul D. Molnar, "Can We Know God Directly? Rahner's Solution from Experience," in *Theological Studies,* vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 228-61, pp. 230ff. and 248ff.

A recent article by Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J. "A Journey into Time: The Legacy of Karl Rahner's Last Years," *Theological Studies,* vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 621-646 raises several objections to an analysis of Rahner's method, presented in my article in *TS.* His basic objections rest on the assumption that philosophy and theology indeed investigate the same object. What is demonstrated in that article, however, is that Rahner's dogmatic identification of the immanent and economic trinity, his definition of transcendental revela· tion and his theory of quasi-formal causality all compromise any true dis· tinction between philosophy and theology in the traditional sense. All of these terms follow from Rahner's method and in effect claim a direct relation between Creator and creatures which I have argued is excluded by the scriptural revelation. The author did not realize that Rahner's theology of the symbol, which, according to his own presuppositions, is put forward as an instance of an application of a general principle of being without restrictions *(TI* 4: 226-8) actually is the very factor which forces Rahner to reduce the trinitarian self-revelation to an instance of the general pattern of being necessarily expressing itself *in se* and *ad extra.* The problems with this thinking are analyzed extensively in that article.

O'Donovan also cites "Numerous other inaccuracies of interpretation," of which he is only able to present three-all three of which are themselves inaccurate representations of what I actually stated in the article. The first asserts that I hold that the Trinity may be "defined." The point of the article clearly states that, although Rahner insists that God, in his transcendence always escapes definition he does in fact define Him according to the philosophical category of the nameless and in that way blurs the distinction between the immanent trinity and "absolute being." The second asserts that "the idea of 'pure nature' has no practical significance." The word practical in this context clearly means what Rahner means by "existential." And since Rahner holds that in existential reality man never exists without grace it is not at all inaccurate to interpret Rahner to mean that, practically speaking, "man ... is not ... pure nature ... but is mixed up with trace elements from actual nature, and hence its state of grace, *(TI* 4: 187, "Nature and Grace"). The third asserts "that a symbolizandum

synthesis of the Christian God with the idea of God drawn from the self-transcending experience of Christians. Accordingly, what determines truth is the idea of God drawn from the experience of man's *term,* i.e., absolute being.' Rahner's method assumes that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity confirms this experience and the knowledge derived from it. In this paper we hope to show that wherever this assumption is at work, a scriptural theology of revelation cannot be held consistently and a clear distinction between philosophy and theology cannot be attained.

## A. God

Rahner's presupposition for knowing God precludes dependence on the *free* revelation attested in scripture as I have described it above at the outset. Since he is a being who is " entrusted into his own hands and always in the hands of what is beyond his control," [5] Rahner assumes man is " a being oriented towards God." [6] Probably no one would deny that we

and its symbol are ' identical.' " If the actual quote is read in context it is quite clear that the meaning of the word *identical* is the meaning Rahner himself attaches to the word when he describes the immanent and economic Trinity as strictly identical. It is clearly a symbolic ontological identity of essence which is distinct from but mutually determined by its appearance. Insofar as Rahner " identifies " the immanent and economic Trinity then it is perfectly appropriate to speak of symbolic identity since it is his theology of the symbol which provides the framework for understanding the nature of this " identity."

[4] See, e.g., Rahner, " The Concept of Mystery," p. 49 where Rabner writes: "we begin ... with the finite spirit's transcendence, which is directed to absolute being." On p. 50 Rahner calls this "whither" of transcendence God. On this point see also *Tl* 11, "The Experience of God Today," (New York: Seabury, 1974), pp. 149-165, pp. 149-53ff.

[5] K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction To The Idea of Christianity.* (New York: Seabury, 1978), p. 44. See also *TI* 4: 52 where Rhaner writes: " The Whither of transcendence is at no one's disposal. ... " *TI* 11, p. 151 expresses the same idea. By experiencing himself this way man is placed into "that mystery which reduces us to perplexity, which controls us and is not controlled by us." For more on this see *Foundations of Christian Faith,* hereafter abbreviated as *Foundations,* p. 42.

[6] Rahner, *Foundations,* p. 44. See also *Tl* 4: 49 and *TI* 11: 153.

are all in some sense in the hands of what is beyond our control. But the fact that there are always things in life we cannot control neither proves that there is a God nor that we are oriented to this God rather than opposed to Him. By this assumption Rahner is compelled to describe knowledge of God as an orientation of human being according to his transcendental method. The meaning of the term God, for Rahner, is neither taken from scriptural revelation nor from dogmatics but from "this orientation to mystery." [7] This is why, for Rahner, "At this point theology and anthropology necessarily become one." [8] For Rahner, knowledge of God represents man's explication in reflection of "what is already present in his transcendentality." [9]

[7] Rahner, *Foundations,* p. 44. See also *TI* 4: 49 where Rahner writes: "We inquire therefore into man, as the being who is orientated to the mystery as such, this orientation being a constitutive element of his being both in his natural state and in his supernatural elevation."

[8] *Foundations,* p. 44. Rahner works out the logic of this insight in his Christology *TI* 4, " On The Theology of the Incarnation," pp. 105-20, p. 116. Rahner writes, "And if God himself is man and remains so for ever, if all theology is therefore eternally an anthropology ... man is forever the articulate mystery of God." See also *TI* 9, "Theology and Anthropology," (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), pp. 28-45, p. 28 where Rahner writes, "anthropology and Christology mutually determine each other within Christian dogmatics if they are both correctly understood."

[9] *Foundations,* p. 44. As usual the same idea is repeated in all of Rahner's pieces. See e.g., *TI* 4: 50 where Rahner writes: "All conceptual expressions about God, necessary though they are, always stem from the unobjectivated experience of transcendence as such: the concept from the pre-conception, the name from the experience of the nameless." On this point see also *Tl* 4: 57. See also *TI* 11: 149 where Rahner writes: "The so-called proofs of God's existence . . . are possible . . . only as the outcome of an a posteriori process of reasoning as the conceptual objectifications of what we call the experience of God, which provides the basis and origin of this process of reasoning." Thus, for Rahner the task is to "reflect upon an experience which is present in every man . . ." *(TI* 11: 150-51). Since this is so theology means "we can only point to this experience, seek to draw another's attention to it in such a way that he discovers within himself that which we only find if, and to the extent that we already possess it." *(TI* 11: 154). See also *Foundations,* p. 21 where Rahner writes: "The knowledge of God is always present unthematically and without name, and not just when we begin to speak of it. All talk about it, which necessarily goes on,

Now, if God is free in the scriptural sense described above, Rahner's claim that knowledge of God is always present in man's striving for "being as such" [10] illustrate the problem of harmonizing reason and revelation according to his method. According to such presuppositions man's very nature forces him to continually transcend his present experience toward something beyond. While there is no reason to doubt this experience, any claim that this is true knowledge of God compromises the freedom of the Christian God; for this God is especially free in relation to such necessary strivings. We hope to show a real conflict between reason and revelation here which is solved only by revelation. [11]

Rahner begins analyzing the term God by analyzing man's experience of himself, and concludes: "The mere fact that this word exists is worth thinking about." [12] What does the word mean? "The present form of the word reflects what the word refers to: the 'ineffable one,' the 'nameless one' who does not enter into the world we can name as part of it ... it expresses the whole in its unity and totality ... It means that which really is wordless." [13] Thus, Rahner writes "the word 'God' which no longer refers by itself to a definite, individual experience, has assumed the right form to be able to speak to us of God." [14]

For Rahner, the term God signifies the "single whole of reality" and "the single whole" of man's existence. [15] And this is a significant insight. For it leads Rahner to conclude that "If the word 'God' really did not exist, then neither would

always only points to this transcendental experience as such, an experience in which he whom we call 'God' encounters man . . . as the term of his transcendence ..." For Rahner's explanation of his method see *Foundations,* pp. 24-39.

10 *Foundations,* p. 35.

11 See text, *infra, passim.*

12 *Foundations,* p. 45.

13 *Foundations,* p. 46. For the same idea see esp. *Tl* 4, pp. 50·5lff. and *Tl* 11: 157, 160.

14 *Foundations,* p. 46.

15 *Foundations,* pp. 47-48.

those two things exist any more for man, the single whole of reality as such and the single whole of human existence in the mutual interpretation of both aspects." [16]

The word God " asks about reality as a whole and in its original ground." [17] Rahner does not rigorously distinguish between the reality of God and the word God. The fact that the word exists gives it a reality all its own. " This word exists, it belongs in a special and unique way to our world of language and thus to our world. It is itself a reality, and indeed one that we cannot avoid." [18] Indeed "We should not think that, because the phonetic sound of the word ' God ' is always dependent on us, therefore the word ' God ' is also our creation. Rather it creates us because it makes us men." [19] What creates us and makes us men? Apparently it is the synthetic word-reality which is "the totality of the world and of ourselves." [20] "This real word confronts us with ourselves and with reality as a whole, at least as a question. This word exists. It is in our history and makes our history. It is a word." [21] Rahner continues, "It is our opening to the incomprehensible mystery . . . it is itself the final word before wordless and worshipful silence in the face of the ineffable mystery." [22]

## B. Knowledge of God

For Rahner, then, knowledge of God is really inseparable from one's transcendental experience of the world. It is *a posteriori* in the sense that it " is an a posteriori knowledge

16 *Foundations,* pp. 47-48.

11 *Foundations,* p. 49. Because Rahner believes this he identifies ontology with natural theology and natural knowledge of " absolute being" with knowledge of God, *TI* 4: 52. For more on this point see *TI* 1: 79-148, "Theos in the New Testament," esp. pp. 81-83 and 133. Compare Rahner, *Hearers of the Word,* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), hereafter abbreviated as *HW,* pp. 8ff. and pp. 53-68.

18 *Foundations,* p. 50 and *TI* 11: 160.

19 *Foundations,* p. 50. How or why a word can create us is not explained.

20 *Foundations,* p. 50.

21 *Foundations,* p. 51.

22 *Foundations,* p. 51 and *TI* 11: 160.

from the world." [23] This is what Rahner describes elsewhere as categorical knowledge of revelation. [24]

On this view "man's basic and original orientation towards absolute mystery," constitutes an experience of God.[25] And this experience is a " permanent existential of man as a spiritual subject." [26] Any conceptual proof for God is therefore simply a reflection on this "orientation towards mystery." [27] What proves the existence of God here is the fact " that speaking of God is the reflection which points to a more original, unthematic and unreflexive knowledge of God." [28]

[23] *Foundations,* p. 52.

[24] See Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition.* Quaestiones Disputatae, 17. Tr. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), pp. 13-21. For a similar idea see also *HW,* pp. 114-15. See also below, pp. B4-B7 and *Foundations,* pp. 153ff.

[25] *Foundations,* p. 52 and *TI* 4: 42ff., 49ff., and *TI* 11: 155-56. Rahner appeals to the *Vorgriff* (prior apprehension) as the factor which guarantees this (p. 155). On this point see also *HW,* pp. 53-68, esp. p. 59. See also pp. 66-67. Cf. also K. Rahner, *Spirit in the World,* Tr. William Dych, S.J. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), hereafter abbreviated as *SW,* pp. 142-44 and 156ff.

[26] *Foundations,* p. 52 and *TI* 4: 49ff.

[27] *Foundations,* p. 52 and *TI* 11: 152ff.

[28] *Foundations,* p. 52. Of course Rahner thinks this way because, in addition to categorical revelation, he presumes the existence of what he calls transcendental revelation, *Revelation and Tradition,* pp. 13-21. Transcendental revelation refers to man's direct experience of the ontology of God himself via the incarnation and grace. For Rahner it is God's quasi-formal self. communication to man which accounts for man's "'entitative' divinization," i.e., "a transcendental divinization of the fundamental subjective attitude, the ultimate horizon of man's knowledge and freedom, in the perspective of which he accomplishes his life" *(Revelation and Tradition,* p. 16). This, for Rabner, is man's grace given supernatural existential. Thus, for Rahner, the *visio beatifica* is the direct apprehension of God, given by God himself. In reality it is the object of man's initial dynamism of spirit which recognizes being in general *(TI* 4: 60-61). Thus, Rabner describes grace as "an inner, objectless though conscious dynamism directed to the beatific vision" *(TI* 4: 61). And this insight leads directly to Rahner's explanation of the Creator/creature relationship in terms of a quasi-formal alteration in the knowing subject. See e.g. *TI* 4: 65-67ff. and p. 54, and 61 and also *TI* 1: 319-346 "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," pp. 328-31. See also *Foundations,* pp. 118ff. and Chapter 5 where Rahner works out the logic of this theory of quasi-formal causality

Rahner insists that knowledge of God does not mean knowledge of something new coming from without but that "We are oriented towards God." [29] And because "This original experience is always present" everyone already knows God as he or she knows himself or herself.[30] "This unthematic and ever-present experience, *this knowledge of God which we always haV'e* ... is the permanent ground from out of which that thematic knowledge of God emerges ... in philosophical

and the change in the structure of the creature, esp. at p. 149. See also Paul D. Molnar, *Theological Studies,* pp. 240ff. It is Rahner's quasi-formal explanation of the Creator/creature relationship that goes beyond the traditional distinction between nature and grace and ascribes true knowledge of God directly to man in his self-knowledge. That is why Rahner feels free to describe God's grace as a conscious dynamism of the creature whereas in fact, if one were to distinguish clearly nature and grace, one could never describe any creaturely activity as anything more than a creaturely activity.

Leo O'Donovan, S.J., *Theological Studies,* p. 625 misses this point by assuming that Rahner's quasi-formal explanation of the operation of God's redemptive grace preserves this distinction, p. 626. It does not in fact even recognize it. Of course the real problem here which the author does not address is whether one can describe creation after the Fall as intrinsically open to God at all without becoming Pelagian in one's doctrine of God.

29 *Foundations,* p. 53, *TI* 4: 54, 61, 65-67ff., and *TI* 11: 156.

so *Foundations,* p. 53. See also *TI* 11: 155, 161. This is why, for Rahner revelation has its existence in man's consciousness and is indeed subject to the structures of the knowing subject. "It [revelation] has its existence in man's own conscious thought and hence is subject to the *a priori* structure of human knowledge" (11: 91, "Reflections on Methodology in Theology"). .And this leads directly to the idea that knowing ourselves means knowledge of God. See *TI* 11: 154 and *TI* 13: 122-32, "Experience of Self and Experience of God," pp. 124-5ff. For Rahner "experience of *God* constitutes the enabling condition of, and an intrinsic element in the experience of self ..." Therefore "The experience of self is the condition which makes it possible to experience God" (p. 125), It is Rahner's concept of the luminosity of being which allows him to think this way. (See *HW,* pp. 39 and 43 and *TI* 4: 49. For Rahner there is an original unity between knowing and being.) See e.g. *Foundations,* pp. 149ff. for more on this idea of luminosity. Rahner writes of Revelation that it is "a modification of our transcendental consciousness produced permanently by God in grace. But such a modification is really an original and permanent element in our consciousness as the basic and original luminosity of our existence. .And as an element in our transcendentality ... it is already revelation in the proper sense" (p. 149). See also *Foundations,* p. 132 for more on this.

reflection . . . we are only making explicit for ourselves what we already know implicitly about ourselves in the depths of our personal self-realization." [31] At this crucial stage in the development of Rahner's doctrine of God it is clear that while Rahner believes God is *free,* his method of synthesizing natural and revealed theology causes him to believe that any proof of God's existence stems from an experience of ourselves. This methodological assumption compromises God's independence in relation to human experience and reflection. Thus, " The meaning of all explicit knowledge of God in religion and in metaphysics . . . can really be understood only when all the words we use there point to the *unthematic experience* of our orientation towards the ineffable mystery." [82] According to his method this is the *foiindation* for the doctrine of *God.* Everyone has an experience of an horizon that cannot be controlled which Rahner calls an experience of the reality of the transcendent God. Thus, when one is oriented towards what philosophy recognizes as mystery or absolute being it can legitimately be assumed that one is speaking about the scriptural God. Eventually Rahner claims that this "being" is identical with the immanent Trinity. [33]

[31] *Foundations,* p. 43, emphasis mine. Also, pp. 2lff. and *TI* 11: 154-55.

[32] *Foundations,* p. 53. Emphasis mine. This same idea is expressed in *TI* 4 using the category of the " whither," pp. 50ff. and again in *Tl* 11: 149 and 150. For example Rahner writes: "But surely both together, the initial *experience* and the subsequent reflection, make it justifiable to speak of the 'experience of God today' . . . " (p. 150, emphasis mine). Cf. also *TI* 11: 159 where Rahner writes: "What is meant by God is to be understood *on the basis of this experience* . . ." (emphasis mine). " This experience is no mere mood, no matter of mere feeling and poetry carrying no conviction . . . For it is present irremovably, however unacknowledged and unreflected upon it may be, in every exercise of the spiritual faculties even at the most rational level in virtue of the fact that every such exercise draws its life from the prior apprehension *[Vorgriff]* of the all-transcending whole which is the mystery, one and nameless. It is possible to suppress this experience, but it remains . . . " (11: 159). *Please Note:* All that Rahner has offered here as proof for God as an independent entity confronting us, is our *experience* of ourselves in relation to our innate apprehension of an all-transcending whole.

[33] *Tl* 4: 71-2. Why? Because "The three mysteries, the Trinity and its two processions and the two self-communications of God *ad extra* in a real

According to this description we do not have to wait upon God to reveal Himself at particular historical moments because it is assumed that this orientation to "mystery," which orientation and mystery can be adequately described by the metaphysician, and therefore what " we call God " [34] *is* truly the *totally other,* the God of Christianity.

Now, how can Rahner say that God is truly transcendent and free and that both philosophers and theologians know Him in this way? In other words, the obvious question here is: if God is really transcendent (in the scriptural sense), then why does He not transcend this orientation, experience and definition as well? While Rahner would say it is this scriptural God we know, his very method renders such a God totally unknowable. [35] Indeed Rahner's presupposition is that

formal causality corresponding to the two processions, are not 'intermediate mysteries.' They are not something provisional and deficient in the line of mystery which comes *between* the perspicuous truths of our natural knowledge and the absolute mystery of God, in so far as he remains incomprehensible even in the beatific vision. Nor are they as it were mysteries of the beyond ... behind the God who is for us the holy mystery." Obviously this is all true for Rahner because he really believes that what natural theology calls God and what Christians call God are one and the same thing. This, because of the luminosity of being. In fact, of course, the only way this could be true is if God were *not free* but subject to the *a priori* structures of the knowing subject. See also, *Tl* 4: 228.

34 *Foundations,* p. 54.

35 Cf. *TI* 11: 159. Our *Vorgriff* would not innately correspond with it. See text *infra.* See also *SW* where Rahner maintains that if God is an "absolutely 'unknown,' something 'coming from without' in every respect, [he] is not knowable at all to a human subject according to Thomistic principles" (p. 182). Such a God would not be subject to the *a priori* structures of the human mind since there would in fact be no original unity between knower and known. This insight would destroy Rahner's concept of luminosity as applied to God. Rahner could not hold his important insight that man is (via the *species impressa)* entitatively assimilated to God *(Tl* 1: 327-8). His entire theory of *quasi-formai* causality is based on this insight. Rahner cannot actually maintain a real distinction between philosophy and theology because of this. So in his philosophy of religion he maintains that man cannot prejudge whether revelation has occurred *(HW,* pp. 173-4). This view apparently maintains the freedom of God's revelation as unmerited and incalculable grace. But how do we know of this grace? Because we must reckon with God's silence. And here is Rahner's problem. There cannot possibly be

*no reality* at all, including God, transcends the limit of experience accessible to the metaphysician. Such a reality, says Rahner, could never be known.[36] Thus, being in general is the limit of Rahner's doctrine of God. God's being cannot transcend this. And of this "being" man always does have a "prior apprehension " *(Vorgrifj)* against which he interprets his experiences.

So while Rahner the theologian insists that God is *free*, Rahner the philosopher assumes that the *true 1iotirce* of our knowledge of God is-" the transcendental experience of our orientation towards the absolute mystery."[37] In fact, because experience of orientation is the determinant here, Rahner's approach cannot conceive God actually existing *apart* from human experience: " we can speak of God and the experience of God ... only *together."*[38] Thus, " a radical distinction between a statement about ' God in himself' and ' God for us' is not even legitimate."[39] Identifying the immanent and eco-

a *real* divine silence on this view since Rahner has already presupposed that his philosophy of religion, by which he knows this silence, is a " condition that is itself created by God's speaking" *(HW,* p. 174). And the fact that this is not a real possibility for God is confirmed by Rahner's belief that if God did not speak, man by nature could hear at least his silence *(HW,* pp. 16, 172, 175). This confusion of course invalidates any real distinction between what philosophy discovers as revelation and what the Christian believes is God's free revelation.

36 *Foundations,* p. 67. Being in general is the limit of all knowledge for Rahner. Rahner writes: "Our proposition about the comprehensibility of being in itself did indeed arise from the fact that in the first question about being every possible object of cognition is already anticipated under the aspect of being in general. There can, therefore, be no existent thing that does not automatically and objectively fit into the context of being in general. For this very reason every thing is comprehensible" *(HW,* p. 96). The same ideas are expressed in *Foundations,* pp. 24ff.

37 *Foundations,* p. 54 and *TI* 11: 159-60ff.

38 *Foundations,* p. 54. Also *TI* 11: 159 and *TI* 4: 50-1. This follows from his belief that being and knowing form an original unity, thus, "The question as to the ultimate cause of the possibility of subsisting-in-oneself is thus identical with the ultimate cause ..." *(HW,* p. 57).

39 *Foundations,* pp. 54-5. This is why Rahner has to insist on the identification of the immanent and economic Trinity-TI 4: 79-2. On any other view we would have a merely formal reconciliation of natural and revealed theology, i.e., of " one and three" *(TI* 4: 71) .

nomic Trinity is necessary for Rahner because he cannot conceive of the permanence of the humanity of Christ in any other way, and because our "experience of the incarnation and grace" [40] make it impossible that the being of God which man knows by reflecting upon himself be different from the being of God revealed.

Because the starting point for knowledge of God is our experience of "mystery," [41] Rahner describes a "more original unity" [42] among 1) natural theology, revealed theology and 3) knowledge of God attained from "experience of existence," perhaps from mystical experience or visions.[43] This derives from historical experience itself. And knowledge of it "contains *elements* which subsequent theological reflection will appeal to as *elernents* of grace and revelation." [44] Moreover, "Everything which we say here about knowledge of God ... refers to a more original experience." [45] Rahner says this is not "natural philosophical knowledge of God" though in part it is.[46] His point is that this experience of mystery (God) is what he will appeal to as the validation of his doctrine of God.[47]

## 1. Revelation-Grace

To the extent that Rahner includes grace and revelation as "elements" in our experience it is impossible to distinguish clearly between philosophy and theology, reason and revelation, and ultimately between nature and grace. Thus, for Rahner, "There is no knowledge of God which is purely natural." [48] And grace is not defined *only* as the free *charis*

40 *TI* 4: 68 and 72.
41 Cf. also *TI* 11: 155:
42 *Foundations,* p. 56.
43 *Foundations,* p. 55.
44 *Foundations,* p. 56. Emphasis mine.
45 *Foundations,* p. 56.
46 *Foundations,* p. 56.
47 Cf. also *Tl* 4: 53-4.
48 *Foundations,* p. 57. Obviously this is true for Rahner because "grace pervades the essence of man from his very roots with divine influence, and

of God revealed in Jesus,[49] but also as our *orientation* towards " the immediacy of God." [50] This means nothing other than

thereby gives him the possibility of acting positively for his own salvation, and so implants in him a free and active tendency towards his own consummation" *(TI* 10: 273-289, "Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World," p. 280). It is precisely because the creature is endowed with this modality that " the difference between 'inner and outer' breaks down at this point. The orientation towards the self-bestowal of God as most radically different from the creature is the innermost element of all in it ..." *(TI* 10: 281). Thus, for Rahner's descriptions of experience, "it is no great loss if the analysis of man as *potentia oboedientialis* is not a ' chemically pure ' presentation of pure nature but is mixed up with trace elements from actual nature, and hence from its state of grace" *(TI* 4: 165-188, "Nature and Grace," p. 187; also *TI* 9: 28ff.). See also *Foundations,* Chap. 4. Because Rahner maintains that nothing but this "holy mystery" by which man always lives "even where he is not conscious of it" *(TI* 4: 54) is the *true* God ["He would not be God if he ceased to be *this* holy mystery" *(TI* 4: 54, emphasis mine)] Rahner concludes that "Grace and the beatific vision can only be understood as the possibility and the reality respectively of the immediate presence of the holy mystery as such" *(TI* 4: 55). "Grace ... makes God accessible in the form of the holy mystery and presents him thus as the incomprehensible" *(TI* 4: 56). Thus, for Rabner, even God's grace cannot be different from the "absolute being" we all know and experience and define as God based upon our self-experience. Grace and glory for Rabner manifestly mean that we cannot control the horizon of our own existence. And this may be so. But this uncontrollability hardly means we have seen or recognized grace as an act of a God existing independently of this experience. From all this Rahner concludes that knowledge of God "has always been familiar to us" and indeed is "self-evident " *(TI* 4: 57; also 11: 161). Furthermore "Mystery is already there with the very essence of the natural and supernaturally elevated being of man" *(TI* 4: 59). It is clear that, having insisted that the being of God conform to what natural theology discovers as God on the basis of experience, Rabner *must* insist that *graoe,* i.e., knowledge of God revealed, is present all along "with the very essence of the natural ... being of man." Thus, there is no real distinction between nature and grace at this point. Indeed Rahner finally concludes that grace is "an inner, objectless though conscious dynamism directed to the beatific vision" *(TI* 4: 61). And the beatific vision is just a term that Rabner applies to the highest possible description of an immediate experience of God.

[49] Cf. Ex. 33: 19, Mt. 10: 8, Rom. 11: 5f., Eph. 1: 5f. Grace is the incomprehensible *free* gift of God's turning to the creature which we cannot merit. It implies forgiveness of sin. See also Ex. 34: 9, Rom. 5:20 and Ps. 103: Bf.

[50] *Foundations,* p. 57.

our " orientation towards absolute mystery." [51] " *We call this orientation grace* and it is an inescapable existential of man's whole being." [52]

This clear synthesis of nature and grace is no mere accident of Rahner's thought. It is the unavoidable consequence of his method. At one and the same time he believes he can know the scriptural God, revelation and grace and also deduce their meaning from the experience of" not being at one's disposal." [53] This he assumes is an experience of" mystery" which he terms the experience of God.[54] So he thinks that when we experience our inability to control all this we are actually experiencing God.[55] "The transcendence in which ('y0d is already known ... may not be understood as an active mastering . . . of God himself ... By its very nature subjectivity is always a transcendence which listens, which does not control." [56]

Rahner then makes his distinction between nature and grace identical with the distinction between our finiteness (being grounded in mystery) and the experience that this is not at one's disposal. This is described as the " unity between transcendence and its term." [57] The *terrn* or goal of this orientation or transcendence Rahner calls God.[58] It could have "a

[51] *Foundations,* p. 52 and *TI* 4: 6lff.

[52] *Foundations,* p. 57, emphasis mine, and also pp. 25 and 34.

[53] *Foundations,* pp. 57-59, 43 and 75-76. See also *TI* 1: 156. See also *TI* 4: 51 where Rahner writes: "The whither of transcendence is at no one's disposal," and *TI* 4: 53 where he writes: "For the Whither ... the nameless being which is at the disposal of none and disposes of all ... we can call ' holy' in the strict and original sense."

[54] *TI* 4: 54. " If man himself is therefore to be understood as the being of the holy mystery, it also follows that *God* is present to man *as* the holy mystery."

[55] *TI* 11: 156, 160 et al.

[56] *Foundations,* p. 58. This would have been a strange insight especially for the Johannine community or for Paul to accept.

[57] *Foundations,* p. 58. Note that this is an exact rendering of the ontological principle of luminosity as Rahner has understood this.

[58] *Foundations,* pp. 59-60. *TI* 4: 62. See also *TI* 11: 153 and 156. Rahner writes: " God is present as the asymptotic goal, hidden in itself of the experience of the limitless dynamic force inherent in the spirit endowed with knowledge and freedom" (p. 153). See also *TI* 13: 123.

thousand other names." [59] It could be "' absolute being' or ' being in an absolute sense ' " or the " ' ground of being ' which establishes everything in original unity." [60] Rahner calls it "the holy mystery." [61] His ultimate goal is to show that the term or source of our transcendence is " identical with the word ' God ' ... We must first describe the experience and the term *together* before what is experienced can be called God." [62] From this series of presuppositions it is perfectly logical for Rahner to conclude that God is experienced whenever we experience our *term,* horizon or the nameless and indefinable. Rahner contends that because the horizon (the *term* of transcendence) is infinite, it is not only not at our disposal, but it cannot be given a name. [63] In this way Rahner attempts to preserve God's freedom and transcendence.

There is, however, a very serious and frequently overlooked problem with this position. If it were truly impossible to name this *term-if* it [the term] were truly transcendent and free-then it actually could not be conceptualized. Rahner, however, does name this term of experience the "nameless." It should be noted quite clearly that the idea of the "nameless " serves a very definite function in his thought from the very beginning. It is our *experience* of our *horizon* which *is* the basis, foundation and norm of knowing God. Thus, this *term* is not really unnameable. It is quite able to be categorized -but as that in human experience which is not at our disposal.

This is an extremely significant point. Because Rahner conceives Creator and creatures under the dialectically necessary umbrella of an original unity between knower and known

[59] *Foundations,* p. 60. It really makes little difference to Rahner what we name him since the term God refers to an experience on the basis of which that which we all experience (the term) is what "we call God" *(TI* 11: 159.). See also n. 127 below.

[60] *Foundations,* p. 60.

[61] *Foundations,* p. 60, *TI* 4. 53.

[62] *Foundations,* p. 61.

[63] *TI* 4: 37, 42, 53, 60. "The name God is the nameless infinity" *(TI* 4: 60). Also 11: 159. God, for Rahner, is "the all-transcending whole which is the mystery, one and nameless " *(TI* 11 : 160).

(horizon, term, nameless, mystery), his presuppositions do not permit a God who is free in the scriptural sense described above. So when he describes what is wrong with pantheism and dualism in a Christian doctrine of God he is unable to escape the pantheist dilemma. Against dualism Rahner writes,

> The difference between God and the world is of such a nature that God establishes and is the difference of the world from himself, and for this reason he establishes the closest unity precisely in the differentiation. For if the difference itself comes from God, and, if we can put it this way, is itself identical with God, then the difference between God and the world is to be understood quite differently than the difference between categorical realities ... God to be sure is different from the world. But he is different in the way in which this difference is experienced in our original, tmnscendental experience. In this experience this peculiar and unique difference is erperienced in such a way that the whole of reality is borne by this term and this source and is intelligible only within it. Consequently, it is precisely the difference which establishes the ultimate unity between God and the world ...[64]

If God *alone* establishes and maintains the world in existence then the *difjerence* between God and creatures must be grounded in *God alone.* But then it could not be said that " God is the difference of the world from himself," since, as other, He alone establishes and maintains the world in its difference without ceasing to be God. Then, Rahner would have to admit, however, that we truly cannot experience our radical dependence on a transcendent other simply by experiencing our horizon since we are identical with our horizon and not with God. Thus, to experience our distinction and union with our *term* may be necessary. But it is not necessarily an experience of God. In fact, according to the scriptural view, nothing in creation is identical with God. And so, in a Christian doctrine of God where the method was dictated by this fact, one would have to acknowledge a continuing difference of *essence* between Creator and creatures. This would mean that faith in the Creator would be necessary to perceive

64 *Foundations,* pp. 62-3.

and to maintain a clear and sharp distinction here without falling into pantheism or dualism. Rahner makes many distinctions since he knows that the Christian God is free, but he makes no such distinction and cannot because, according to his method he assumes that God and man are already *one in intellectu.* Thus, while Rahner insists that God is free to be silent, his method causes him to describe a God who is not *really* free to reveal himself or not.[65] Indeed, for Rahner," God is the most radical, the most original, and in a certain sense the most self-evident reality."[66]

The important point here is that Rahner's definition of mystery is an ontological definition of man's relation with his horizon, which horizon is necessary as the condition of conceiving or experiencing anything.[67] This *term* is *mystery* because, logically enough, it is " nameless " and " not at our disposal ".[68] This *terrn* or mystery cannot be defined, even

[65] See also *TI* 6: 71-81, "Philosophy and Theology," p. 75. Rahner writes that Revelation "presupposes as a condition of its own possibility the one to whom this revelation remains unowed." Also *HW,* p. 168. Rahner writes: "there would be no word of God were there no one who was at least intrinsically capable of hearing it." See also *HW,* p. 92 where Rahner writes: " In virtue of his nature as spirit, man constantly and essentially hears a revelation from God." Since, for Rahner, revelation occurs as a transcendental necessity of man's spirit which includes grace Rahner even writes: "revelation occurs of necessity," *(HW,* p. 93; see also *HW,* pp. 20, 94-6 and 147ff. See also *Foundations,* p. 172.

[66] *Foundations,* p. 63 and *TI* 4: 57. See text, *infra.*

[67] For more on this see *HW* pp. 66-7 where Rahner writes: "A revelation from God is thus possible only if the subject to whom it is supposed to be addressed *in himself* presents an *a priori* horizon against which such a possible revelation can begin to present itself in the first place." Thus, for Rahner, "God does not for his part initiate the relationship; he is already implicit in the openness of this relationship . . . " *(HW,* p. 66, no. 9). This, of course, is why Rahner maintains that man by nature can come to terms with revelation and can perceive it *(TI* 1: 83). This, because the whole of nature has always been " imbedded" in a supernatural context *(TI* 1: 81). Obviously that is why, for Rahner, natural knowledge of God and theological knowledge based on revelation cannot contradict each other.

[68] *Foundations,* pp. 64-5. Obviously Rahner did not just invent this idea. He got this from the fact that " man experiences himself as being at the disposal of other things, a disposal over which he has no control," *Founda-*

by the *Vorgnff* Rahner insists. But the conflict which I have tried to illustrate here is that *he has already defined it* conceptually by the terms nameless, horizon, condition of the possibility, absolute being and holy mystery. This inconsistency is traceable *to* Rahner's starting point for his doctrine of God as noted above: one's unthematic experience of the absolute. He is unwilling *to* begin his transcendental method solely by acknowledging the normativity of the scriptural revelation. Instead, Rahner insists that this *terrn* is not only a *mystery* which can be described philosophically; but it is a "holy" mystery which we must worship.[69] And this synthesis of the object of philosophy and of theology represents the conflict of his method once again. It becomes even clearer when Rahner's thought is compared with Kant.

## Q. Rahner and Kant

Rahner neither wishes to ignore Kant's critiques of pure and practical reason nor does he wish to leave us purely on the level of ideas. So, he insists that all of this is not just something going on in the mind of man *because* if this were true then we " would lose all connection with the original experience." [10] Does this assertion really overcome Kant and actually refer us to God (a true transcendent other independent of us) ? Does this assertion point to anything *beyond* a regulative idea drawn from practical reason (man's experience of self-tran-

*tions,* p. 42. Now this experience can hardly be disputed. But as a proof for the reality of God who *transcends such an experience* it presupposes what is not proven and is thus inadequate. This inadequacy follows from Rahner's method. He thinks he has discovered the being of God by examining man'g term. Thus, he writes: "there is and can be only *one* proof: in the whole questionable nature of man seen as a totality ... " *TI* 9: 127-44, "Observations on the Doctrine of God," p. 140. See also *TI* 11: 149.

69 *Foundations,* p. *66.* See also *TI* 4: 61 and 67. On p. *67* Rahner writes: "We can therefore affirm at once with certainty that the two mysteries of incarnation and grace are simply the mysteriously radical form of the mystery which we have shown to be the primordial one, from the point of view of philosophy of religion and also of theology: God as the holy and abiding mystery ... "

10 *Ji'Qitnd«tions,*Γ· *67* and *TI* 11 : 159-60,

scendence) ? I do not see how these questions are answered by this assertion. In faithfulness to his method Rahner *assumes* that the universality of the experience proves that it cannot be just an idea. "For this term is what opens up and makes possible the process of transcendence. Transcendence is borne by this term, and this term is not its creation." [71] Yet, on the crucial question of what *proves* that this *idea* of a *term* determining the validity of our experiences, actually corresponds with a real and true " being," a *Ding an sich,* Rahner passes over the *question* and assumes that because we cannot describe our experience without this idea of a term or horizon-it must be real.

So, while Kant asked metaphysicians to prove this connection between idea and reality, Hahner simply *assumes* it and by making that assumption he never really answers him. Thus, Rahner concludes: "The affirmation of the reality of the absolute mystery is grounded for us, who are finite spirits, *in the necessity with which the actualization of transcendence as our own act is given for us."* '[72] Because the foundation for and validation of knowledge of God is a " self-validating" experience of one's horizon, Rahner, once again, does not conceptualize any independent freedom for God. "The basic and original knowledge of what 'being' is comes from this act of

[71] *Foundations,* p. 67 and *TI* 11: 160.

[12] *Foundations,* p. 67. Emphasis mine. The foundation for all of this in Rahner's thought is what was described above as the luminosity of being. Because Rahner assumes an *original unity* of the knowable and its cognition *(HW,* pp. 40-1) he argues that they "must derive from a single origin" (p. 41). Thus, the problem of objectivity for Rahner is solved by his assumption of this original unity between subject and object which necessarily must be deduced from the knowing subject. It is precisely on the basis of this insight that Rahner develops his notion of the pre-concept *(Vorgriff) (HW,* pp. 53-68) as part of man's subsisting-in-himself which is self-validating. Rahner assumes it is self-validating because of his assumption of the original unity between knower and known. So for Rahner our experiences are self-validating. And if you don't have one you simply cannot know what he is talking about, according to him. He writes: "We must experience here what mystery is, or we shall never understand its true and perfect sense" *(TI* 4: 53).

transcendence, and it is not derived from an individual existent which we know. Something real can encounter us only in knowledge, and to state that there is something real which is a priori and in principle inaccessible to knowledge is a self-contradictory statement." [73] And according to his method that must be so. But the only way this can be true is *if* man possesses *innately* knowledge of every possible reality. *Yet* this possession is just what Kant called into question. If God is not an individual existent which we *can* know, then there is no real knowledge of God in his uniqueness and otherness as one who loves. And indeed if he is not an *e3.:istent* which truly is *inaccessible* to human insight, then he is not a real transcendent other at all; since he is accessible necessarily and always as we must affirm him as the term of all our transcendental acts.

It should be stressed that by assuming that knowledge of God is a universal experience of man as he is. Ra:hner has precluded any real transcendence or freedom for God *independent* of what human experience ascribes to him. Thus, while it is clear that Rahner has profoundly indicated that we cannot leave the sphere of experience and reflection to know the transcendent God, he has not shown that knowledge of God is a *free* human response of faith to God's confrontation of His creatures in Christ and the Spirit as expressed in scripture. Rather, "In the act of transcendence the reality of the term is *necessarily* affirmed because in this very act and *orily* in it do we experience what reality is." [74] Here is the crux of the matter. It is here that the creature either *needs* God, grace, revelation and faith or has them as part of his ontology; in which case theology will never escape the appearance of redefining God, revelation, grace and faith as elements which can be seen and described without the *need* to choose between a strict philosophical and theological method.

[73] *Foundations,* p. 67 and *TI* 11: 150. On p. 160 of *TI* 11 Rahner insists that this kind of God does not exist today.

[14] *Foundations,* p. 68. Emphasis mine. Cf. also *TI* 11: 155-6, 159.

### 3. Pantheism

The hallmark compromise of the divine freedom implied by the *creatio ex nihilo* is the fact of *mutual conditioning* which determines Rahner's thought in significant ways. For Rahner there can be no God without man as there can be no man without God. This is because Rahner identifies knowledge of God with the necessity of affirming our horizon. Again, Rahner would certainly insist that God is free precisely because He is nameless. But the question I have raised here is whether the term of our experience which Rahner has described truly is nameless. For if it were, God would then be inaccessible to human insight. We would not be able to know him by experiencing ourselves. As I have suggested above, however, Rahner's method begins precisely by naming the nameless because he assumes there is an original *unity* between knower (man) and known (God). "We have discussed both the holy mystery, which exists absolutely and which we call by the familiar name 'God,' and our transcendence to this holy mystery together. In the original unity of this transcendental experience, the two are *mutually dependent* on each other for their intelligibility." [75] And indeed they are. But what has Rahner described here? According to his own presuppositions he has described man's original experience of his unity with the one and all of created being. We do not have to believe in the God of scriptural revelation to describe this mutually dependent relation.

[75] *Foundations,* p. 68. For an example of Rahner's statement regarding proofs for the existence of God see *Foundations,* p. 69 where he writes: "That which does the grounding is itself grounded, as it were, and what is present in silence and without a name is itself given a name." Because Rahner thinks this way he actually maintains that "God confers on man the power to make a genuine answer to his Word, and so makes his own further Word dependent upon the way in which man does in fact freely answer" *(Tl* 1: 111). This follows again from his assumption that "In any act of cognition it is not only the object known but also the knowing subject that is involved" *(Tl* 11: 87). Indeed "It [knowledge] is dependent not only upon the object, but also upon the essential structure of the knowing subject . . . they *mutually condition* one another" (p. 87, emphasis mine). See also *Tl* 4: 49 and *HW,* 39-41, 43.

Thus, this description of God does not result from faith seeking understanding. In order to describe the Christian God there would have to be a clear statement that His particular *freedom* precludes the idea that He can be described in revelation and grace as mutually dependent in this way. Faith in the Creator means knowledge of one who *freely* acts *for us.* This implies that He is dependent on no one and nothing *to be* and to be our God *ad extra.*

Rahner's identifying knowledge of God with the necessity of affirming one's horizon then prevents him from speaking of God as an individual existent confronting man at specific points in history. And yet it seems to me that this is exactly the kind of act which scripture envisioned when it referred to God's grace and revelation. Whereas in scripture God is the Lord of Israel and the one who is revealed in the events of the cross and resurrection, for Rahner He is the " inconceivable and incomprehensible single fullness of reality. This fullness in its *original unity* is at once the condition of the possibility both for knowledge and for the individual thing known objectively." [76] Thus, the proofs for the existence of God express this experience of union and distinction between oneself and the ground of this experience, i.e., the *term* (horizon) .[77] The metaphysical principle of causality itself comes from the same experience. [78] Thus, this principles too proves to Rahner that in his analysis of the experience of transcendence and its term he has truly described the Creator-creature relationship. Yet this is possible because Rahner has actually synthesized both Creator and creature under a metaphysical notion of being drawn from an experience of " absolute being." [79] Thus, all proofs of God spring from this " same transcendental experience." [80]

[76] *Foundations,* p. 69.
[11] *Foundations,* p. 70.
[78] *Foundations,* p. 70. Rahner insists that causality should not be interpreted as in the natural sciences but in terms of experience of our term.
[79] *Foundations,* p. 71.
[so] *Foundations,* p. 71.

4. Analogy of Being

Rahner also re-defines the analogy of being using the transcendental method. We do not learn about God "from something which does not have much to do with God." [81] Because " transcendental experience is the condition which makes possible all categorical knowledge of individual objects, it follows from the *nature of transcendental experience* that the analogous statement signifies what is most basic and original in our knowledge." [82] Thus, for Rahner, *analogy* cannot mean a similarity between two utterly different beings [Creator and creature] which do not exist in an original ontological *unity.* It must mean " the tension between a categorical starting point and the incomprehensibility of the holy mystery, namely, God. We ourselves, as we can put it, exist analogously in and through our being grounded in this holy mystery which always surpasses us." [83] Here, as elsewhere, Rahner seems to maintain God's freedom and human freedom by distinguishing our categories (human freedom) from the holy mystery which always surpasses us (divine freedom) . But, inasmuch as this "holy mystery" has already been categorized as part of the *very structure of created being and mutually determined* by our experience of it, the problem of how to envision God's freedom remains. If this holy mystery is the Creator God existing utterly in Himself and in whom we can only *believe,* then it cannot logicaily be described as the necessary *term* against which all human knowledge takes place, i.e., the metaphysical idea of absolute being. This assumption by Rabner allows him to think he can describe God as the absolute instance of a general principle of being. Thus, when Rahner defines God as person he writes: "The statement that 'God is a person' ... is true of God only if, in asserting and understanding this statement, we open it to the ineffable darkness of the holy

[81] *Foundations,* p. 72.
[82] *Foundations,* p. 72, emphasis mine.
[83] *Foundations,* p. 73.

mystery." [84] When asked where our philosophy receives its content Rahner would say: " from our historical experience." [85] Consequently, while he intends to do a theological ontology, his method leads him to make the experience of self the foundation, norm and source of understanding God, revelation and grace.[86]

The rest of Rahner's doctrine of God simply works out the logic of this "transcendental" reflection on experience. "Man implicitly affirms absolute being as the real ground of every act of knowledge ... and affirms it as mystery. This absolute . . . which is always the ontologically silent horizon of every intellectual and spiritual encounter with realities, is therefore always infinitely different from the knowing subject." [87] While this may be true I would say we cannot therefore leap to the conclusion that this absolute being is the Christian God. For in a Christian doctrine of God we speak of one who is of a completely different being and nature from the absolute being conceivable as the" single whole of reality."

### 5. *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

At this point in his discussion in *Foundations of Christian Faith* Rahner explains the creation "out of nothing." [88] It is a clear expression of the fact that for the Christian theologian creation can in no sense be seen or described as necessary to God without denying God's freedom. But the conflict between philosophy and theology surfaces here once again. Though Rahner intends to maintain God's freedom *in se* and in revelation and though he states this eloquently, he does not realize that his method, which distinguishes us from God by distinguishing us and our *term*, cannot actually preserve the freedom he describes as a theologian. So while he writes: " God

[84] *Foundations,* p. 74.
[85] *Foundations,* p. 74.
[86] *Foundations,* p. 75. None of this is contradicted in volume 4 or volume 11 (text 18ff., and 3-15 pp. supra). Both articles insist on the same point.
[87] *Foundations,* p. 77 and also *TI* 4: 50.
[88] *Foundations,* p. 78.

does not become dependent on the world, but remains free vis-a-vis the world and grounded in himself," [89] his thinking does not bear that out consistently. Attempting to preserve human and divine freedom, Rahner says God does not become an object of categorical knowledge, which knowledge always involves mutual necessity between cause and effect and presumably leads to the definition of causality envisioned by natural science but which is inapplicable here.[90] Thus, Rahner is faced with the problem of explaining how we (in our categories) actually know God while maintaining His freedom. Instead of turning to the God of scriptural relevation he answers from his method by saying that God is the "*absolutely distant term* of the transcendence within which an individual finite thing is known." [01] And this answer demonstrates again the logical and theological problem involved in synthesizing natural and revealed theology as in the following dilemma.

*Either* Rahner may argue that we have no categorical knowledge of God since he is free. This would preserve creaturely and divine freedom and point us to revelation as that which authenticates our concepts. Our concepts would be limited and would point beyond that limited range only when God intervened to enable it. But then, of course, Rahner would have to maintain that we have *no real knowledge* of God by reflecting on ourselves apart from scriptural faith in the triune God. *Or* he may argue that knowledge of our *term.* (which of course has to involve categories-the nameless being a category too) is *real knowledge* of God; in which case he has in fact denied his own description of God's freedom. But he cannot *logically* argue both that God is *free* (that we have no categories for him) *and* that we know him as the "term" of our spiritual dynamism. What is it that leads Rahner to believe he has maintained God's freedom here? Clearly, it is

[89] *Foundations,* p. 78.
[Do] *Foundations,* p. 70.
[91] *Foundations,* p. 78. Emphasis mine.

the idea that God is the *horizon* we all experience necessarily as that which is " not at our disposal." [92] So, by conceptually making this" term" not just remote but" absolutely distant" Rahner believes he is maintaining the freedom of the Christian God. But the problem here is that no matter how distant this *term* may be, Rahner and any philosopher can still describe it (categorically) as the holy mystery, absolute being, the nameless or as Rahner himself stated " by a thousand other names," and indeed as the Creator God of Christianity, without ever believing in the triune God. Insofar as this is thought possible, the *freedom* of God implied by the Christian *creatio ex nihilo* recedes into the baokground since the transcendental method *must claim* a true knowledge of God as part of an experience of one's horizon. And whenever this assumption is the starting point of a doctrine of God, Christian revelation, which sees the scriptural word as its only norm for truth, becomes more a conclusion than a starting point for reflection. Onoe this happens it is hard to see why we would *need* Christian revelation in any practical way.

### 6. Categorical-Transcendental Revelation

By removing knowledge of God from the realm of the categorical and placing it into the realm of experience Rabner posits an original unity between Creator and creatures. [93] Thus, this cannot be understood without an experience of freedom and responsibility. At this point Rahner applies his method to the scriptural understanding of God, revelation and grace. We know God " in a transcendental experience in which the subject ... is experienced as being borne by an incomprehensible ground . . . the absolute mystery which is not at our disposal ... Creatureliness, then, always means both the *grace* and the mandate to preserve and to accept that tension of analogy which the finite subject is ... " [94]

92 See text pp. 6ff. and *TI* 11: 159-60.

93 *Foundations,* p. 79. This is the more "primordial unity of the spirit " he presumes exists and defines in *TI* 4: 38ff.

94 *Foundations,* p. 80. Emphasis mine.

The same procedure takes place in *Theological Investigations,* volume 4, " The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," and again in volume 11, "The Experience of God Today." And the results reveal once again how difficult it is to describe vevelation and grace as free acts of God calling for faith seeking understanding once it is assumed that experience can be a starting point equal to scripture in this matter.

The transcendental method excludes the idea that a special inconceivable act of God within experience is the sole source of truth. Thus, the key to interpreting lectures two and three of *Theological Investigations,* volume 4, " The Concept of Mystery ..." is to realize that what dictates Rahner's view of incarnation, grace and glory and his identifying the immanent and economic Trinity is not a special inconceivable act of God. It is not the revelation of something previously hidden as it might be in scholastic school theology. Rather it is the fact that he believes each of these represents the radical proximity of God to creatures in their self-transcending experiences. That is why Rahner's distinction between nature and grace, reason and revelation and philosophy and theology can be perfectly clear in one description and become quite obscure in another. Each of these " supernatural " mysteries is taken by Rahner as a truth confirming one's unity and distinction with absolute being (mystery'-term-horizon) which one always experiences. Thus, incarnation, grace and glory are not truths that reveal something totally beyond the sphere of human experience. Rather they simply confirm that the holy mystery is *indeed* always present as the *term* of our experience is present. Consequently, the immanent and economic Trinity is identical and God's radically close relation with creatures can only be expressed in terms of quasi-formal causality. [95] While Rabner the theologian insists that truth is grounded in the triune God, in Christ and in grace, he is led increasingly away from a specifically Christian interpretation of those concepts as he applies his method. The operative principle of his method asserts that theological and philosophical truth can be known from

[95] See Molnar, *TS,* pp. 240ff., 245-Sff. for more on this problem.

man's experience of and interpretation of himself. The problem here is that the triune God, Christ and grace tend to become instances of his general transcendental principles.

In volume 11, "The Experience ..." Rahner writes:

> The experience of God to which we have appealed ... is not necessarily so a-Christian as appears at first sight. On the contrary ... it is precisely Christianity which makes real this experience of God in its most radical and purest form, and in Jesus Christ achieves a convincing manifestation of it in history . . . This experience of God ... really constitutes the very heart and centre of Christianity itself and also the ever living source of that *conscious manifestation* which we call 'revelation.' . . . Through this experience of God Christianity itself simply achieves a more radical and clearer understanding of its own authentic nature. For in fact in its true essence it is not one particular religion among others, but rather the sheer objectivation in history of that *experience* of God which exists everywhere in virtue of God's universal will to save all men by bestowing himself upon them as grace ...[96]

Why should Christianity and not other religions possess this obj,ectivity? If the experience of God exists everywhere as this statement indicates then why should Christian experience be any more authentic than any other religious experience? Rahner intends to preserve Christianity's uniqueness but again his method explains that uniqueness as an instance of his general principle of being applied to human experience. Consequently, as a Christian theologian Rahner maintains Christianity is the "pure form" of an experience of God which all religions describe. Yet, this creates more problems than it solves. For if truth is contingent on anyone's experience of God then any statement that Christianity is the "purest" expression of religious experience can only make it appear that Christian experience is somehow inherently better than other religious experience.

The problem which I have tried to present in this paper surfaces here once more. Any attempt to explain the objective uniqueness of Christianity by pointing to our subjective experience interpreted philosophically or religiously will always

96 *TI* 11: 164. Emphasis mine.

describe grace and God's universal will to save as properties of creaturely being. Yet if scriptural faith and revelation are normative, then it is clear that the objective uniqueness of revelation never resides in anyone's religious experience, but in the uniqueness of the Christian God acting *ad extra* in free revelation and free grace. Rahner's argument would have been more convincing had he held that a Christian's experience is not one among others because it is tied to Christ alone. Instead he argues it is not one among others because it is a more radical form of what everyone experiences.

Thus, Rahner believes that Jesus is a "convincing manifestation" of our self-experience in history. Yet, if this is so, it is hard to know why he was crucified and not installed as king of Israel or heralded as the solution to the philosophical problems of the Greeks.[97] If Rahner's norm here had been the word of God revealed he would have realized that Jesus (as true God and true man) brings us all that we, in our religious experiences *cannot* procure for ourselves, i.e., God's inconceivable act of revelation and salvation manifested in his life, death and resurrection. The prophets and apostles were witnesses to that truth. He would have realized that describing this self-sufficient revelation of a *free* God as a "conscious" or unconscious manifestation in ourselves compromises the very objectivity he sought to maintain. Instead of presenting Christianity as the purest or most radical form of religion he would have been more able to show that *everyone,* including Christians, depends always upon God's *free* grace for salvation and for objective verification of these truth claims. Christians cannot point to any religious experience or set of experiences as the pure or true form of religion any more than anyone from another religion can do it. This, because God's grace *al,one* makes "religion" true existentially and theoretically. Thus, Christians are those who actively live this truth.[98]

97 Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 2: 8.

98 Cf. Acts 11: 26. The word Christians was first used at .Antioch to refer to the disciples who accepted the teaching of the apostles. Rahner's difficulty

Rahner's conclusion really goes beyond the limits of theology to the extent that the principles of his method dictate the solution to this problem. He writes: "It is, therefore, a task precisely rfor Christianity itself to point ever anew to this basic *experience of God,* to *induce* man to discover it within himself, to accept and also avow his allegiance to *it* in its verbal and historical objectivation; for, in its pure form and as related to Jesus Christ as its seal of authenticity, it is precisely this that we call Christianity." [99] Is it now the task of Christians to point out to other Christians and non-Christians that they can achieve knowledge of God in this way and that their allegiance is to their experiences of " absolute being " which being can well be explained as a universal human manifestation without *faith* in Jesus and the Spirit and thus without employing a strictly theological method of faith seeking understanding? Again, it is another question entirely whether Christianity is the " pure form " of *this experience* at all since Christ actually points us away from any existential or conceptual self-reliance to complete dependence on Him. Thus I would say that biblical revelation is at variance with Rahner's conclusion as we are told that *1ve cannot really achieve knowledge of the true God* in this way since we *are* dependent *only* on the One Mediator-to whom *alone* we owe allegiance.[100]

## 7. Mediated Immediacy

Returning to *Foundation of Christian Faith* Rabner assumes once again that " grace " is embedded in the world of experience [101] and recognizing that leads to the truth of the Christian

here is that he assumes that God's "universal will to save" is identical with grace as a constituent element in human experience. It really is not. And as long as grace is conceptualized in this way there can be no clear distinction between God's will and human experience which in fact is not structurally altered by the incarnation as Rahner thinks. Humans exist in *relation* to God's salvific act in Christ and the Spirit-not in identity with it.

99 *TI* 11: 164·5, emphasis mine.

100 See, e.g., Edward Schweizer, *Jesus,* (Atlanta, 1971), pp. 89-90. This is exactly what happened in Gnosticism.

101 *Foundations,* p. 81.

doctrine of God. It is worth examining this final assertion by Rahner of how to find God in the world using the transcendental method.

Rahner has established two things thus far in *Foundations.* 1.) · "As ineffable and incomprehensible presupposition, as ground and abyss, as ineffable mystery, God cannot be found in his world." [102] This is his way of insisting that God is *free.*

Yet all religion, including the Christian religion, "declares phenomena existing within our experience as definite and exclusive objectifications and manifestations of God." [103] This is his way of insisting that we, as creatures, can know God. Examples of these phenomena are the pope (as vicar of Christ) and Jesus himself; "in this way God as it were appears within the world of our categorical experience ..." [104]

In relation to this theological problem, namely, that God is the ineffable silent term of all knowledge and that religion claims a categorical knowledge of God, Rahner proposes his theory of "mediated immediacy." [105] This theory basically articulates the unity and distinction between ourselves and our horizon or term as discussed above. The conflict between reason and revelation is evident since at one and the same time Rahner affirms indirect knowledge of God through created symbols and experiences and *direct knowledge* of and experience of God through grace and revelation. It is, of course, this latter affirmation which I believe is excluded by God's freedom *(creatio ex nihilo).* While Rahner holds the *creatio ex nihilo* as any theologian would, his philosophical and theological explanations of it categorize grace and revelation as elements within human consciousness-as existentials of man as he exists in the world.[106]

[102] *Foundations* p. 81.

[103] *Foundations,* p. 81.

[104] *Foundations,* p. 81.

[105] *Foundations,* pp. 83ff.

[10s] The reason he thinks this way is that within his system it is completely impossible to conceive of God acting in the incarnation, grace and glory *(TI* 4: 66-72) while rema.ining absolutely other than the creature as the naturally

Yet, if Christian revelation means God *freely* reveals Himself in and through history without becoming dependent on

known efficient cause. Thus when God acts (imparts himself) in the incarnation, grace and glory, this *must* take place via quasi-formal causality *(TI* 4: 67) because this signals the kind of entitative divinization of the transcendental subjective attitude necessary for Rahner's natural theology. Quasi-formal causality means that "God imparts himself immediately of himself to the creature" *(TI* 4: 66) He must do this. Rahner writes: " God as his own very self *must* penetrate into the non-divine region of the finite" *(TI* 4: 67, emphasis mine). This, because the triune God can be none other than the *holy mystery* Rahner discovered as efficient cause from his philosophy of religion (natural theology).

As efficient cause, God creates another. God does not act this way in relation to creation. He is "formal " cause acting in creation. The problem here is that the Creator God is not merely an efficient cause naturally known. In fact the Creator God, as efficient cause, is no less than the efficient cause acting in the form (creation). But Rahner cannot conceive of such a God and such a transcendent divine action on and in the creature. This is the case because he insists that revelation of the immanent Trinity cannot contradict the fact that the absolute holy mystery (the efficient cause) is the reality of God revealed. Thus, for Rahner there is *no triune God transcending the concept of mystery* drawn from *experience.* That is why, in his trinitarian doctrine Rahner can only conceive of God in his proper reality as the unoriginated origin, while in the incarnation, grace and glory we meet something less than this, i.e., the Real Symbol (Christ) *('PI* 4: 228ff, and 237-241).

As an example of Rahner's difficulty here consider this statement taken from *TI* 4: 67 **"It** is simply contradictory that something should belong completely to the order of creation, by being created, and still belong to the strictly divine order, by being strictly supernatural. Supernatural reality and reality brought about by the divine self-communication of quasi-formal, not efficient type, are identical concepts." This is a clear and *necessary synthesis* of *supernatural* and *natural reality* which must follow from Rahner's *method.* Rather than thinking of God's grace as his incomprehensibly *free act on* and *in* the creature-the act of the efficient cause (the Creator)-Rahner thinks of it as the quasi-formal alteration of the knowing subject, i.e., the reality "brought about" by God's immediate communication of himself to the creature in grace and glory. In fact this is a denial that the incarnation is a mystery of faith as " Scholastic " theology saw it. Isn't that the very mystery of our faith, i.e., that Jesus, being *true God* and *true man,* belongs to the creaturely sphere and yet is truly supernatural-no *less God* than the Creator-the efficient cause? And isn't the real problem of knowing God truly solved *only* by the fact that in Jesus we have the revelation of the Father (efficient cause) *only* because God has acted and does act freely (grace) on our behalf in Jesus and the Spirit?

For Rahner's explanation of quasi-formal causality see also *TI* 1: 329ff. and *Foundations,* pp. 119-20ff.

history then we really have no *direct* knowledge of God and any such claim would make our experience more than human or God less than transcendent in order to explain incarnation, grace and glory. The main point of New Testament Christianity is that we, as creatures, can know God truly when our thinking in faith points to his sovereign intervention in history. Sign and thing signified, though seen as related in faith, would not be synthesized. While Rabner continually insists on the distinction between sign and reality, he also synthesizes them to the extent that grace and revelation [what is signified] cannot transcend being in general which we experience and know from philosophy.[107] The New Testament view seems closer to the concept of mystery which Rabner rejects as Scholastic "school theology," since he believes that this view maintains that mystery is obscured and veiled and only accessible to *faith.*[108] Rabner cannot go along with this because, for him, *ratio* is a spiritual entity of absolute transcendence and therefore is the very faculty by which the presence of *mystery* is assured.[109] That is why Rabner asserts that God (as unknown) is included essentially in every act of cognition.[110] The comprehensive concept of mystery which Rabner has in mind[111]

107 See text, p. 36, n. 17, p. 38, n. 33 and esp. p. 39, n. 36. For the same idea see also *TI* 4: 221-252, "The Theology of the Symbol," pp. 234-5 where Rahner writes: They [the principles of symbolic ontology] arise because the concept of being is 'analogous', that is, displays the *various types* of self-realization of each being, and being in itself, and hence also the concept and reality of the symbol are flexible. But because these are necessarily given with the general concept of beings and being-as the 'unveiled ' figure of the most primordial 'truth' of being-the symbol shares this *'analogia entis'* with being which it symbolizes." Rahner's explanation of God, Christ, Church and sacrament all bear the mark of this thought. For him " the symbol is the reality, constituted by the thing symbolized as an inner moment of moment of itself, [sic.] which reveals and proclaims the thing symbolized, and is itself *f'uU of the thing symbolized"* (7'I 4: 251, emphasis mine). This is why he thinks there is a mutual causal connection between the sacramental signs and God's grace (p. 240). See also K. Rahner, *The Church and The Sacraments,* Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (New York, 9163), p. 38.

10s *TI* 4: 38-40.

109 *TI* 4: 41.

110 *TI* 4: 4lff., 49-50.

111 *TI* 4: 48ff.

derives from his consideration of man in his natural and supernaturally elevated state as "oriented toward mystery." [112] This analysis follows from his method. It asserts that man can have a self-validating experience of God, and in that assertion the real need to depend on God's special intervention in history either in Israel, Christ or the Church or by awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit can no longer be stated with the same clarity and consistency as in the New Testament and in the tradition. For our orientation already contains what scripture and the tradition claim we can only receive as *free gift.*

Rahner clearly recognizes the problem here and states that God could be said to play an indirect role as the "primordial ground" of experience. Or, he says, a person might worship nature as divine or make scientific truth the answer thinking in this fashion. Nonetheless, despite the fact that "it is very difficult to distinguish clearly here between nature and supernatural grace in their mutual relationship" [113] this can be called "natural religion." [114]

Here Rahner turns to Christian revelation again to explain God's transcendence and immanence. He says that categories such as sacrament, church, revelation and scripture only point to the "transcendental presence of God." [115] But how can he describe these in terms of "mediated immediacy"? His answer is clear. If God is to remain infinite while encountering us in religion "then this event must take place on the basis of transcendental experience as such." [116] This means that this presence must be a modality of this relationship. Since transcendental experience of absolute being allows for an immediacy of God, it must be true. Again Rahner is consistent in his method by holding that Christian categories do not point to ·specific interventions of God in history which can be seen

112 *TI* 4: 49.
11s *Foundations,* p. 85.
114 *Foundations,* p. 85.
115 *Foundations,* p. 85.
116 *Foundations,* p. 85.

only in faith. Rather they point to the " modality of this transcendental relationship." [111] Of course, for Rahner, this modality is man's supernatural existential which he frequently describes in terms of quasi-formal causality. [118] And this explanation is ultimately traceable to his philosophy of the symbol which assumes fusion and mutual dependence of sign and thing signi:fied.[119] But, in connection with his doctrine of God, this means " immediacy " to God " must be embedded in this world to begin with." [120] And this follows since he has already assumed that experience of our term (God-the single whole of reality-absolute being) is an inherent experience of man. Thus, religion simply is a moment in and modality of our transcendental and " mediated immediacy to God." [121] But what kind of God can be known directly by knowing the medium (religion) and God *embedded* in the religious medium? A God who " as the transcendental ground of the world has from the outset embedded himself in this world as its self-communicating ground." [122] Rahner clearly intends to say that the Christian God has been involved with the world since the very beginning. But as he explains how we interpret experience of the Christian God according to his method, he cannot really conceive of a God truly existing independently of the world (i.e. an immanent Trinity) .

The significance of all this highlights the problem I have sought to clarify in this paper. Because our self experience is both starting point and norm for the question of God and his activity in the world, Rahner believes that the " categorical presence of God " is simply the religious subject objectivating his religious experiences. And as such they [categories-objectivations] perform a" valuable role." Actually" The role indeed

111 *Foundations,* p. 85.

us See text, pp. 18 et al. and esp. p. 44, n. 105, p. 37, n. 28, and pp. 38-9 n. 35, et al.

119 See, e.g., *TI* 4: 236 and above, n. 106. Also *TI* 4: 228ff.

120 *Foundations,* p. 87.

121 *Foundations,* p. 87.

122 *Foundations,* p. 87.

really belongs to those phenomena in themselves." [123] This attempt to speak of a God who is and remains *free* in the scriptural sense ascribes too much to created phenomena. It assumes that all religious experience points to the reality of God insofar as it points to the horizon (term) of human experience. But this is the very assumption which causes Rahner to compromise the scriptural and the traditional distinctions between God (the true God) and his *free* grace and idols and existentials which might lead us away from the true God and not toward him. Rahner concludes his treatment in *Foundations* by defining God's intervention in history with an example of what validates our "good idea " which we think corresponds with God's intervention.

"The moment I experience myself as a transcendental subject in my orientation to God and accept it, and the moment I accept this concrete world in which ... the absolute ground of my existence unfolds historically for me and I actualize it in freedom, *then* within this subjective, transcendental relationship to God this 'good idea' [his intervention] receives objectively a quite definite and positive significance." [124] Perceptively, Rahner aisks what is to prevent me from calling *anything* an *intervention* of God arguing in this fashion? His answer is: "Why, then, may this not be the case?" [125] How this question is actually answered can be a matter of no small concern to philosophers and theologians.

Following the position for which I have argued, i.e., that the God of scripture is truly *free* even in his involvement in human experience, we would have to say that this may not be the case because God himself is not in any way *dependent* on anyone or anything to be God in himself or God for us *ad extra.*

123 *Foundations,* p. 88. Cf. also *Tl* 4: 221-252. Symbols must have this function for Rahner because being and appearance are intrinsically and essentially related so that one cannot really exist without the other. See pp. 230-lff. All of this is true for Rahner because he believes that symbols possess an " overplus of meaning" (225). See also above, n. 106.

124 *Foundations,* p. 88. Emphasis mine.

125 *Foundations,* p. 89.

This insight would preclude arguing, as Rahner does, that our orientation to God contributes *objectively* to the positive significance of our ideas about his intervention in history. The only way Rahner's insight could be true is if the Christian God were in fact " embedded " in the world as a " ground of being " recognizable by the metaphysician and the philosopher of religion as well as by the theologian, thinking within the biblical faith.

This is not to say that God cannot be conceptualized as a "ground of being." Obviously, insofar as we all actually depend upon God for our being He is the " ground of being." The question raised here is what specific object determines the truth of our metaphysical concept of God's being? If it is the immanent Trinity acting *ad extra* in Christ and the Spirit, then we cannot actually begin thinking about Him outside of faith in the Father, Son and Spirit. This would mean that we could not begin thinking about God truly as the " ground of being " prior to an acknowledgement of the unique being of God revealed in Christ and the Spirit. Any attempt to define God as the " ground of being " before believing in the immanent Trinity might lead directly to the conclusion of the Deists, i.e., that Christ is unnecessary really to know God.[126] Interestingly, the position which I am questioning here is exactly what *must* be stated in a philosophy of symbolic reality.[121] But it is just this idea which obscures philosophical and theological investigation.

126 Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy,* (New Haven, 1979), pp. 104-5ff.

121 See above, nn. 106 and 121 and Molnar *TS,* 46, pp. 238ff. and 25lff. See also *TI* 4: 225ff. Rahner believes that " in the long run everything agrees in some way or another with everything else," (225). Thus, for Rahner, symbols are related essentially with what is symbolized and the two are intrinsically and mutually dependent. All of this is true because what is symbolized " passes over into the ' otherness ' of the symbol " (240). In other words, in a symbolic philosophy, signs and things signified are embedded in one another in such a way that no clear and sharp distinction between them can be made. Clearly, this cannot apply to knowledge of God who is and remains different from the creature in his encounter with creation. This symbolic thinking is exactly what leads to Rahner's insistence on a quasi-formal explanation of the Creator-creature relationship once again (pp.

The philosopher can indeed bypass Christ and attempt to know God. He or she may always discover a " supreme being" but that is the most that can be discovered thereby. The theologian of revelation cannot bypass Christ [and by implication the Old and New Testaments] and attempt to know God. Thus he or she will know that the unity and Trinity of the Christian God would preclude any attempt to define God as a supreme being without allowing Christ and the Spirit the sole freedom to determine the truth of the concept. Then a clear and sharp distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity would be maintained since it would be very clear that the being of God revealed (the immanent Trinity) actually transcends and is different from the being of God recognized by the philosopher apart from biblical faith (supreme being recognized as the term of our experiences of self-transcendence).

Because he is faithful to his method (attempting to harmonize natural knowledge of God with revealed knowledge) Rahner is actually unable to resolve this theological problem. Thus, he must maintain that *what* is categorized, i.e., "the holy mystery," is not conceptually beyond the religious phenomena which, in themselves, are supposed to convey God's grace. On this view the theological question of how we really know that this or that " concept " of God's intervention is *true* is left ambiguous. For Rahner, of course, the answer resides in his *assumption* that transcendental experience of one's horizon is a real experience of *God* simply because people experience themselves this way. And their experiences are self-validating. Thus, what "we call" God and his intervention ultimately depends not on God *alone* but on God as well as the strength of our transcendental experiences. I am arguing that this mutual coordination of God's action in history with

245ff.). The whole problem here centers on the fact that in a Christian doctrine of God-God is and remains ontologically different from his creatures even in the incarnation, grace and glory. There is in fact no original ontological unity between Creator and creatures as there must be for a symbolic ontological explanation of absolute being in relation to finite being.

our historical self-experience compromises the unique objectivity and freedom of God envisioned by the scriptural revelation.

Furthermore, this assumption by Rahner actually subverts the real need for Christian revelation as an independent source of truth coming to us from something other than our self-experience. One does not *need* to believe in God's special presence in history in his Word and Spirit if one already possesses this truth in the experience of his orientation toward the absolute, which absolute may well have little or nothing to do with the eternally triune God of Christianity. [128] In Rahner's doctrine of God then we are told that we need this God. But his method ends exactly where it began, i.e., with man's experience of himself which he" calls" God.[129] And this leads to his theory of anonymous Christianity in which he spells out the implications of this position by maintaining that everyone can know and experience what Christians know and experience in faith simply by having these transcendental experiences.[130] Though

[128] See, e.g., Gilson, pp. 105ff. and L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity,* (New York, 1957), pp. 50-58. The god of the Deists (cf. Gilson) and the god of Feuerbach are not the Christian God but an apotheosis, a mythological human invention.

[129] See *Foundations,* pp. 53-4 and K. Rabner and K. Weger, *Our Christian Faith: Answers for the Future* (Crossroad, 1981), pp. 13 and 25.

[130] See, e.g., *TI* 12: 161-178, "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church." On p. 161 many additional references to Rahner's treatment of this topic of anonymous Christianity are given. Rahner's position that Christianity is present in everyone in an incipient state *(TI* 12: 164) simply confirms the fact that he is consistent in carrying through the logic of his method. If he did not say this he would have to deny that we could know God by knowing our *term* and that grace was embedded in creation. Ultimately he would have to deny his theory of luminosity and his philosophy of symbolic reality. Because human being is already changed ontologically (obediential potency and supernatural existential) in virtue of the incarnation Rahner believes that people don't have to hear about Christ to be Christians. Rather, in deciding for or against themselves they already decide for or against God and Christ. The problem with anonymous Christianity is the same problem that is apparent in Rahner's doctrine of God. He never really shows us that we are believing in and knowing anything which truly transcends us and exists in reality apart from our experience and interpretation of that experience. Thus, God, grace, revelation and faith are simply

Rahner certainly wished to present a more open view of salvation in this theory, the net effect renders Christianity less rather than more necessary. This, because the pivotal factor which determines the truth of Christianity on this view is to have significant human experiences, beginning with the ex-

qualities of man's experience interpreted philosophically and theologically for Rahner. As long as that is the case we really don't need to believe in Jesus and the Spirit before knowing the true God. And as long as this is the case we shall never answer the theological question of whether what we "call" God, grace, revelation and salvation are *true* as realities coming to us from a real God independent of us. For Rahner we don't need the grace of God revealed in Christ to explain " reality " to ourselves and others. God merely confirms our transcendental experiences and our interpretations of them. Thus, for Rahner, everyone is a believer whether he or she knows it or not. This, simply because everyone has unthematic experiences of absolute being in order to continue to exist meaningfully in the world. (On this see *TI* 7: 211-226, "The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives," p. 223). Rahner writes: "there may be many who face up to life bravely ... yet who do not regard themselves as believers at all. But . • . in their calm acceptance of their lives they actually achieve, implicitly and in principle what the conscious and professed believer does explicitly ..."

On this same point see *TI* 5: 3-22, " Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today," pp. 12-13. And this leads to speculation like that of the 'questioner ' who poses for Rahner the assertion in *Our Christian Faith* " that everyone who lives their world-view with determination and co=itment will find that this world-view proves true" (19-20). In fact the answer to the question of which " world-view" is true cannot be answered by examining anyone's determination and commitment to it. And this is the predicament of Rahner's method-be begins and ends his thought about truth with the determination and commitment of one's transcendental experiences. See also pp. 12-13 of *Our Christian Faith* where Rabner insists that a person is a believer in the " unreflected core of their existence " as long, as he loves, is loyal and committed to the truth. The problem with this assertion is that on his presuppositions Rahner cannot tell us whose version of "truth " is really true, since we can in fact know the truth without knowledge of Christ. That is because what actually determines the truth of his doctrine of God is our reflection on this "unreflected core of existence." For this reason belief in God, for Rahner, means belief in mystery or human existence or reality as a whole. It ciinnot mean belief in the Christian God who transcends humanity and confronts people who experience him in judgment and grace according to the Old and New Testaments. It is obvious that one can live and be committed in fact without acknowledging the truth of Christianity. Paul's analysis of his own position in Galatians and Romans would provide a good example of this. Cf. also *TI* 6: 231-249, "Reflections on the Unity of Love of Neighbour and the Love of God," p. 232 and pp. 238ff.

perience of our horizon. Any real dependence on Christ in the New Testament sense would demand faith and action with respect to Him alone.

To sum up. We have seen *what* Rahner's doctrine of God states and we have seen that it is *based* on "transcendental experience." We have contended that this starting point compromises God's *freedom* and the consequent *need* to *believe* in the *triune* God *before* being able to make sense of the Creator/creature relationship. We have contended that this leads to Rahner's synthesis of nature and grace and to the idea that God's free grace and free revelation can be described as "elements" or modalities by the philosopher of religion as well as the theologian.

### C. Revelation as An Act of God-Innate Knowledge of Truth

Now we must make this analysis and critique more precise by focusing on the nature of and need for Revelation in a Christian doctrine of God. Here we shall contrast the traditional Thomist view of Gilson with the transcendental Thomist view of Rahner. In addition, we shall draw out the implications of the scriptural revelation for theological method. In his book, *God and Philosophy,* Etienne Gilson develops the question of the proper relation between philosophy and theology by analyzing revelation and innate knowledge of the truth. It is clear that each problematic aspect of Rahner's thought mentioned above centered on how to understand the freedom of God in himself (the immanent Trinity), in his revelation (the economic Trinity), and on how we know him. We have seen that Rahner's starting point and theological method claims that everyone always has an experience of and knowledge of God. He equates this with experience of and knowledge of absolute being which he defines as mystery. This knowledge is innate and unavoidable, though it can be ignored.131 We have contended that it is this claim itself which compromises the scriptural portrayal of revelation in its free-

131 See text, *passim.*

dom, obscures the traditional distinction between philosophy and theology, nature and grace, and finally fails to distinguish adequately between God in himself (the immanent Trinity) and God *for us* (grace, incarnation and glory),[132]

**1.** Philosophy and Theology

Gilson sets up the question as follows. He argues that while Greek philosophy sought to identify the ultimate origin of the world with a first philosophical principle, the Greeks could not actually show that the first principle was anything independent of the world which could actually relate with the world. Thus, he concludes that philosophy could not solve the question it had set for itself.[133]

Then, he states that the answer was found in God's revelation to Moses. This is significant. For the solution to the philosophical problem of finding a first cause (an efficient cause), in Gilson's eyes, is answered *only* by "Him who is," i.e., Yahweh, God Himself.[134] We shall not examine Gilson's analysis of Augustine and Thomas in their attempts to think about this question in light of the bible and the inherited philosophies (Plotinus for Augustine and Aristotle for Thomas). While this is interesting and instructive we shall move directly to modern philosophy and theology in the interest of time and space.

Descartes

Gilson contends that Descartes confronted the same philosophical problem as the Greeks, i.e., the problem of natural theology and whether, by reason alone (this time including the idea of the Christian God), man could reach the Creator God-Yahweh who was both transcendent and immanent. The Greeks could reason to a first principle but then this obliterated their religion which advocated not one, but many gods. As they held to their religion, this contradicted their

132 See text, *infra.*
133 Gilson, Chapter I.
134 Gilson, Chapter 2.

philosophical idea of a first cause.[135] And this was indeed the conflict they faced. If the transcendent God could be known as a first cause (philosophically demonstrable) then he could not really be transcendent. And if God is truly transcendent as the one beyond the many (this world) then he cannot in fact be immanent. Thus, any religious reliance on such a God to save us would make little sense.

> When a Greek philosopher had to approach the problem of natural theology by a purely rational method, he found himself confronted only with the religious gods of Greek mythology. Whatever his name, his rank, or function, not one among the gods of Greek religion had ever claimed to be the one ... creator of the world, first principle, and ultimate end of all things. Descartes, on the contrary, could not approach the same philosophical problem without finding himself confronted with the Christian God. When a philosopher is also a Christian, he can very well say, at the beginning of his inquiry: let me pretend that I am not a Christian; let me try to seek, by *reason alone* and without the light of *faith*, the first causes and the first principles whereby all things can be explained. As an intellectual sport, this is as good as any other one; but it is bound to result in a failure, because when a man both knows and believes that there is but *one cause* of all that is, *the God in whom he believes can hardly be other than the cause which he knows.*[136]

This difficulty parallels the predicament Rahner faces in his work on the philosophy of religion, *Hearers of the Word,* and recapitulates the conflicts discussed above between reason and revelation. Rahner writes: "The philosophy of religion . . . cannot pre-judge the possible content of ... an utterance of God. It cannot even pre-judge the question whether such an utterance has occurred."[137] But Gilson's words regarding Descartes seem to apply here as well, i.e., the God in whom he believes (the triune God) can hardly be other than the cause which he knows-i.e. the *term* or horizon-absolute being itself. And this is what philosophy of religion can demonstrate.

135 Gilson, pp. 78-9.
136 Gilson, pp. 78·9.
1s1 *HW,* p. 174.

Thus, while Rahner speaks of the triune God, and of his own work as a theological ontology, his method compels him to pre-judge the possibility of revelation and its content precisely because he insists that his philosophy of religion is a " condition that is itself created by God's speaking." [138] In other words if it were really true that a phi1osophy of religion could not pre-judge whether revelation had in fact occurred, then Rahner's attempt in *Hearers of the Word* to establish its possibility by looking at man is in vain, since *we* can never know exactly what *we* mean by revelation. The conflict which arises here compromises Rahner's own perception of the limits of the philosophy of religion. But more importantly, it causes him to re-define revelation according to an often unarticulated presupposition that all philosophy stems from God's revelation (speaking) . Gilson illustrates a similar problem in Descartes's thought.

> The whole problem of modern natural theology is there in a nutshell . . . Far from coming after the Greeks as though there had been nothing in between, Descartes has come after the Greeks with the naive conviction that he could solve, by the purely rational method of the Greeks, all of the problems which had been raised in between by Christian natural theology ... what he did, at least in metaphysics, was to restate the main conclusions of Christian natural theology as if Christian supernatural theology itself had never existed. [139]

a. Innate Knowledge of God

In line with natural theology Descartes posited that the idea of the Christian God was innate. [140] Yet as Gilson writes: "If *we* investigate into the cause why such an idea exists within us, we are at once led to posit, as the only conceivable explanation for it, a being who is possessed of all the attributes which attend our own idea of him, that is, a self-existing, infinite, all-powerful, one and unique being." [141] And,

138 *HW,* p. 174.
130 Gilson, pp. 79-80.
140 Gilson, pp. 81-2.
141 Gilson, p. 81.

When we think more attentively of God, we soon find that the non-existence of God is, strictly speaking, unthinkable. Our innate idea of God is that of a supremely perfect being; since existence is a perfection, to think of a supremely perfect being to whom existence is wanting is to think of a supremely perfect being to whom some perfection is wanting, which is contradictory; hence existence is inseparable from God and, consequently, he necessarily is, or exists.[142]

But is this the true God? Gilson continues:

It is a well-known fact that Descartes always despised history; but here history has paid him back in full. Had he ever so little investigated into the past of his own idea of God, he would have realized at once that though it be true that all men have a certain idea of the divinity, they have not all, or always, had the Christian idea of God. If all men had such an idea of God, Moses would not have asked Jehovah for his name; or else Jehovah's answer would have been: 'What a silly question! You know it.' Descartes was so anxious not to corrupt the rational purity of his metaphysics by any admixture of Christian faith that *he simply decreed the universal innateness of the Christian definition of God.* Like the innate Ideas of Plato, Descartes' innate idea of God was a reminiscence; not however, the reminiscence of some idea contemplated by the soul in a former life, but simply the reminiscence of what he had learned in church when he was a little boy.[143]

b. God-Necessity of Creation

Where did this decree leave Descartes's conception of the Christian God? According to Gilson, it forced him to maintain that creation was in fact necessary to God as he had reduced "He who is" (Yahweh) to the condition of a first principle.[144] Gilson writes:

Now it is quite true that a Creator is an eminently Christian God, but a God whose very essence is to be a creator is not a Christian God at all. The essense of the true Christian God is not to create but to be. 'He who is' can also create, if he chooses; but he does not exist *because* he creates, nay, not even himself; he can create because he supremely is.

142 Gilson, pp. 81-2.
143 Gilson, pp. 82-3, emphasis mine.
144 Gilson, pp. 88-9.

We are now beginning to see why, and in what sense, the metaphysics of Descartes was a decisive moment in the evolution of natural theology. Evolution, however, is not always synonymous with progress; and this time it was destined to be a regress . . . What I am trying to make clear is the objective fact that, even as a philosophical supreme cause, the God of Descartes was a stillborn God. He could not possibly live because, as Descartes had conceived him, he was the God of Christianity reduced to the condition of a philosophical principle, in short, *an infelicitous hybrid of religious faith and of rational thought.* The most striking characteristic of such a God was that *his creative function had integrally absorbed his essence.* Hence, the name that was hereafter going to be his truest name: no longer 'He who is' but rather 'The Author of Nature.' .... after Descartes, he was destined progressively to become nothing else than that. Descartes himself was too good a Christian to consider Nature as a particular god; but, strangely enough, it never occurred to him that to reduce the Christian God himself to no more than the supreme cause of Nature was to do identically the same thing. [145]

God did indeed become nothing more than Nature when Spinoza concluded that "A God who 'exists and acts merely from the necessity of his nature,' is nothing more than a nature. Rather he is nature itself." [146]

God is the absolute essence whose intrinsic necessity makes necessary the being of all that is, so that he is absolutely all that is, just as, in as much as it is, all that it is 'necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God.' [147]

Thus, Gilson writes, " In the doctrine of Descartes, one may still wonder if God's essence involves his existence in himself or in our mind only; in the *Ethics* of Spinoza no hesitation remains possible." [148] Gilson concludes that " Spinoza's metaphysical experiment is the conclusive demonstration of at least this: that any religious God whose true name is not ' He who is ' is nothing but a myth." [149] And this *necessary mythologfoal*

145 Gilson, p. 89, emphasis mine.
146 Spinoza's *Ethics* quoted in Gilson, p. 101.
147 Gilson, p. 101.
148 Gilson, p. 101.
149 Gilson pp. 103-4.

*idea of* course opened the door to Deism and the French Enlightment which saw God as the great "watchmaker." In other words, as Gilson says, " God became again what he had already been in the *Timaeus* of Plato: a Demiurge, the only difference being that this time, before beginning to arrange his world, the Demiurge had consulted Newton." [150] In terms of modern philosophy, Kant really spelled the end of such naive speculations-at least to the extent that his critiques of pure and practical reason were not simply ignored.

### *3.* Rahner-Descartes-Spinoza

Though there are significant differences, there are also significant ways in which Rahner's doctrine of God follows the scheme from Descartes to Spinoza illustrated by Gilson. One really notable difference is that Rahner's foundation is more experience than thought. Yet there is no experience *in nuce;* there is only *interpreted* experience. Indeed Rahner himself expresses the opinion that although metaphysics is not the norm for his doctrine of God, it is experience.[151] For Rahner metaphysics directs man to the unthematic experience he already has of God.[152] In this sense Rahner clearly acknowledges that there is no experience *in nuce;* only interpreted experience. And it is in this sense that metaphysics is his criterion of truth. His criterion is and remains being in general as objectified by man on the basis of his experience of himself and of creation. [153] And the question here concerns what validates objectively our always subjective interpretation of God acting within the range of our experience. In what ways, then, can Rahner's thought be compared to that of Descartes and Spinoza?

First, in practice Rahner maintains that we know the true God innately. It should be noted clearly that on one level of his theology he would deny this, while on another level, toward which he is led by his method, he actually maintains

150 Gilson, p. 107.
151 *Tl* 9: 133-36.
152 *Tl* 9: 138.
153 See text, *infra.*

this.[154] To the extent that he actually maintains the direct knowledge of God implied in his concepts of transcendental revelation and of quasi-formal causality Rahner is compelled to identify the God of natural theology with the triune God.[155] Insofar as this takes place within his system he actually subverts the centrality for Christian revelation he certainly wished to establish theoretically. By maintaining in practice that revelation must be *identical* with the constructs of reason or nonexistent,[156] Rahner effects his belief that natural theology and

154 Cf. Molnar, *TS,* 46, pp. 245-261.

155 See Molnar, *TS,* 46, pp. 240ff., esp. n. 57. Rahner's method forces him into this position since he must see the Trinity as the highest insta.nce of being accessible to the meta physician. Thus, he writes: " *An aativities, from the sheerly material to the innermost life of the Blessed Trinity, are but modulations of this one metaphysical theme of the one meaning of being: self-possession, subjectivity," (HW,* p. 49, emphasis, mine). I am stating that if God is really free-independently existing as the immanent Trinity even in his economic actions *ad extra-then* he factually transcends any idea of being accessible to the meta.physician and that the truth of metaphyiscs cannot simply be identified with the truth of revelation. In other words reason and philosophy are not useless in the theological enterprise, but neither are they on a par with revelation as in Rahner's thought. One's reasoning and philosophy are true as their object has independent and objective existence which can, within due limits, be demonstrated. Thus, I am basically arguing for what Gilson says: i.e., "Why should not we keep truth, and keep it whole? It can be done. But only those can do it who realize that He Who is the God of the philosophers is HE WHO IS, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob," Gilson, *God and Philosophy,* p. 144.

156 See text *supra* and n. 6. Rahner's statements that there would be no word of God withotu someone intrinsically capable of hearing it *(HW,* p. 168) and that revelation is " an interior quality of the concrete historical essence of man " (*HW,* p. 74) bear this out. For the same idea, see *Foundations,* p. 129 and Molnar, *TS,* 46, pp. 23lff. esp. n. 15. It would be unfair to Rahner not to perceive the nuance of his thought. It is not that he doesn't realize that the Christian God must be free. For he writes: " To prevent possible misunderstanding, it should be noted here that grace is the self-revelation of God unto man. This self-revelation is the foundation and the final goal of all revelation. But from this results the fact that revelation, *without detriment to its free origin,* is an interior quality of the concrete historical essence of man." He really thinks this concept of revelation maintains God's freedom. The problem is that once revelation is conceptualized as part of the essence of man it factually loses the freedom for which I have argued. So while Rahner argues that "man ... can never integrate God as

revelation theology investigate the same *object.* Indeed this is the very reason he gives for identifying the immanent and economic Trinity. [157] If Gilson's argument presented above is correct, however, we must say that inasmuch as Yahweh *alone* is God, this thinking is questionable. A theology in which reason is subordinate to this particular God would investigate in practice the meaning of experience in light of knowledge of the Creator God who is totally inaccessible to human insight apart from his free naming of himself. For this relevation to be recognizable philosophically or theologically it would have to be categorized as a *free* act on the same level a,s God's action as Creator. For this reason a clear and sharp distinction between philosophy and theology would have to be maintained- a distinction which would not necessarily follow from an experience of "absolute being." Such a distinction would stem not from experience or reflection but from the very nature of the God revealed to Moses and known within the context of biblical faith. Although we have noted that Rahner does indeed describe God as free, we have also shown that his method forces him to be unable to make this kind of clear and sharp

a disposable element into his self-comprehension," *(HW,* pp. 74-5) this kind of integration actually takes place because he believes he can deduce the meaning of grace and revelation from examining man's spiritual experiences philosophically and theologically. Thus, Rahner can maintain quite clearly that God is free and at the same time write: "God is posited, too, with the same necessity as this pre-concept," (*HW,* p. 63) when speaking of human knowledge of God and that *revelation* " has its existence in man's own conscious thought and *hence is subject to the a priori structure of human knowledge." TI* 11 [New York: Seabury, 1974], "Reflections on Methodology in Theology," 68-114, at 91. My point is that a revelation of God subject to the mind of man in this way constitutes a synthesis of the objects of philosophical and theological investigation and factually denies the freedom for God which Rahner, as a theologian, intended to maintain.

157 Cf. Molnar, *TS,* 46, p. 249 "He believes that this identification avoids a merely formal reconciliation of one and three ... Moreover, his so identifying emphasizes that the Trinity and its two processions, together with the two self-communications of God *ad emtra* in a 'real formal causality corresponding to the two processions,' *do not come between our natural knowledge and the absolute mystery of God,"* p. 249. Cf. also *TI* 4: 72 for this idea.

distinction. This, because his doctrine of God is based on the idea that philosophy and theology are already *one* in their presumed common quest of being in an absolute sense.[158] Thus, for Rahner, what" we call God," on the basis of our religious experience really is God. In fact, however, there is a real conflict here which this claim overlooks, namely, that the God of Moses, Paul, and the Johannine community and the Synoptic writers and He *alone,* revealed Himself as "He who is". And the conflict ensues from the simple fact that this particular God was not a naturally known God corresponding with our innate ideas of absolute being.

Second, Rahner then describes the Creator/ creature relation as mutually necessary and mutually conditioning since this is true of any naturally known god who is in fact *identical* [distinct in degree, but not in kind] with the sphere of creation as its " absolutely distant term." To that extent one does not really *need* to know Christ to know the Creator God, true revelation or God's free grace. This may be why Rahner argues that all of these realities are " embedded " in creation in one way or another. But as he does this Rahner cannot clearly distinguish the " elements " one from another with any consistency and indeed he thinks of grace at times as identical with our own human dynamisms.[159] To the extent that this difficulty exists within Rahner's thought it is clearly concommitent with the conclusion of Spinoza illustrated above.[160]

158 See text, *supra* nn. 30, 33, 35 and 72. He must do this of course because he is being faithful to one of the six ontological necessities he thinks applies to the being of the Christian God in his self-revelation, i.e., "the necessity for all being to agree ontologically with its origin," Molnar, *TS,* 46, p. 242.

159 See text, pp. 8, 13-25. This is why Rabner can write that grace is an "inner ... dynamism toward the beatific vision," *(TI,* 4: 61). I would say that grace may allow us to make sense of our human spiritual dynamisms in a way that relates us to God toward whom we move eschatologically in the present. But that very recognition would preclude describing that grace as a dynamism which in itself remains always human and to that extent ambiguous.

160 See text, *supra.* This is also where Deism began to think about God. See Gilson pp. 104:ff. Compare Spinoza's view with Ralmer's statement that

Third, Rahner's thought about God reaches its logical conclusion in his theories of the anonymous Christian, in his explanation of creation as the paradigm of a possible utterance of God,[161] and in his identifying the immanent and economic

God is the " single whole of reality," above, p. 5. The rest of his theology works out the logic of this insight. What makes Rahner's theology so difficult is his simultaneous insistence that God is really free and his various theoretical attempts to show this. The problem to which I have called attention, however, is that once the Christian God is conceived under the metaphysical idea of absolute being an inadmissible synthesis of natural theology and revealed theology has taken place and God's actual freedom is not maintained.

161 See, e.g., *TI* 4: 115, 116; *TI* 11: 215-229, "Christology in the Setting of Modern Man's Understanding of Himself and of His World," p. 225; *TI* 5: 157-192, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World" pp. 177-8. Compare to *TI* 4: 23lff. This corresponds exactly with Rahner's philosophy of the symbol. Because sign and thing signified are mutually necessary for Rahner all of his descriptions of creation manifest the same difficulty.

Cf. for e.g. *TI* 11: 220 where he writes: "... the creation, considered as the constitution of the non-divine 'out of nothing,' is revealed as the prior setting and *condition for the supreme possibility of his* [God's] *imparting of himself."* This idea is exactly what leads Rahner to draw similar conclusions regarding grace. In *TI* 6: 71-79, "Philosophy and Theology," pp. 72-3 Rahner writes: " Grace exists ... by being the divinising condition of the latter [the person], and hence presupposes and incorporates into itself the whole reality of this person as the *condition of its own possibility* and makes it part of the factors of its own concrete being." Thus, for Rahner Philosophy is a "condition of the possibility of theology" *(TI* 6: 71). The problem here is that in his description of creation and of grace Rahner has denied God's freedom. For Rahner God actually *needs* an addressee and recipient of his grace: "Grace, understood as the absolute self-communication of God himself, must always presuppose *as a condition of its own possibility (in order to be itself)* someone to whom it can address itself and someone to whom it is not owed," *TI* 6: 75). The same is true of Revelation: "Accordingly, it must be said that since revelation is a moment in this free self-opening-out by gratuitous grace, it presupposes as a *condition of its own possibility* the one to whom it is not owed" *(TI* 6: 75). In this paper I have argued that if the God of scripture is really free then the fact that there are creatures at all and creatures who are in fact recipients of God's revelation and grace is and *remains* a *miraculous creation* of his free love in any given situation. It cannot therefore be described symbolically as an instance of creaturely being at all as Rahner believes. Similarly if Rahner had envisioned this kind of freedom for God he could not have described creation as the paradigm of a "possible " utterance of God. But inasmuch Rahner actually holds that

Trinity. While Rahner offers lengthy and profound explanations of God's freedom, his practical explanation of *creatwn* absorbs God's essence into his creative function.[162] To the extent that Rahner believes creation can be explained as a self-validating reality and that the Creator/creature relationship can be described as one of mutual conditioning, it is impossible for God really to be free to create or not, to reveal himself or not and still be God. Again, without wishing to deny the freedom of the Christian God, Rahner's method, which attempts a synthesis of the triune God and the god of natural theology, leads him into the same predicament as Descartes. By actually maintaining these two presuppositions throughout his system Rahner certainly appears to have done the very thing for which Gilson criticized Descartes: He reduced the God of the bible to the condition of a philosophical principle and then reunited his concept of the trinitarian self-revelation with this principle. Rahner's attempt to make this synthesis more viable for modern man than the Scholastic notion of mystery as something unknown which makes itself known to faith, reveals the conflicts that actually exist between Rahner's reconstruction of his concept of mystery based on an experience open to everyone and the traditional attempt to distinguish sharply the object of philosophical (absolute being) and theological (the immanent Trinity revealed) reflection.

On these three points we can at least say that the content of Rahner's doctrine of God is regulated by his philosophy of

creation is the "condition " for God's utterance *ad emtra,* creaturely self-experience which is thought to be self-validating then becomes the determinant of what is possible for both God (defined as absolute being) and for creatures (defined as finite existents). And that is exactly the problem in Rahner's doctrine of God as it concerns revelation and grace which we have tried to highlight. See also *TI* 9: 134. For Rahner creation is the *"condition* for the possibility," of God's revelation and the "grammar" of his self-expression *ad emtra.*

162 See text. It is Rahner's claim that creation is a self-explaining fact that leads to all his other assertions. The most obvious fact which confirms all of this is his description of the creature and Creator relationship as mutually conditioning, above.

being based on experience and explained in Christian categories. Though Rahner certainly did not intend it, the *creatio ex nihilo,* the Mosaic revelation, and the grace of God revealed in Christ become factually and existentially unnecessary to man's self-understanding within creation. This, because these Christian categories are merely categorical articulations of what is already innate in our experiences of self-transcendence. Thus, Rahner in fact re-defines the Chalcedonian *unio,* the doctrine of creation, and the doctrines of incarnation, grace and glory to conform to his philosophy of being. And by doing this he frequently synthesizes the being of God with the innate movements of the creature as illustrated above. His symbolic Christology is the supreme manifestation of this.[163]

[163] See e.g. *Tl* 4: 235ff. and Rahner's various pieces on Christology, including Chapter 6 of *Foundations.* For instance Rahner writes: " The theology of the Logos is strictly a theology of the symbol, and indeed the supreme form of it," *Tl* 4: 235. The problem obviously is that since symbols *must* express themselves to be themselves and because the symbol is full of the thing symbolized there can be no real freedom for God before or after creation or incarnation. He, as the supreme instance of symbolic ontology, must conform to these principles. But as this is the case, he cannot in fact be free. On this point see esp. *TI* 4: 227ff. In fact, because Rahner makes his doctrine of God and Christology conform to these principles of symbolic ontology, he cannot even begin to distinguish creature and Creator and even ends by confusing the humanity and divinity of Christ and Christ with creatures *(TI* 4: 236ff.). The following statement is analyzed at length in Molnar, *TS,* 46, pp. 248ff.: "It is because God 'must' 'express' himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly; the finite created utterance *ad emtra* is a continuation of the immanent constitution of 'image and likeness' ---" (236-7). The problem with this is that he had previously described the functions of image and likeness as necessities corresponding with the functioning of symbols. And if God must express himself inwardly and that function is "continued" in creation and incarnation, then God must create and must communicate himself to the creature in grace. Thus, despite Rahner's insistence that God is free-inasmuch as he has substituted experience of absolute being for God, it is clear that this "God" is not free but subject to his principles of metaphysical ontology, i.e., all beings are symbolic because they must express themselves and the symbol is essentially constituted by what is symbolized so that they are mutually dependent. But, as noted in the text, Rahner has only described the *term* of human experience in this way. He has not described the being of God, i.e., the immanent Trinity.

An obvious question which unfortunately is beyond the scope of the present paper is: what can keep a philosophical theologian from the difficulties encounted by Descartes, Spinoza, the Deists, the Enlightenment generally and Rahner? [164] We can only suggest that the answer to this predicament may lie in perceiving that the differences between a Gilsonian Thomist and a transcendental Thomist may arise from the deeper question of the relationship between faith and understanding as seen in light of scripture. For Gilson the answer was to be found in an actual recognition of God's *free* self-revelation. Rahner *says* the same thing, but his method does not maintain the kind of freedom for God's action that Gilson's method does. Gilson apparently meant to allow Yahweh the freedom to determine the truth of our ideas. He did this by never claiming that the ideas have this truth in themselves. Not even the *idea* of the supernatural can guarantee that we have spoken of a truly transcendent other. In fact he really meant what he said when he wrote: "Why should not we keep truth, and keep it whole? It can be done. But only those can do it who realize that He Who is the God of the philosophers is HE WHO IS, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." [165] And if this is true, then we really need to know what Yahweh did in Israel, in Christ and the Spirit, before we can distinguish

[164] It is important to note that the problem here is a methodological one. Perhaps this is the key difference between a Gilsonian Thomist and a transcendental Thomist. Rahner begins his treatment of mystery *(TI* 4) by insisting that *ratio* is the way mystery is assured (p. 41) and proceeds to ascribe revelation and grace to the knowing subject in its reflection on its term. This appears to be what "Scholastic" school theology wished to avoid in order *not to claim* that creation was a self-evident fact as Rahner does *(TI* 3: 24-34, "Thoughts on the Theology of Christmas," (p. 32). Rather, creation found its basis in the God of the Christian faith, i.e., "He who is." For that reason creation really was seen as not *necessary* to God and it was further seen that God could not truly be recognized by identifying the necessary movements of creaturely being with His inner being which is *free.* This thought is most clearly expressed in Gilson's analysis above. I believe this insight applies to knowledge of God as well as to knowledge of revelation, faith and grace.

[165] Gilson, p. 144.

a truly divine act from our self-experiences. This would imply that theology must be faith seeking understanding and not understanding seeking faith if it is to be successful in truly uniting and distinguishing the mystery of God and the mystery of creatures.

It would appear from what was presented above that the outcome of Rahner's transcendental method is quite similar to the outcome of Cartesian logic. Both thinkers identify what is known in faith (God's free revelation and free grace) with the necessary movements of the human spirit toward absolute being which is a metaphysical construct drawn from experience. But this proves that we *need* to acknowledge and to know God's revelation *first,* before we can make sense of our " ultimate " origin and end as something actually transcending both the categorical and existential (transcendental experience) realms. And this means that we must at least question Rahner's method for doing theology insofar as it begins by assuming that an experience of the nameless is an experience of the true God. If Gilson can teach anything on this point it may be that the very nature of God revealed to faith compels us to begin and end our analysis with faith in Yahweh alone before actually finding the ultimate explanation of reality. For the New Testament that same truth was found in Christ alone since he alone was the eternal Word of God present in the flesh. The truth of the New Testament of course rested on the fact that this revealed word did not contradict but confirmed what Yahweh revealed previously in Israel. That is why, for Paul, recognition of the truth of our existence was tied to confession of Christ's Lordship which confession implied reliance on him alone and not any or all of our experiences, no matter how profound they may be.[166]

PAUL D. MOLNAR

*St. John's University*
*Jamaica, New York*

166 Cf., e.g., l Cor. 12: 4ff.

# THE FATE OF THEISM REVISITED

## I

THEISM SEEMS to be caught in a dilemma. Speaking persuasively to the surrounding culture seems to demand hat theism sacrifice its own integrity as a significantly distinctive world-view; affirming its distinctiveness seems to result in moving itself to the periphery of the culture. Briefly, then, either theism acquires relevance at the price of forfeiting any claim to distinctiveness or it takes seriously precisely those things that make it seem significantly distinctive and thereby isolates itself from the rest of the culture. Such is the fate of theism as portrayed by (friendly?) critics of theism like Jeffrey Stout, Alasdair Macintyre, and Van A. Harvey.[1] The main question addressed in this paper is whether or not the theist (or his more specific variant, the Christian theist) has a sound response to this dilemma? How, if at all, can the Christian theist avoid the horns of the dilemma of redundancy and irrelevance?

[1] Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy* (London and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), especially Part 2. Alasdair Macintyre, "God and the theologians," in *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London: Duckworth, 1971), pp. 12-26; see also Macintyre's essay, "The Fate of Theism," originally delivered as one of his Bampton Lectures at Columbia University in 1966. Macintyre's lectures were published in *The Religious Si,qnificance of Atheism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). For "The Fate of Theism," see pp. 3-29. Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Belie1Jer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); see also Harvey's essay, "The Pathos of Liberal Theology," *Journal of Religion* 56 1976: 382-391. For an illuminating discussion of the fate of theism, see Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperatives: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Doubleday 1980).

The practical relevance of this dilemma for Christian doctrine was recently evidenced in Thomas Sheehan's review of Hans Kiing's latest book in the *New York Review of Books.*[2] After summarizing Kiing's views on the Christian doctrine of eternal life, Sheehan writes:

> Kiing . . . has pushed Catholic theology to the limits of its own language. In fact, he has brought it to the point where one can ask what its teachings have to offer that cannot be found outside the scope of its experience and discourse. For example, the hope in immortality he evokes is certainly not peculiar to Catholicism or Christianity. Nor is it an exclusively religious doctrine: we find it in pagan philosophy from the Greeks onward, even in thinkers who did not believe in a personal god.... On a broader scale, it is clear that religious experience is available outside Catholicism and Christianity; and for many people natural human experience, with no religious or transcendent dimension, is satisfying enough. What, then, does Catholicism claim to provide that cannot be found beyond its boundaries? I am not asking about the subjective aspects of experience, be it natural or religious (its felt quality, psychological genesis, personal meaning, and so on). I am asking an objective theological question: what does Catholicism claim that makes it unique, essentially different from non-Catholic religions and non-religious humanisms? [3]

Sheehan's answer to this last question is clear. That which makes Christianity unique and essentially distinctive and which traditional believers sought to clarify and defend moves Christianity to the periphery of the culture. By identifying themselves primarily with the tradition in terms of classical Christianity, no one hears what Christians have to say but themselves. The only alternative to this self-imposed isolation, holds Sheehan, is to be intelligible to contemporary educated, secular-minded men and women: in which case Christian theism may well have interesting things to say, but these will not be significantly distinctive in any Christian sense. To put this last

[2] Thomas Sheehan, "Revolution in the Church," *The New York Review of Books,* June 14, 1984, pp. 35-39.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 38.

point another way, the strategy of accommodation raises the question why one should be Christian at all.

Some theologians have sought to avoid the horns of this dilemma by arguing that the dilemma, as posed here, gains its apparent force by posing false alternatives. The problem, as defined here, imposes an exclusive choice between two poles: first, classical Christianity and, second, contemporary structures of experience, thought, and society. But this way of posing the problem suffers from a basic mistake, they say. It creates the distinct impression that each of these poles is a fixed, static point and not historical.[4] Instead, they argue that an understanding of the Christian faith involves a theological methodology which is sensitive to the history of its evolution and development. Similarly, an interpretation of the contemporary structures of experience, thought, and society should include an understanding of those various factors which led to the formation of these structures. More exactly, a historically sensitive, theological method will require that one distinguish the kernel of Christianity, which can and should be detached, from the outmoded husk. Briefly, then, to distinguish the theistic kernel from the theistic husk is the wisdom this theological methodology offers for avoiding the horns of the dilemma. The idea here seems to be that Christian theism would undergo an interpretative process which would be like peeling off the outer layers of an onion in order to get at the essence of the onion. On this view, essential aspects of classical theism could be held onto that seem defensible or intelligible in the vocabulary of our secular-minded culture. Presumably, then, this theological methodology would make it possible for the theist to secure a hearing from a secular audience without doing violence to the central claims of Christian theism.[5]

[4] Many theologians have argued that the dilemma gains in apparent force by posing false alternatives. For a recent example, see Francis Schussler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).

[5] See Stout, *op. cit.,* p. 146.

One may be excused for having doubts about the success this approach has in avoiding the horns of the dilemma. We must note here that the question crucially arises: How exactly does one determine when a certain layer or layers are disposable externals or the essential inner cargo? [6] It seems to me that in order to determine this the interpreter of traditional theism will have to engage in what sociologist Peter Berger has called *cognitive bargaining.* In general, cognitive bargaining consists of compromises with respect to beliefs between traditional and modern modes of thought and practice. [7] In the case of the interpreter of traditional theism, what this amounts to is the following. It is the interpreter of theism, rather than the secularist, who experiences the greater pressures to be convincing. Accordingly, he attempts to reformulate theism by translating, in the manner of a Bultmann or a Tillich, traditional theistic claims into secular vocabulary. In other words, the interpreter of theism defending himself cognitively against his secular audience almost inevitably incorporates elements of the latter within his own defence. Ideally, I suppose, the give-and-take should be mutual. In fact, however, this process of cognitive bargaining operates mainly in one direction with the interpreter of theism offering the cultured despiser of classical theism " less and less in which to disbelieve." [8] Undoubtedly the problem which now emerges for the interpreter of theism is the problem of just where to draw the line. The line here represents that which he may not go beyond without dismantling the tradition of classical theism from within. Clearly, then, this approach does not avoid the horns of the dilemma. If anything, it brings us back to the fundamental issue that detrmines what Van A. Harvey has called the" pathos of Liberal theology." Harvey writes:

s On this, see Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: SPCK, 1984).

1 See Berger, *op. cit.,* pp. 99-101. See also, Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File: Reports on the Subversion of the Modern Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), especially chapters 10 and 11.

s Macintyre, "Fate," p. 24.

[T]he problem the liberal faces concern[s] the degree to which Christian belief can be accommodated to modernity and remain recognizably Christian. If the cognitive surrender is unconditional, the theologian does achieve a remarkable harmonization, to be sure, but only at the cost of raising the question why one should be Christian at all. The pathos of the liberal theologian is that, if he identifies himself too unqualifiedly with modernity, he runs the risk of alienation from the very community his apologetic is to serve. If, on the other hand, he defines his role primarily in terms of classical Christianity, he runs the risk of being an obscurantist, alienated from the modern intellectual community of which he also wants to be a member. [9]

It is interesting to note here that it is often the critics of theism who wish theists would be more orthodox. Why do the critics insist upon this? They believe, rightly, I think, that there can be no serious interaction with theism beyond a certain point if it is not recognizably theistic. As Jeffrey Stout puts it, "One wants one's conversation partners to remain distinctive enough to be identified, to be needed." [10] The question which can and should be asked, holds Stout, is whether Christian theism can be both critical enough to be respected and distinctive enough to be needed. Perhaps an even more basic question which now needs to be asked is how did Christian theism get into this predicament in the first place?

## IT

Jeffrey Stout has recently provided us with an important perspective on the question regarding the predicament of Christian theism. In this paper I cannot hope, and do not propose to try, to examine the details of the historical scenario which he paints for us. I wish only to call attention to what I take to be the crucial importance in his account of what may

[9] Harvey, "Pathos," p. 383.

[10] Jeffrey Stout, "The Voice of Theology in Contemporary Culture," in *Religion and America: Spirituality in a Secular Age:* editors Mary Douglas and Steven M. Tipton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 249-261; for this quote, see p. 260.

be called the evidentialist challenge to religious belief.[11] The evidentialist holds, first, that religious belief is not acceptable unless rational, and second, that religious belief is rational if and only if supported by argument and evidence. Evidentialism has almost always, perhaps always, offered classic foundationalism as its epistemological defence. Classic foundationalism may be understood as a doctrine about justified belief. The classic foundationalist holds that (1) Some beliefs are, epistemically, absolutely secure and properly basic-the idea is that some of our justified beliefs are not held on the basis of any other beliefs; these are the properly basic ones. All justified non-basic beliefs are justified wholly by the evidential support they receive from basic beliefs, (3) Any properly basic belief must be self-evident, evident to the senses, or based on incorrigible reports of experience.

Now if classic foundationalism is true, then the justification of theistic beliefs must be foundationalist. However, some foundationalists, but not all, have argued that the theist is not epistemically justified in holding the beliefs which he does hold. They allege, first, that theistic beliefs are not supported by basic beliefs, that there is not sufficient evidence for them, and second, that a person is rational in accepting theistic beliefs only if he has sufficient evidence for them.[12] What is most interesting here is not the claim that theistic beliefs do not fit the foundationalist's criterion for justified belief. More interesting, but also more directly relevant to the question I am presently addressing, is that many Christians have held,

11 This is how Nicholas Wolterstorff refers to the challenge issued by Enlightenment thinkers when it comes to matters of religion. See *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God,* editors Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (London and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). For Stout's account of this challenge, see *The Flight from Authority,* chapter 6. For an extensive discussion of the 5tages of development theism underwent in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, see Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

12 For a discussion of these claims, see Plantinga's essay, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality,* pp. 17 ff.

whether deliberately or inadvertently, to classic foundationalism. More exactly, they have appealed to classic foundationalism in defence of what I am here calling evidentialism. That is, in response to the question, how, if at all, do we justify those beliefs which we hold, they opt for the evidentialist position.

To pursue this issue further, I should like to examine briefly Stout's account of that period in British philosophical history when Christian theism sought to meet the evidentialist challenge. Here, I think, we have a prime example of what I earlier called, with Berger's help, cognitive bargaining. The theist defending himself cognitively against his secular critic incorporates elements of the latter's presuppositions within his own defence.

Stout's discussion of the evidentialist challenge to religious belief has three phases. These phases correspond to the three stages of development theism underwent in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Representative of the first stage is the philosophical theology of John Locke The second stage can be seen in the controversies over Deism, while the third can be seen in David Hume's (1711-1776) critique of religion. There are two inter-connected issues under discussion throughout the three stages: first, how exactly does one identify a proposition as revealed truth (i.e., a set 0:f propositions or documents regarded as containing revelation from God) and, second, how does one decide what any such propotion means.[13] I now want to look briefly at each stage in turn.

In raising the question, how is a revealed proposition to be identified, Locke does not doubt whether any revelation from God can be true. As Paul Helm puts it, "Anyone who believes, as Locke did, that God is a perfectly truthful being will assent to the proposition 'Any revelation from God is true.' This last proposition is analytic for Locke and for all theists. But saying this does not settle the epistemological question of

1a Paul Helm, "Locke on Faith and Knowledge," *Phiiosophioal Quarterly* 23 (1973) : 52-66. I have greatly profited from Helm's paper for my understanding of the issues that concerned Locke.

how anyone knows whether or not a particular proposition is revealed by God." [14] So we must distinguish here. Whatever God reveals is infallibly true for l,ocke. What Locke wants to know are the grounds upon which men can claim to know that a proposition is revealed. In Locke's view, it is not a matter of faith that *p* is a revealed truth. He distinguishes the proposition *"p,* a revealed proposition, is believed" from" *p* is a revealed proposition because it is believed to be so." [15] This distinction is crucial: it must be possible to identify *p* as a revealed truth independently of anyone believing it to be so. How, then, is a revealed truth to be identified? In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* J,ocke writes in answer to this question:

> Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of faith: but whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge; which can never permit the mind to reject a greater evidence to embrace what is less evident, nor allow it to entertain probability in opposition to knowledge and certainty. [16]

Reason must not only identify *p* as a revealed truth, but it must also decide what any such proposition means. Locke explains:

> Because the mind, not being certain of the truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the probability that appears in it, is bound to give up its assent to such a testimony, which, it is satisfied, comes from One who cannot err, and will not deceive. But yet it still belongs to reason to judge of the truth of its being a revelation, and of the signification of the words wherein it is delivered.17

But what is reason? And, correspondingly, on what grounds must it judge? Locke continues:

> Indeed, if any thing shall be thought revelation which is contrary to the plain principles of reason and the evident knowledge the

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 52.

[15] *Ibid.,* p. 55.

[16] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London and New York, 1961), Book IV, Chapter 18, Section 10, p. 588.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 587.

mind has of its own clear and distinct ideas, there reason must be hearkened to as a matter within its province: since a man can never have so certain a knowledge that a proposition, which contradicts the clear principles and evidence of his own knowledge, was divinely revealed, or that he understands the words rightly wherein it is delivered, as he has that the contrary is true; and so is bound to consider and judge of it as a matter of reason, and not swallow it, without examination, as a matter of faith .... Therefore nothing that is contrary to, and inconsistent with, the clear and self-evident dictates of reason has a right to be urged or assented to as a matter of faith, wherein reason hath nothing to do.[18]

So what is purportedly revealed truth must be consistent with the principles of reason and the self-evident knowledge the mind has. But Locke does not mean to claim that revealed truth itself is self-evident; nor is it demonstratively supported (i.e., logically entailed) by such principles and knowledge. Locke uses such principles and knowledge as a negative criterion for identifying *p* as a revealed truth. Hence, while revealed truths do not consist of self-evident truths, they cannot consist of anything that is inconsistent with what is self-evident.19

Does Locke stipulate any other criteria, besides the one I just mentioned? Other than the criterion of not containing anything that is inconsistent with what is self-evidently true, Locke stipulates that a candidate-revelation must measure up to two other criteria: first, when originally given, it was accompanied by impressive external signs (e.g., miracles) and, second, there is an historically reliable account of the latter.[20] Yet even if a candidate-revelation measures up fully to all three criteria, even then it could never be known with certainty to be a revelation from God. Accordingly, the grounds upon which men can claim to know that pis a revealed truth are empirical, and hence can only be probable. For the moment I think that we have said enough about Locke. Let's go on to look briefly

18 *Ibid.,* pp. 587-588.
19 Helm, "Locke on Faith and Knowledge," p. 56.
20 *Ibid.,* p. 56.

at the second stage in the British discussion: the controversies over Deism.

The Deists enthusiastically endorsed Locke's dictum about reason as the guarantor of revealed truth. In fact, they claimed to be more consistent in its use. This resulted in the following problem: if nothing that is inconsistent with the dictates of reason has a right to be assented to as a matter of faith, then assent must be withheld where it is impossible to discern what a revealed proposition means. However, what, then, of the mysteries of revelation such as the Trinity and the resurrection of the dead? Under these conditions faith in these mysteries would become an irrational belief.[21] In response to this problem, Locke went on to argue (in his controversy with Bishop Stillingfleet) that "faith and knowledge are independent, and that a proposition can be accepted as part of revelation even if it is not understood."[22] Locke explains:

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 59. Hans Frei puts it this way in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 52-53: "The deistic controversy, at once reacting to, shaping, and testing the notion of revelation, began a series of arguments about the credibility of special divine communication and (later on) of divine self-presentation through the medium of historical occurrences. Two issues were at stake from the beginning. The first was of a predominantly philosophical nature. It concerned the inherent rationality or credibility of the very idea of a historical revelation. Was it conceivable or intelligible? Is it likely, it was asked, that a perfectly good God should have left mankind without decisive guidance for so long, only to grant the privilege finally to a tiny, rude, and isolated fraction of the human race? Or is what is called revelation nothing more than a specific instantiation of what God had made known everywhere and all along, concerning truth and human happiness? Furthermore, is the appeal to the 'mystery' of revelation anything other than an admission that the idea itself is unintelligible, a token of that unwarranted intrusion of imagination or, worse yet, sheer ignorant superstitution into matters religious which the new intellectual rigor must repel? The second question was: Even granted the rationality or inherent possibility of revelation how likely is it that such a thing has actually taken place? ... The immediate question was whether there are good grounds for believing in the actual occurrence of the miraculous events constituting the indispensable evidence for historical revelation. How authoritative, in short, how well attested are biblical accounts, especially those of miracles, since the natural presumption in a 'scientific age' is obviously against them?"

[22] Helm, "Locke on Faith and Knowledge," p. 59.

A definition of knowledge, whether a good or bad, true or false definition, could not be of ill or any consequence to an article of faith: because a definition of knowledge, which was one act of the mind did not at all concern faith, which was another act of the mind quite distinct from it.[23]

And, in addition, he says:

Let the grounds of knowledge be resolved into what anyone pleases, it touches not my faith: the foundation of that stands as sure as before, and cannot be at *all* shaken by it.[24]

On the face of it, this view seems wholly inconsistent with the view Locke sets out in the *Esb•ay.* Be that as it may, of more importance now is to note that the Deists were not at all convinced by Locke's reply to their problem. Stout sheds some valuable light on their objection:

The next stage of the British discussion arrives when Deists, marching behind Locke's dictum about reason as the guarantor of revelation, ask why, if *all* evidence is to be taken into account ... , the content of a putative revelation should not bear more directly upon our decision to accept or reject the proposition in question. If the proposition itself is inherently improbable, does this not make it less likely that the proposition is revelatory? [25]

The Deists answer to this question is well known. We ought to accept only those claims of classical theism that can be established independently as probable hypotheses. Under these conditions the claim that " *p* is a revealed truth but I do not understand it " is regarded as totally unacceptable. Where it is impossible to discern what a revealed proposition means, that proposition is either improbable or redundant. "The supernatural mysteries of faith, in particular," as Stout puts it, " are declared paradoxical and, therefore, improbable. Hence the significance of John Toland's title *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) ." [26]

[23] John Locke, *Works* (1823), Vol. IV, p. 282.
[24] *Ibid.,* p. 147.
[25] Stout, *The Flight from Authority,* p. 116.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 117.

But there is still the third stage of development theism underwent at the hand of Hume's critique of religion. My understanding of this, pared down for my purpose here, is as follows. Hume subjected the minimal theism of Deism to the tests of its own standards of appraisal. He, in short, claims that their anaemic theism does not meet the standards that Deism itself lays down. What, then, about religion with revelation? What about classical Christianity itself? Well, says Hume, my critique of minimal theism has served the cause of faith and true religion. For by exposing the inability of reason to undergird the tenets of theism, I have thereby paved the way for grace to supply it instead.[27] He concludes

> that the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.[28]

I have serious doubts as to whether Hume really intended to render a service to classical Christian theism. But even were it not so, Hume's profound influence upon certain strands of modern philosophical theology cannot be gainsaid. (Needless to say, by influence I do not mean that certain modern theologians hold to Hume's philosophy. I mean simply to refer to their mode of handling problems, their fundamental assumptions in the intellectual treatment of certain problems, and the kind of questions they ask-all this limits and disposes the answer they give.) In a fascinating but highly tendentious reading, Stout reconstructs the history of post-Humean theology as a story that takes Hume's accomplishment for granted

[21] David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* London 1748, Section X, par. 40. See also Terence Penelhum's essay, "Natural Belief and Religious Belief in Hume's Philosophy," *Philosophioal Quarterly* 33 (1983): 166-181.

[28] Hume, *Enquiry,* sec. X, par. 41.

and does not attempt to refute him on his own terms, and asks simply what remains possible after Hurne.

Now this is a strong claim. It would no doubt be possible to object to Stout's claim by pointing to the broadly inductive or probabilistic arguments developed by C.S. Lewis, E.L. Mascall, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and others. It seems obvious to me that these writers have indeed sought to refute Hurnean type arguments on their own turf, and to revive something like a natural theology by meeting the evidentialist challenge head-on. Unfortunately Stout fails to consider the merits of their work in his reconstruction of the history of post-Hurnean theology. Nevertheless, perhaps the real point at issue-the point which, it might be suggested, is really at the forefront of Stout's mind-is that any given attempt to defend theism in terms of an empirical probability calculus is in all likelihood a hopeless task. [29] But how could Stout know this in advance of someone's proposing such a defence? Suppose Stout is right, however. That is, let's suppose that the clash of probabilistic reasoning with religious beliefs is in all likelihood inevitable. Where then, one may ask, does the clash come? Sometimes Stout seems to suggest that the clash arises between the different ways in which beliefs are held: the religious believer typically gives unqualified assent to his beliefs, while those beliefs supported by probabilistic reasoning deserve only qualified or provisional adherence. Basil Mitchell is admirably explicit on the dilemma in which this places the would-be defender of the rationality of theistic belief:

> To the extent that he attempts to indicate how faith can be rationally defended, he is led to characterise faith in a way that fails to satisfy the religious mind; but if he portrays faith as it characteristically operates in the life and thought of believers, he describes something inevitably incommensurate with the only sort of justification that is available. [30]

[20] Stout, *The Flight from Authority*, p. 170.

[so] Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. l16.

Sometimes he speaks, *ala* Hume, of religious beliefs as being highly unlikely on empirical grounds; and, correspondingly, that several alternative non-theistic explanations of the phenomena are nearly as good, if not equally good or better. [31] Sometimes Stout states the clash much more strongly, as when he says that religious beliefs are, in terms of the standards of intelligibility, paradoxes such that they are both *supa* and *contra rationem.*

Now I would urge us to consider that all these clashes are not the same. For example, we could find it unacceptable to apply a probability calculus to the question of the existence of God without rejecting standards of intelligibility such as the law of non-contradiction. Furthermore, the notion of paradox has a wide scope of application: ranging from highly unlikely on empirical grounds to beyond the reach of our intellectual capacity to the logically inconsistent. Grace M. Jantzen is unmistakably correct when she writes that " one does not have to be in opposition to *rationality* to admit the former two, only the latter." [32] In addition, she says, "If rationality is *defined* in terms of an empirical probability calculus, then no doubt religion will have to oppose it-but why define it that way?" [33] Yes, why indeed? Perhaps Stout believes, following David Hume and W.K. Clifford, that a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence and that it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. But this contention raises the following questions. What is evidence? What sorts of propositions are candidates for evidence? How do we determine which propositions count as evidence such that my beliefs are rational if and only if they are evident with respect to them? I cannot

31 Stout, *The Flight from Authority,* p. 117.

32 Grace M. Jantzen, "'Religion' Reviewed," *Heythrop Journal* 26 (1985): 14-25. For this quote see p. 23. Jantzen's paper is a review of Leszek Kolakowski's book, *Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). I am indebted to her for helping me to gain clarity on precisely how varied the clash between reason and religion is.

33 *Ibid.,* p. 23.

recall that Stout ever gives any argument in support of this Humian and Cliffordian position.

Still, what Stout does not fail to make clear is just how, and why, certain post-Humean theologies are caught in the dilemma of redundancy and irrelevance. Classical Christian theism, he holds, confronted by the challenge of evidentialism and its attendant demand, must either accept this demand or reject it.

> To accept the demand is to put one's most cherished beliefs at risk .... This would be to treat theism as a collection of hypotheses, or rather to transform theism .... into Deism-and therefore to accept a steady erosion of theism's traditional content. To reject the demand is to treat theism either as something to be believed in the face of evidence or as something to which evidence is not really relevant-in either event as something essentially removed from the critical rationality central to the culture. If evidence is treated as irrelevant, then the traditional theoretical content of theism is diminished just as radically as it would be in Deism. But if theism retains its traditional content while being believed in the face of evidence any genuinely critical intellect would consider a decisive refutation, it thereby sacrifices any serious claim for attention from the culture upon which it would like to have an influence.[34]

However, it appears to be assumed by Stout that there is only one way to reject the demand of evidentialism: by pleading *nolo contendere* with respect to it. It must be confessed in fairness to Stout that there have been some theists who have tended, whether deliberately or inadvertently, to adopt a conformist stance regarding evidentialism-and therefore have surrendered the structure of rationality to the evidentialist. Be that as it may, this stance is surely unacceptable. I believe it is defensible to hazard the view that the evidentialist sees the structure of rationality mistakenly. Most evidentialists hold to a certain paradigm of rationality. They hold, as Nicholas Wolterstorff puts it, " a certain criterion for the application of the concept *rational-the* criterion being that of

[34] Stout, *The Flight from Authority,* p. 102.

classical foundationalism." [35] What Wolterstorff argues, along with Alvin Plantinga, as I understand them, is that if ever Christian theism is to avoid the horns of the dilemma of redundancy and irrelevance, Christian theists must be released from their adherence to classic foundationalism. Significantly, they argue that classic foundationalism does not live up to its own requirements, in essence showing that it is self-referentially incoherent, failing its own test for rationality. I will try, therefore, briefly to present their argument against classic foundationalism, and to suggest how it frees the theist from the dilemma.

## III

Before pursuing the main part of their argument against foundationalism, ·it would probably be useful to clarify somewhat how Wolterstorff and Piantinga understand the dilemma faced by the theist. I said earlier that classic foundationalism may be understood as a doctrine about justified belief. The classic foundationalist holds that our beliefs are divided into those which need support from other beliefs and those which can support others and need no support themselves. Given this distinction, he further holds that beliefs which are self-supporting, *basic* beliefs (i.e., beliefs not inferred or reached as conclusions from other things he believes) are those which are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible reports of experience. Other beliefs, *non-basic* beliefs, are rational if and only if supported by basic beliefs.

Evidentialism, we remember, is rooted in classic foundationalism. Regarding theistic beliefs, the evidentialist holds that a person is rational in accepting theistic beliefs only if he has sufficient evidence for them. Most exactly, he holds that theistic beliefs are thus justified only if they consist of basic beliefs (in the sense explained), or if they are inferred

[35] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Can Belief in God Be Rational if it has no Foundations," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God,* editors Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (L-Ondon and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 142.

from basic beliefs which supply adequate support for them. The story of modern philosophical theology from Hume to the present day is a story of attempts to show that theistic beliefs do or do not fit the foundationalist's criterion for justified beliefs.[36]

Theists have, by and large, not challenged the foundationalist's view regarding the structure of rationality, holds Wolterstorff. By not doing so, they have accepted, whether deliberately or inadvertently, the claim that they as philosophers, or scientists, or, more recently, as theologians, have no right to their theistic beliefs unless they are able to show that these beliefs follow from basic propositions accepted by all parties to the conversation-theist, agnostic, and atheist alike. Moreover, theists have led themselves to believe that, if foundationalism is true, they have no right, as scholars, to let their religious beliefs function as control beliefs within the devising and weighing of theories, i.e., with the project of exploring and developing the implications of Christian theism for the whole range of questions philosophers, scientists, and theologians ask and answer.[37] Finally, their conformist stance with respect to foundationalism has resulted in accepting the presumption that, as Basil Mitchell has said, " in case of conflict between religious and scientific or historical claims it is the former that must give way." [38] Briefly, then, Wolterstorff and Plantinga have argued that the adherence of Christian scholars to classic foundationalism has debilitated their work, holding them back, they claim, from the practice of authentically Christian scholarship. Wolterstorff states his claim this way:

36 N. Wolterstorff, "On Avoiding Historicism," *Philosophia Reformata* 45 (1980) : 178-185.

*s1* Alvin Plantinga, " Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984) : 253·27I. This is Plantinga's inaugural address as the John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. The points I am making in the text are, roughly, the same ones Plantinga makes on p. 260 of his paper.

38 The quotation is from an unpublished paper which Mitchell read to the staff of the Philosophy Department at Rhodes University, March 1984. The paper deals with Richard Swinburne and Nicholas Wolterstorff, and is called "Two Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion." See p. 11 for the quotation.

I asked myself why it is that Christian scholars are so acquiescent in the face of scholarly claims which contradict their Christian convictions, and why they think it inappropriate, conversely, to let their Christian convictions guide their own scholarship. My answer was that they intuitively think of knowledge and science along foundationalist lines. That is, they hold intuitively to a foundationalist theory of knowledge. They intuitively think of knowledge as the goal of science. And they view the productions of theoreticians as, by and large, achieving this goal. For if one thinks of authentic *scientiae* as erecting a super-structure of certitudes on a foundation of certitudes, and if one thinks of our actual sciences as, by and large, authentic *scientiae,* then of course science will be seen as fundamentally OK as it is, and the relevance of the faith will be confined to the practice of such strategies as application interpretation, and harmonizing. [39]

Here the point, I think, is the following. Presuming classic foundationalism to be true, Christian theists have confined the relevance of the Christian faith " to the offering of peculiarly Christian *applications* of received scholarship, to the offering of peculiarly Christian *interpretation8* of received scholarship, and to *accommodating* . . . religious convictions to received scholarship." [40] Now Wolterstorff and Plantinga believe that a fourth strategy is available, one that does not, they maintain, accept conformism as an overriding rule. vVolterstorff writes:

Common to the three strategies of harmonizing, setting theories within a context, and applying them is their *conformism* with respect to science. They all take for granted that science is OK as it is. In none of them is there any *internal* relation between Christian commitment and what goes on within the sciences. In none of them does Christian commitment enter into the devising and weighing of theories within the sciences.[41]

[39] N. Wolterstorff, "Christian Philosophy and the Heritage of Descartes," 20 pp., especially p. 10. This is an unpublished paper. Wolterstorff read it in the summer of 1979 at a conference on Locke. Descartes and the Rise of Modern Science, sponsored by the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada.

[40] *Ibid.,* pp. 9-10.

[41] N. Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976, second edition, 1984), pp. 81-2.

I think we can understand Wolterstorff's proposal more fully if we remember that neither philosophy nor science nor theology evidences a single homogeneous structure. In many academic disciplines controversy is endemic; academicians as academicians disagree amongst themselves. But even were it not so, why should Christian scholarship degenerate into legitimizations of the academic status quo. Nowadays we expect, as Christians, that contemporary Christian social theories should be critical of both advanced industrial capitalism and state socialism. "We have learnt this and much more from recent political and liberation theologies. Correspondingly, why then should we expect anything less than a similar critical attitude regarding the classic foundationalist theory of knowledge and science? "Why should the Christian (or anyone else)," asks Wolterstorff, "surrender all his critical faculties in the face of it? "[42]

Lest a mistaken impression be conveyed here, it must be said that in putting forth this proposal Wolterstorff and Plantinga do not at all mean to suggest that Christian scholars have nothing to learn from their non-Christian and non-theist colleagues. Nor do they mean to suggest that Christian scholars ought to retreat into their own intellectual ghettoes, assuming a posture of repudiation and isolation and conversing with only those scholars of similar breeding. Surely, says Plantinga,

> Christians have much to learn and much of enormous importance to learn by way of dialogue and discussion with their non-theistic colleagues ... We are all, theist and non-theist alike, engaged in the common human project of understanding ourselves and the world in which we find ourselves. If the Christian philosophical community is doing its job properly, it will be engaged in a complicated, many-sided dialectical discussion, making its own contribution to that common human project. It must pay careful attention to other contributions; it must gain a deep understanding of them; it must learn what it can from them and it must take unbelief with profound seriousness.[43]

[42] *Ibid.,* p. 82.
[43] Plantinga, "Advice", pp. 270-271.

So far I have referred quite generally to what Wolterstorff and Plantinga call the classic foundationalist view of knowledge, by which they mean quite generally the view that basic beliefs constitute the evidence in terms of which all other beliefs are justified. But it is important for us to describe more specifically the form of foundationalism that is being subsumed under this genera.I label. The foundationalist supposes, we remember, that there is a set of propositions, let's call it Es, such that my belief in God is rational if and only if it is evident with regard to Es. He also supposes that belief in God is not among the propositions to be found in Es. For the foundationalist, we noted earlier, a proposition is properly basic only if it is either self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses. Now Wolterstorff and Plantinga call that form of foundationalism which holds that Es is limited to such propositions *basis-restrictive* foundationalism. It is this species of foundationalism, which they take to be the classical view, that they launch an attack against. For purposes of brevity, I have decided to follow the main part of the argument set forward in some essays recently published by Plantinga. [44] In the main and for purposes of this paper, I shall sidestep many of the difficult conceptual problems surrounding the analysis of notions like self-evident and incorrigible.

The fundamental principle of classical foundationalism is:

(I) A proposition $p$ is properly basic for a person S if and only if $p$ is either self-evident to S or incorrigible for S or evident to the senses for S.

What kind of propositions are self-evident, asks Plantinga? Well, arithmetical truths such as

(2) $2 + 1 = 3$:

simple truths of logic such as

[44] A. Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?," in *Rationality and Religious Belief,* ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 7-27; "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?," *Nous* 15 (1981): 41-51; "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Christian Scholars Review* 11 (1981): 187-198; and "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality* (see note 35) .

(3) No man is both married and unmarried;

and the generalization of simple truths of logic, such as

(4) For any proposition *p* the conjunction of *p* with its denial is false.[45]

With respect to incorrigible propositions, some philosophers have taken these to consist in claims about one's own mental life, namely, propositions which describe my immediate perceptual experience, and propositions which describe my present sensations or feelings. Regarding the former, Plantinga gives the following as examples:

(5) There is a tree before me,
(6) I am wearing shoes,
(7) That tree's leaves are yellow.

Propositions (5) - (7) entail the existence of such material objects as trees, shoes, and yellow leaves. But I could mistakenly believe that there is a tree before me, etc. So more cautious claims must go into the foundation, such as

(8) It seems to me that I see a tree,
(9) I seem to see something yellow,

or even, says Plantinga, as Chisholm puts it,

(10) I am appeared yellowly to.

Summarily stated:

(11) *p* is incorrigible for S if and only if (a) it is not possible that S believe *p* and *p* be false, and (b) it is not possible that S believe *-p* and *p* be true.[46]

Following this, Plantinga invites us to look more closely at (1). It contains two elements, he says.

45 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," pp. 55-56.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 58. I should stress that Plantinga wouldn't take "There is a tree before me" as an incorrigible proposition. It is, indeed a report of an immediate perceptual experience-or at least, Plantinga would take it that way. Such beliefs arise in us immediately. But it's not incorrigible. The incorrigible ones would be those given in (8) and (9). Nicholas Wolterstorff reminded me of this point.

(12) A proposition is properly basic if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses;

(13) a proposition is properly basic only if it meets this condition.

(13) may indeed be true, says Plantinga. But what reason, if any, is there for accepting the proposition that a proposition is properly basic only if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses? Does this proposition itself display any of these relevant features? That is, suggests Plantinga, suppose the proposition

(14) most propositions that display these relevant features are true itself displays one or more of these features.

Plantinga then asks:

> Would that he a relevant answer to the question, what reason, if any, is there for believing that most propositions displaying this feature are true? It is hard to see how. The question is whether a proposition's displaying this feature is a reason for thinking it true; to reply that [(14)] displays this feature is simply to invite the question again. Here the appeal to self-evidence seems entirely unsatisfactory. It is as if the theist were to reply to the question: "Why believe in God?" by pointing out that God requires us to believe in Him, and requires us to believe only what is true. This may indeed be so; but it does not apply a reason for belief for anyone who does not already believe.[47]

But now suppose the foundationalist does accept (13) as basic. Suppose, that is to say, that he does not accept it on evidence provided by other propositions but instead accepts others on the basis of it. Well, argues Plantinga, according to (13) itself, (13)

> is properly basic for *F* only if [(13)] is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses for him. Clearly [(13)] meets none of these conditions. Hence it is not properly basic for *F*. But then *F* is self-referentially inconsistent in accepting [(13)]; he accepts it

[47] Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?," p. 20. Unfortunately, when I wrote this paper I did not have access to the book where this article is found. My page reference here is to loose copy of the article that I have in my possession. Subsequent references are to this copy.

ns basic, despite the fact that [(13)] does not meet the condition for proper bas\cality that [(13)] itself lays down.[48]

conclm1cs Plantinga, the foundationalist is "hoist by his own petard." For proposition (13) is itself neither self-cvicleni nor evident to the senses nor incorrigible. "\Vhy, then, 1ve accept such a criterion? Plantinga continues:

> But suppose we waive this point for the moment and leave the foundationalist to try to see how to achieve consistency here. Is there any reason to believe [(13)]? If so, what is it? [(13)] cer·-tainly does nol appear to be self-evident; it is certaintly not incorrigible. It is not er.sy to see, furthermore, that it either follows from or is evident with respect to propositions that *are* self-evident m incon<gible. it is hard to see that there is any reason for accepting [(13)], even from a roughly foundationalist point of view. vYhy then should we accept it? Why should the theist feel any obligation to believe it? The answer, I believe, is that there is no reason at all for accepting [(13)]; it is no more than a bit of intellectual imperialism on the part of the foundationalist.[19]

It seems to me that Plantinga's argument has defeated the classic foundationafot's objection against including theistic beliefo as part oJ' a person's foundational or properly basic beliefs (i.e. not inferred or reached as conclusions on the basis of other knmvn beliefs). This argument, of course, does not in any way prove that belief in God is properly basic. The argument, however, is not inconsequential for Christian theism. :Plantinga. h2s shown, I am persuaded, basis-restrictive foundationalisrn to be internally incoherent; no one would be rational to believe it on its own understanding of rationality. **But** this, <:s I hope is plain, does not imply that Plantinga has given us a re:Json for bolding the proposition regarding belief in God as basic. J\Tevertheless, while this argument is not a reason for holding it, it does eliminate a possible reason for *not* holding it."[0] That is, Plantinga has disposed of basis-restrictive founda-

4· Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in Goel," pp. o0-61.

49 Plantinga, "Is Belief in Goel Rational?," pp. 22-23.

r.0 George I. Mavrocles, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited," in *Faith and Rationality,* p. 19C.

tiona1ism as a reason Rgainst holding that belief in God if; properly basic. There is, then, if Plantinga is right, no reason for denying that, if basis-restrictive foundationalism is internally incoherent, religious beliefs may be among the propositions to be found in Es.

In addition, it would no longer seem to be an impropriety to make use of such beliefs as a criterion of theory-formation and theory-appraisal. In other words, if basis-restrictive formdationaEsm is not true, it follows that theists can and should move beyond seeing their distinctively religious beliefs as a mere addendum to theories on purely foundationalist assumptions. With regard to those theories, the Christian scholar need not be confined to finding interpretations that will be maxim.ally acceptable from the theistic standpoint. He can also take his religious beliefs as rm autonomous source of logical implication capable of affecting scientific theory-formation and theory-appraisal. Needless to say, the data, background theories, ideas, and other warrants used here in the construction and appraisal of theories are drawn from various valid and relevant sources. On this view, it be totally unsatisfactory for the theist to confine himself to theories readily conformable to his religious heliefs. Theory-formation and theory-appraisal must be adequate to distinguishable base points, or points of reference. [51]

We come, then, finally to the question: How would breaking the hold which basis-restrictive foundntionalism has upon Christian theists make it possible for them to avoid the horns of the dilemma of irrelevance and redundancy? Let us look back once again to the dilemma's horns. Either theists will remain within the religious closed circle, conversing with only those scholars of similar breeding--in which case they will

01 Ernan Mc:'lfullin, "How Shouid Cosmology Relate to Theology"! ., in *The Soienoes and Theology in the 'Twentieth Century,* edited by A. H. Pc-ncocke (London: Oriel Press, 1981), p. 51. For an excellent discussion of t]1e poirts made in this paragraph, see James M. Gustafson, *Protestcwt and Roman Oatholio Ethics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1'178), especially chapter 5.

have no access to the public and shared epistemic criteria which purportedly constitute the foundation of all knowledge. Or theists will accept those criteria-in which case they may well have interesting and important things to say, but these will not be significantly distinctive in any Christian sense.[52]

But why, Wolterstorff and Plantinga have asked, should the theist plead *nolo contendere* with respect to the so-called public and shared epistemic criteria of classical foundationalism? Why should the theist adopt a conformist stance regarding it? Why should he surrender the structure of rationality to the foundationalist? Does the hold which the dilemma has upon him not stem precisely from these concessions which the theist has made, whether deliberately or inadvertently, to basis-restrictive foundationalism? I think, with Wolterstorff and Plantinga, that the answer to this last question must be yes. For the apparent force of the dilemma is measured by whether or not the theist accepts the criteria of classic foundationalism. But, if the foundationalist sees the structure of rationality mistakenly, it is really quite obvious that the theist need not concede these things; conformism need not be seen as an overriding rule. The theist need not accept the presumption, as Wolterstorff puts it, "that if ever one discerns conflict between one's religious convictions on the one hand, and the results of reputable science on the other, then one is obliged as a rational person to resolve the conflict by revising one's religious convictions." [53] He may now respond differently: the theist may offer, for example, a critique of classic foundationalism-which would eliminate a possible reason for not holding his religious beliefs as an autonomous source of logical implication capable of affecting scientific theory-formation and theory-appraisal.

It is worth emphasizing that nothing I have said entails the view that the Christian theist should not be prepared to modify,

[52] This is how Macintyre, more or less, states the dilemma in his article, "God and the Theologians," p. 23.

[53] N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), p. 170.

and in certain circumstances to abandon, his initial position in order to take account of other positions that are inconsistent with it, if those positions are well supported, or very much better supported than his own.[54] It does not follow from what has been argued here that in principle no conflict between science and religious convictions can ever arise. Nothing I have said should be taken to mean that I want theists to stand still, as it were. A second point worth emphasizing is this: We should not suppose, if the classic foundationalist sees the structure of rationality mistakenly, that the Christian believer, the non-Christian believer, and the non-religious humanist have no access to public and shared epistemic criteria and beliefs. The truth is that they do in fact have access to such criteria and beliefs.[55]

Earlier in this paper, I took note of the fact that it is often the critics of theism who wish theists would be more orthodox. They insist upon this, I said, because they believe, rightly, that there can be no serious conversation with theism beyond a certain point if it is not recognizably theistic. They want, Stout said, their conversation partners to remain distinctive enough to be identified, to be needed. Well, if classic foundationalism is internally incoherent, as Christian theists like Plantinga and Wolterstorff have argued, then, I suggest, Christian theism can be both critical enough to be respected and distinctive enough to be needed.

EDWARD J. ECHEVERRIA

*Rhodes University*
*Grahamstown, South Africa*

[54] B. Mitchell, "Two Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion," p. 14. Wolterstorff makes a similar point in chapter 13 of *Reason within the Bounds of Religion.*

[55] N. Wolterstorff, "Is Reason Enough?", *The Reformed Journal* 31 (1981) : 23. On this, see my essay, "Rationality and The Theory of Rationality" Forthcoming in *The Christian Scholar's Review.* I am grateful to Nicholas Wolterstorff for helpful comments on ideas contained in this paper.

# CONVERSION AND CONVERGENCE: PERSONAL TRANSF0l{l'11ATION AND THE GROWING ACCORD OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

HAT IS IT that keeps theology and religious studicc1 apart? And what, on the other hand, will bring them together? It will be immediately observul that these questions are put in such a way as to imply that theology and religious studies were things, like rockets in orbit, " already out there now real," that continue in motion according to the principles of their own momentum, and are brought together through forces applied from the outside through human intervention. Obviously this is not exactly the case with the matter in hand. Rather it is that both theology and religious studies are in human subjects in the first place. Some human subjects identify themselves as theologi::rns: others call themselves scholars devoted to the study of religion. So the question might be put, what keeps them apart, i.e., what separates the theologian from the practitioner of religious studies? Cculd it be that the progressive transformai:ion of human subjects devoted to the study of religion, from one or another viewpoint, brings about the gradual unification of the disciplines in which the meaning of religion is brcmght under control? And if that is the case, what kind of subjective transformation would promote the unification of their objective concern? In the pages that follow these are the questions that will be pursued.

The: proximate occasion for my setting out to write something on the topic of the relation between religious studies and theology is the fact of being engaged in teaching in the Department of Religion at l,a Salle University. At the moment

of writing the curriculum of the department is divided into four sections. They are labeled as follows: (1) biblical studies; (2) theological studies; (3) historical studies; (4) religious studies. In the first sector the focus is obviously the sacred scriptures of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Theological studies have to do exclusively with the Christian tradition, the community, its doctrine and its ritual. Historical dudies deal with that same tradition, now not in terms of the entities by which it is constituted, but rather from the point of view of the development of the tradition as a whole in this or that period, both from within and in relation to cultural conditions that have made a major impact on the tradition. Hence, for example, " Religion in America ". Heligious studies, finally, focus on the great religions oi the world other than Christianity, taking in alrn the int2r(faciplinary topic *oi* "Heligious .Attitudes in Modem Literature". Significantly, under this last rubric no mention or history is made in the section title.

In reference to this menu, moreover, it has been said that the department is aci:uaHy doing two quite distinct things. The question that occurs, of course, is what these two distinct things are and hov;r they are related. Even the layperson will discern readily that the distinction has something to do with the difference between inatters that concern the Christian community and the religious beliefs and practice of "others". Therefore, under the banner of the inquiry already outlined, and taking La Salle's setup as somewhat typical, at least of collegiate study of religion in the context 0£ North American Catholic institutions of higher learning, I intend a critical assessment of this menu and its presuppositions. This makes for a twofold purpose: (l) to make a modest contribution to the ongoing discussion of the religious studies/theology problematic; (Q) to engage in the sort of critique just now suggested.

At the outset it should be stated too that the quite substantial contribution of Bernard Lonergan, " The Ongoing Genesis of Methods" (recently published as part of the vol-

ume, *A Third Collection;* see works consulted, *in fine)* is seminal to what follows. The problem is one of method, to be sure; but that fact does not place it in the realm of abstractions. The questions are after all rather concrete. Is there, for example, any dynamic relationship between the study of Buddhist spirituality and the interpretation of Pauline literature? What might be the connection between grasping what was going forward in the tridentine period and understanding the terms of the Chalcedonian definition of hypostatic union? Are these endeavors perhaps parts of one integral whole, or are they in some sense functions or phases of a single process? Some answers to such questions, albeit provisional, seem to be demanded, both for the forward movement of our work as scholars and educators, and for the sake of the students whom we serve.

## A MODERN QUESTION

In attempting to do a little justice to questions such as these, it is prerequisite to acknowledge the modernity of the inquiry. Taking the Christian tradition as more familiar both to myself and the typical reader, we should observe that there are two phases in the history of the tradition in which such an inquiry did not and *could not* have taken place. With Lonergan, we may designate these two moments as the Christian tradition in the first and second stages of meaning, where limitations in the differentiation of consciousness dictated the conditions in which the Christian tradition was accepted and understood. [1]

In the first stage, the tradition comes into existence through the dissemination of the message and the gift of the Spirit, giving rise to the community. The message, the gift, and the community are the compound focus of experience, without being thematized. At first no attempt is made to express either the objective concern of the community or its common

[1] On stages of meaning see R. Doran (1979), 75-80.

subjective experience in other than symbolic terms. When, moreover, questions of truth do arise, they are dealt with piecemeal, so to speak, on an *ad hoc* basis.[2]

In the second stage of meaning, when there emerges the coherent endeavor to translate the symbolic meanings of the Christian religion into literal meanings, theology is established as a scientific discipline in the university setting (e.g., at the University of Paris during the era of an Aquinas) . In that setting the sciences are constructed according to aristotelian canons, the various disciplines are distinguished according to their formal objects; and so it is said in reference to theology that its work takes place under the *ratio formalis* of the divine as susceptible of being revealed. In the framework of a synthesis such as Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae,* one might fancifully imagine that what is thought of today as religious studies might have been worked in as an expansion of the inquiry concerning the virtue of religion (II II, 81-100) . Of course, the expansion would have eventually dwarfed the original treatise, and the methods employed in the investigations would have been quite foreign to the mind of Aquinas. In any case, the endeavor in that context would have been to preserve the integrity of the discipline by considering everything under the formal objective of divine revelation.

In our own day, as the tradition is reborn (perhaps kicking and screaming) into the third stage of meaning, when method has begun to supplant logic as the control for scientific inquiry, the question about religious studies and theology arises in explicit fashion. Their integration is not at all clear, and there seems to be good reason for thinking of them as quite distinct endeavors. At the same time the yen for coordination of effort, with a view toward that utility which is the aim of all modern scientific endeavor, suggests and even promotes the fashioning of some sort of unity.

[2] cf. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., *Theology of the Christian Word* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1978), particularly chapters 1-3.

## RELIGION, THE COMMON FOCUS

If religious studies and theology are to be brought together at all, a first step might consist in relating them to their common objective, religion itself. The question might be put as follows: what is peculiar about their respective approaches to the same entity? These relations are clarified, moreover, through an understanding of how religion *comes to be* the common focus; and that involves an historical perspective.

In the second stage of meaning theologians affirm that the focus or object of their study is God, and everything else as it is related to the divine (cf. Aquinas, *Smmna Theologiae,* I, I, 7), an affirmation that on the surface appears to propose something quite different from the modern view, that *religion* is what holds the theologian's attention. It is to be noted, however, that the former affirmation has the classical view of culture as its context, where it is assumed that the men and women of the given culture have unique access to the one true God, and that people of other cultures worship false gods and cultivate religions that are quite worthless, if not downright harmful. Also characteristic of the classical view is the absence of historical consciousness, i.e., of the awareness of the constitutive function of meaning. [3]

With the coming of the modern era, however, when the constitutive function of meaning, as regards social institutions and cultural achievements (of which theology is a signal example), begins to be appropriated, theologians will take what appears to be a more modest stance and, speaking about the role of theology, will say, as Bernard J,onergan does, for example, that it is to mediate between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix xi) . There will then be as many theologies as there are distinct cultural matrices contextualizing diverse religions. There is even the possibility of different theologies, based on distinct religions, within a single culture, and, at the limit, of theological

[3] On the classical view see N. Lash (1985) with references to Lonergan.

diversity within a single religion. No a priori judgments are made, moreover, regarding the worth of the various religions. As Lonergan puts it, " the theologies [will] endeavor to discern whether there is any real fire behind the smoke of symbols employed in this or that religion" (1985, 161). In this context it makes sense to pay attention initially to religion itself, to attempt to say what it is.

## THE C01'•1POUND OF RELIGION

The rationale for the more modest stance referred to in the previous paragraph resides in the recognition that questions about God are on the human horizon. The thrust of human intentionality, no matter what the cultural determinations are, is toward a self-transcendence that is not only intelligent, rational, and responsible, but also loving in an unrestricted manner. The view is bolstered by the exploitation of the discovery that religious experience occurs on that level of intentionality where decisions and commitments are made, i.e., where consciousness becomes conscience. The actuality of human being in love in an unrestricted manner (again, without regard for cultural conditions) is a transformation of conscience, and therefore the basis for seeing everything in a distinct light. These items have been distinguished and unpacked with great precision in the chapter which Lonergan devotes to the topic of religion in *Method in Theology* (see especially, 101-109) . What follows immediately is little more than a re-statement of the salient points of that analysis.

To proceed from below upwards, i.e., from religious questioning to religious fulfillment, we may begin by making the general observation that the sphere of religion is "the world as mediated by ultimate meaning and motivated by ultimate value" (Lonergan [1985], 161). Thus in ordinary human life, questions for understanding and for reflection are raised in dynamic patterns until they perhaps reach a limit, where the questions have to do with questioning itself. So too in that sector of intentionality where the questions are deliberative.

The pattern is again dynamic and reaches asymptotically toward a limit, where questions may arise that have to do with the value of the deliberative process itself. The thrust of this entire process is toward self-transcendence, in that the cognitive process heads toward truth and the deliberative toward value, both of which are independent of the subject. In fact the subject finds authenticity in the affirma6on of what is discovered and judged to be true in fact, and in decisions to be and to do what is esteemed as of genuine value. At any point, however, the process itself may undergo a complete revolution through that fulfillment which is religious experience, where all meaning is transposed and all value is transformed in such wise that the person is grasped by ultimate concern, and begins to see the world through the eye of love (faith) and to value what is given in the world according to the measure of the love which is its source.

" Our *hearts* are flooded with love for God by the gift of the Holy Spirit " (Rom. *5:* 5) : this is the Christian way of describing that experience, and as a descriptive expression it is helpful in working out the implications of the experience. At the outset we do not *lcnow* the One with whom we are in love. Significantly, therefore, the heart is identified as the seat of religious experience. The heart, however, does have reason which reason does not know and cannot on that account express in its own manner. And so the expression of the experience is largely symbolic, where the symbols that are evoked issue from what is felt in the heart. These feelings are intentional responses to values that are apprehended but not yet grasped by any sort of reflective understanding. Thus Lonergan observes that typically religions " apprehend ultimate meaning and ultimate value symbolically" (ibid.). This is to intimate (as we have already insisted) that initially we come into *religious* contact with reality on the fourth level of conscious intentionality, so that our response is to meanings and values revealed in feelings. The connection here is that the decision which religious experience *is,* has feelings as its

correlative, giving it mass and momentum. The expression, therefore, must be symbolic, for symbol is precisely that: sign of something real or imaginary evoked by feeling or that evokes feeling (Lonergan [1972], 64).

As issuing from religious experience, implanted, so to speak, in the fourth level of human interiority, religion is seen to be thoroughly dynamic, never a finished product, always developing, but dialectically (cf. I,onergan [1972], 110-112). Its authenticity and corresponding authentic expressions may be and often are marred by unauthenticity, with its myth and magic, and this both in the personal and historical domains. Individuals do make brave beginnings, when grasped by ultimate concern; but sustained growth is more the exception than the rule. So too religious traditions come into existence and flower, only to be threatened by disintegration and even oblivion.

Although the heart does take the lead in religious conversion, to the effect that the human subject is thrust toward and reaches out for that which is of ultimate value, it is not to be denied that the mind, with its focus on the intelligible and the rational, is integral to religion come to full expression. Kierkegaard was certainly correct in affirming that faith is a leap, but it would not be correct to jump to the conclusion that it is a leap into irrationality. The aphorism is rather rightly understood as affirming that faith is a leap *into* reason, i.e., into that dynamism which comes to rest only in the achievement of having gotten "to the bottom of things." The subject who is grasped by ultimate concern does as a matter of fact desire to know the One by whom he or she is grasped. In fact the experience of being in love in an unrestricted manner is normaily the basis of a process of development from above downwards, which has the following stations: (1) the flooding of the heart with love for the known Unknown; (2) judgments of value, i.e., convictions which issue from the heart flooded by love, which are quite beyond reason: a new set of judgments on oneself, as loved and called to love unrestrictedly, and on the universe as an expression of love;

(3) a more or less sustained inquiry aimed at understanding both oneself and one's world, as transformed by love, and the source of that transformation *(fides quaerens intellectum);* (4) a daily life enriched by love, wisdom, and understanding, i.e., a return to the data, now transformed and transvalued through the development of the religiously grasped subject. Such development is, moreover, dialectical, in the sense already described.

Nor does such development take place in a cultural vacuum. And so a complete account of religion must include something about the word, not only about the inner word through which God replaces the heart of stone with the heart of flesh, but also about the outer word: the word of tradition, the word of fellowship, and the word of gospel. It is here especially that religions diverge; for, whereas the existential experience of being grasped by ultimate concern may be assumed to be common and transcultural, the cognitive expression of that experience (whether personal or traditional) will always be culturally conditioned. This will be the case as well when the outer word is expressive of that which issues from God's intervention in human history, to reveal what is properly characteristic of divine being and of God's design for humanity. "\Vhere such intervention is affirmed, of course, there is the added burden of discerning the authentic expression of it from the unauthentic; and this would seem to be an ongoing task.

In terms that are transcultural, then, to the question, what is one doing when one is being religious? the answer that might be given is, one is being in love in an unrestricted manner. That is what religious experience seems to be: a condition of the human subject, i.e., human intentionality, wherein that subjectivity is fulfilled. The inner experience corresponding to such fulfillment is joy and peace quite beyond understanding. This dynamic state, moreover, as any other intentional thrust, demands outward expression; and in this case, as Lonergan observes, the expression will be largely symbolic, for the meaning and value, i.e., the concern, are ultimate: beyond literal expression, because beyond comprehension.

## QUESTIONS CONCERNING RELIGION

Two questions arise spontaneously out of this dynamic state: (1) What is taking place within me? (2) Who is it that I am loving? The two questions correspond to the subjective and objective sides of the experience, respectively. In the attempt to do them justice, let the Christian tradition stand as concrete example. The answer to the first question is by way of interpretation of the experience, giving it a name and describing that for which the name stands. In the Christian tradition it is said that the human heart is flooded with love for God through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5: 5). Accordingly, from a Christian standpoint, religious experience is that flooding of the heart with joy and peace that must be attributed to the Spirit of God as to its source. The answer to the second question is, of course, somewhat more complex; perhaps the simplest way of bringing it to clarity would be in terms of one or another of the creeds of the ancient Church. Significantly the Greek term used to name them is *symbolon.* Trinitarian in structure, they are not endeavors to penetrate the doctrine by way of understanding, but rather in a descriptive way to unfold the mystery as the ground of what the Christian community believes to be the way in which salvation is worked out.

Out of this message, in its objective and subjective aspects, together with the reality of the gift of the Spirit, the Christian community grasps its own dynamic being. Its growth in space and time is attributed to these same factors. The quality of its life, however, consists in the effort on the part of the community, at any given moment or place to make their personal expression of the message authentic, i.e., intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving. Such an effort is always limited in its performance, and so both the personal and the traditional experssions of Christianity are compounds of the authentic and the unauthentic. In any case, what we have been attempting to describe in these last paragraphs is the Christian religion in the concrete. What does it mean to be

religious in the Christian manner? The elements are: the hearing of the message, the gift of the Spirit, sharing in the life of the community which is born of these two factors.

Now this entire movement called Christianity is at its historical source lived and experienced without being thematized. This is to say that people's hearts are flooded with love for God, they acknowledge God to have entered into human history through Incarnation, and they form community to celebrate both the message and the gift of the Spirit, without engaging in formal inquiry as to how the gift, the message, and the gathering are to be understood.

## EMERGENCE OF THEOLOGY

Eventually, however, inquiry does occur. And at this point our own discourse shifts topically from religion as such to theology in its nascent form. In the first instance the inquiry seems to be focused precisely on the fundamental issues: the message as proclaiming Incarnation and Trinity; and the gift interpreted as the Spirit, who is God, replacing the heart of stone with the heart of flesh. How are we to understand Incarnation? What precisely do we mean when we affirm Jesus to be the Son [Word] of God and Son of Mary? It is this line of questioning, and its dialectical unfolding, with which Lonergan is concerned in essays such as " The Origins of Christian Realism," and " The Way to Nicea." [4] The outcome as well as the development is, of course, culturally conditioned, in a manner that later scholars have sometimes described as the hellenization of Christianity. What this says simply is that those believers who were engaged in the inquiry used their minds in the manner in which they could, nurtured as they were in a world in which great categories were dominant in human discourse. It is *not* to say that they used their minds in a way radically different from the way in which we might use ours. For, Greek though they were, they were nonetheless constrained

4" The Origins of Christian Realism," in *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia, 1974), 239-261; *The Way to Nicea* (Philadelphia, 1976).

to be *attentive* to what they saw, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted, *intelligent* in their questions for understanding, i.e., in discerning intelligible patterns in their sense experience, *reasonable* in the way in which they might bring the process of reflective understanding to closure, and *lovingly responsible* in their conduct of the entire process of inquiry. In other words, the invariant structure of conscious intentionality was quite as operative in that era as it is in our own.

Such is also the case with the inquiry that is aimed at clarifying the nature of the gift, most often referred to as the Pelagian controversy. When the human heart is flooded with love for God, what are the antecedents and the consequences? How especially is human freedom engaged? What indeed is the *nature* of the gift? As with the inquiry concerning the message, these questions do not occur all at once, nor are they answered without some agony. There are, in fact, accusations and recriminations, charges of infidelity to the tradition, and eventually the sorting out of heretical positions from those that are labeled orthodox. Thus it is that heroes emerge and antiheroes make their appearance, to be discriminated eventually as champions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, respectively.

With the rediscovery of Greek thought on the part of Christian intellectuals of the western Church in the medieval period, theology enters upon a new phase. It consists in a sustained and coherent effort to transpose the symbolic meanings of the message and the gift into meanings that are literal, where *literal* stands for what is submitted to the control of logic. *Mythos* is replaced by *logos,* not piecemeal, as in the patristic period, but wholly and coherently. The great monuments of this effort are the *Summae* of Thomas Aquinas. Now the mysteries of Incarnation and Trinity are placed in the context of systematic understanding, not in the sense of being reduced to moments in an overarching and a priori rational framework, but rather in the sense of providing the fundamental clues for the discovery of the rationale for the relationship of the human and the divine. This permits Aquinas to

distinguish the *via inventionis* from the *via doctrinae,* to ground his understanding of creation in the doctrine of the Trinity, and his understanding of human growth through the sacramental life of the Church in the doctrine of redemptive Incarnation.

Theology in the modern key, which Lonergan describes as the third emergence of inquiry concerning praxis (what are we *doing* in being Christian, i.e., what do belief in and proclamation of the message really entail; what is the significance of the gift, enjoyed and exploited as it is in the context of the community which is Church?) ,[5] is a renewal yet to achieve its definitive status; nor is that achievement likely to take on a form in any way simila.r to what we have known in the past. No new system is likely to emerge, for *logos* is being replaced by *methodos;* and the entire enterprise takes on a dynamism that classical consciousness could not envisage. Both religion and theology are seen as developing entities, and in each case the development is dialectical. Progress and decline are not restricted to personal religious histories, but belong also to communities, Churches, theological movements and schools. Not only are individuals lost and found, but entire traditions founder and undergo undeserved recovery. Thus the impact of modern science, modern exegetical and historical methods, and modern philosophies upon modern religion and modern theology is yet to be fully assessed; and the assessment itself must be ongoing. As moderns we do not write final chapters, but only *essais vers* ... with sketches of coming attractions.

The dialectical quality of religious and theological development, insofar as it is grasped by present-day practitioners of the theological enterprise, is the foundation of something quite constructive. We see the building rise in the ecumenical movement, wherein theologians of various confessional backgrounds first scrutinize their own traditions in the light of their dialectical relations with other confessions, and then eventually subject *themselves* to critical scrutiny, as more or less authentic

[5] 1985, 16lf.

representatives of those traditions in the present. This latter development is, of course, crucially important, as a concrete recognition that authenticity is never to be taken for granted, that aberrations (or a compound of the authentic and the unauthentic) are to be as expected both in the data to be investigated and in the investigation of those to whom the data are delivered. There is authentic praxis in traditions marred by unauthenticity, introduced in the past and cultivated unknowingly in the present because of inattention to its presence. It is what J,onergan names minor authenticity. [6] There is also unauthentic performance in traditions that are in a state of decline; and this seems to be motivated by despair over what is possible in terms of reform. People just give up. As Lonergan observes, the Rule is still read but one wonders whether or not the home fires are burning (ibid.). Finally, there is unauthenticity on the part of those living in traditions that have undergone substantial reform, for it is quite difficult for us to respond to the invitation to sustained development.

## COMPOUND OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The unintentional effect of what has been said up to now might be the impression that only religion and theology are undergoing development. This is far from the truth, of course, for they are simply elements in a much more complex cultural evolution and differentiation. And so it might be appropriate to make some observations about the emergence of religious studies as a group of disciplines, largely historical in their methodology, that have come into existence in the modern world. They seem to have a double focus. First there is the study of the religions that have been and are practised in human communities anywhere at any time. Second there is the application of empirical and historical methods in the study of the Christian religion, and this in the academy of the West,

[6] 1972, 80.

where heretofore the Christian religion, as an object of study, was assumed to be exempt from such methodology. In effect both dimensions of religious studies have complex backgrounds.

One is reminded in the first place of that passage from H. Butterfield's *The Origins of Modern Science,* which Lonergan himself cites or to which he makes reference so often:

> "Since [the so-called scientific revolution,] popularly associated with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but reaching back in an unmistakably continuous line to a period much earlier still] overturned the authority in science not only of the middle ages but of the ancient world-since it ended not only in the eclipse of scholastic philosophy but in the destruction of Aristotelian physics **–it** outshines everything since the rise of Christianity; and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom." [1]

The relevance of this citation to the topic at hand is the application of the new methodology in the academy of religion. With the new methodology, moreover, come several questions, among which the following seem particularly important: (1) the significance for the study of religion of the shift in the aim of the sciences to usefulness; (2) the application in the study of religion of the demand on their part for autonomy, i.e., self-determination in the selection of terms and relations; (3) the assimilation in the study of religion of modern scientific concern with *things·* susceptible of being observed and experimented with, rather than with words and logical relations (Lonergan [1985], 147-149).

Mention has to be made, of course, of another element of the intellectual history of the West, namely, the First Enlightenment, which becomes the context for the pursuit of scientific understanding in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and where it is assumed on principle that traditional religion belongs to the past, without qualification, and that a brave new world can be constructed from the consistent and coherent use of human reason. Whereas the scientific revolution as such

[1] 1965, 7.

seems neutral in reference to the religious tradition of the West, this latter transition is anything but indifferent, indeed is hostile, to the dominant role of religion in human life and of theology in the academy.

From this hybrid stock arises the modern study of religion, both the largely historical investigation of the religions of all places and all times, and the undertaking of the challenge to reassess the documents of the Christian tradition according to the methods of the critical historical school. Insofar as the endeavor has been inspired by the ideals of the scientific revolution, without reference to the ideology of the First Enlightenment, the results have been cumulatively and progressively the basis of progress in our understanding of the human subject as religious, and of the objectifications of the religious quest and religious experience. Results as regards the documents of the Christian religion, once thought of as the source of premises from which deductions could be made, but now viewed as data to be understood, are perhaps less easily assessed; but there is no doubt that the commitment has been made on the part of the Churches of the West to participate in the venture which is the on-going critical examination and re-examination of the tradition. The Fundamentalist hue and cry, whether biblicist or ecclesiastical, in opposition to this development may be taken as a rearguard action, bothersome perhaps but self-corrective. In the classical style it seeks to establish norms in some unchangeable and abstract set of principles, to which believers and theologians alike may have recourse.

Of course this progress is marred by the ideologies, especially those that tend to *reduce* religion by the hermeneutic of suspicion to the expression of either hidden psychological obsession (in the manner of Freud) or socio-economic oppression (in the manner of Marx). Without denying the legitimacy of this hermeneutic, especially in the unmasking of the unauthentic in the traditions as they are lived in the modern world, we would want to make a plea for the complementary hermeneutic of recovery (in the manner of P. Ricoeur), with a view

toward establishing the peculiarity of the word that is addressed to the human subject in religious experience.

Lonergan speaks of an asymptotic movement of theology and religious studies toward a relationship that is overlapping and that eventually renders them interchangeable. This is accomplished, according to him, through the intelligent and reasonable use of the entire battery of methods: empirical (both those which are peculiar to one or another of the disciplines and that which is transcendental: generalized empirical method) , critico-historical, dialectical, and praxis. Let us see how this might work out concretely, and, on that account, dynamically.

The use of generalized empirical method (GEM) might be considered in the first place, because it is both pervasive and crucial. At the outset, moreover, a distinction might be brought to bear. GEM is employed in *act'U exercito* wherever human subjects are attentive to data, intelligent in the inquiry aimed at understanding, and reasonable in the assessment of what is understood. Such is the experiment that Lonergan refers to as taking place in the historical process.[8] *In actu signato,* however, GEM is operative only where a person is responding to the challenging invitation to intellectual conversion, i.e., where a more or less coherent effort is being made to appropriate rational consciousness: to " catch oneself " in the experience of experiencing, understanding, and judging; to understand what it is to experience, understand, and judge: to make true judgments concerning experience, insight, and judgment. To do this, and to confirm what is done by the practise of this kind of reflexive awareness, insight, and judgment brings about a converted rational consciousness, that is coming into possession of its own dynamic activity, knowing what it is doing when it is knowing, capable at any given moment of discerning the operation that is taking place within consciousness, and knowing also the relation of what is occurring now with what preceded and what is forthcoming. Such expertise would seem

[8] 1985, 152.

to be a rarity.[9] So also is the complementary development of coming to realize what it is in this dynamic process that constitutes the knowing subject precisely as a *knower,* and finally the crowning achievement of discerning what it is that is known in the process *(cf.* J,onergan (1972)), *13-25.*

It might be hoped that all those engaged in both religious studies and in theology would qualify as employing GEM in both the first and the second senses. The fact of the matter, however, is that consistent and coherent intelligence and reasonableness is not to be taken for granted, either in the sifting out of data, the interpretation of texts, the assessment of what is going forward in history, or the dialectical evaluation of the tradition. This is the force of the observation that we have come to the end of the scientific age of innocence. A fortiori is it the case that intellectual conversion is not to be assumed. What can be done simply is to promote intellectual conversion, both in oneself and in others, in the manner, though certainly not with equal thoroughness, that Lonergan himself has promoted it in the writing of *Insight.*

The promotion of intellectual conversion is both for the benefit of religious studies and theology, taken singly, and for their eventual merger. Where human subjects are lovingly responsible in their scholarship and study, they choose to be attentive to the data at hand for research, and therefore in the long run will cause to appear whatever is relevant for interpretation. In the same context responsible exegetes make conscious choices to handle the relevant texts with careful intelligence, conducting an exhaustive inquiry regarding their meaning, never completely satisfied with the results, always ready to revise where new data turn up to constitute a challenge to old interpretations. Responsible historians will assiduously cultivate and develop their method to reconstruct the constructions of past moments in the progress and/or decline of the tradition under scrutiny. Finally, religious and

[9] For a description of intellectual conversion that suggests its arduousness, see Lonergan (1972), 238-240.

moral authenticity will energize those who engage in dialectics to select out of the tradition (s) those elements which are complementary and those which are contradictory. They will invite their colleagues in the academic community to promote the former, e.g., the complementarity of the various cultural expressions of Christian doctrine, while engaging in the reversal of what surfaces as contradicting the thrust of the tradition. In this connection, of course, what Lonergan has said about dialogue, as it promotes the authenticity of the investigator, as well as the reformation of the tradition that is investigated, is crucial (1985, 159) .

The introduction of the condition, " where human subjects are lovingly responsible," indicates that intellectual conversion cannot be thought of as being achieved in isolation from moral and religious self-transcendence. Lonergan's position on this is clear:

> Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next the eye of this love reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion. For the word, spoken and heard, proceeds from and pentrates to all four levels of intentional consciousness. Its content is not just a content of experience but a content of experience and understanding and judging and deciding. The analogy of sights yields the cognitional myth. But fidelity to the word engages the whole man (1972, 243).

The conversions then are foundational, not merely for human living, but even for the work of the religious scholar and the theologian. They are the basis of the effective coordination of the " whole battery of methods." In the presence of the conversions this entire battery will be developed with systematic results, while without them their use will be sporadic and the results of the sporadic use will be limited. The cmnula-

tive and progressive result of the conversions is the openness of the human subject to himself or herself as pure question; and in the context of religious studies/theology, this implies not only the use of dialectic, verging always toward dialogue, in the sorting out of the authentic from the unauthentic, but also the adoption of praxis as method, in the mediation of religion to a given culture in its present state.

As Lonergan has stated, praxis as method is an instance of development from above downwards: "the use of this method follows from a decision that is comparable to the claim of Blaise Pascal that the heart has reasons which reason does not know" (1985, 161). In the context of religious studies, such a decision will bring about the discernment of a distortion in the religious situation of the world at large, namely, the adversarial relationship of the great world religions, where they come into contact with one another. "What are [we] going to do about it? What use are [we] to make of [our] knowledge of nature, of [our] knowledge of man, of [our] awareness of the radical conflict between man's aspiration to self-transcendence and, on the other hand, the waywardness that may distort his traditional heritage and even his own personal life?" (ibid.). In the spirit of F. Heiler, it will see cooperation among the adherents of the various religions as the preface to mutual understanding. The promotion of cooperation will bring about the awareness of the common convictions that underlie the disparate objectifications of faith (the eye of love) in religious belief. It will also provide the ground for the twofold hermeneutic: the hermeneutic of suspicion to discern the unauthentic in the tradition as it is passed on from generation to generation and the hermeneutic of recovery to uncover the elements of the tradition that promote authenticity in its adherents. As regards the first of these hermeneutics, where unauthenticity in the tradition is ferreted out, religious studies will extend an invitation to reform.

Praxis in the context of theology will operate in an analogous way to promote unity among the various confessions within

a single religious tradition (e.g., the denominations of Christianity) and the different theological schools in one and the same denomination. Again the conversions are foundational in the discernment of distortion. Authentic subjects are discerning subjects in this regard, for objectivity is the fruit of subjective authenticity. Especially religious and moral conversion are the source of the decision to do something about the distortion. Here we can appeal to the ecumenical movement as a typical exercise of praxis. In the approach that the Christian Chmches have made toward one another is revealed the success of the twofold hermeneutic; in the degree to which they remain alienated are revealed biases which remain to be overcome.

If on the surface it appears that, from the angle of praxis, religious studies and theology still remain only parallel to one another, the reason is probably that we are still viewing the two movements as taking place on their own (like the two rockets in space). The fact is, of course, that concretely there are theologians and religious scholars, all human subjects, constantly being called forward to a more intensive and extensive authenticity. Insofar as through the conversions they are brought in touch with the reality of their own being, as oriented tovrnrd the transcendent, toward value, and toward truth, their efforts will converge. They will see themselves as involved in an enormous ongoing work of understanding the religious dimension of human life, not in isolation from other dimensions, but in coordination. Thus the convergence of religious studies and theology, in the converted human subjects, who are the theologians and religious scholars, will eventually show the way to the unification in tension of the other scientific disciplines, a process that needs to be catalyzed.

Perhaps in light of all this it is inappropriate at the present juncture to get all hot and bothered about the organization of the menus that represent the offerings of departments of religious studies, of religion, and of theology. At least on the undergraduate level the pervasive aim would seem to he foundational. Thus, in biblical studies, the orientation is toward

initiating in the students an *inquiry* regarding the compound of authenticity and unauthenticity in the developing tradition that is represented in the literature. Theologica1 studies are concerned with the struggle for balance in the tradition of the *'Understanding* of the gift and the message, and the *self-understanding* of the community. Historical studies make their contribution by exhibiting the radical conflict between authenticity and unauthenticity in the future development of a tradition, thus suggesting the need for dialectic and dialogue. Finally, the study of the religions outside one's own tradition manifests that self-same struggle, and promotes some understanding of the distorted situation. Being exposed to the issue of conversion from these various angles should provide the opportunity for reflection concerning one's own foundations.

MAURICE SCHEPERS, **O.P.**

*La Salle University*
*Philadelphia*

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# HUSSERL ON GALILEO'S INTENTIONAI,ITY

THE PROBLEM OF THE compatibility between phenomenology and history is the unique problem characterizing Edmund Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.*[1] Husserl attempts to resolve the pvoblem by directly investigating the crisis of the modern sciences-a crisis which he claims begins with Galileo. The aim of this essay is to evaluate critically Husserl's assessment of Galileo as the originator of the crisis. I hope to show that, given Husserl's own demands for the proper historico-phenomenological investigation of the crisis, his conclusions about Galileo are not justified. This will be accomplished, in part, by using some of the work on Galileo done by William A. Wallace, 0.P.

## THE "ORIGIN" OF THE CRISIS

Husserl describes the crisis of European sciences in terms of a teleological movement. The *telos* began with the radical change effected by the ancient Greeks in their recognition that reason is essential to humanity, and that reason is the *entelechy* of humanity.[2] For the Greeks, one of the exigencies of reason is a universal knowledge of what is, in which truth in itself, *episteme,* is attainable. The telic character of reason is revealed in the fact that reason in its philosophical mode continually moves from latent to manifest reason beginning with the Greeks. Husserl writes: "... the *telos* ... was inborn in

1 Translated, with an introduction, by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) ; abbreviation: *Orisis.*

2 See Carr's Introduction p. xxxviii to the *Orisis* for a discussion of the sense in which the Greeks' change was a radical one.

European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy-that of humanity which seeks to exist, and is only possible, through philosophical reason, moving endlessly from latent to manifest reason and forever seeking its own norms through this, its truth and genuine human nature ..." [3] The search for a universal knowledge initially had a " na'ive obviousness " which from the very beginning was not immune to transformations that eventually would increase and achieve greater and greater sophistication.

For Husserl, the transformations are brought about by skepticism, which, in its denial of the presence of reason in " the factually experienced world," finally reaches the point where "... the deepest essential interrelation between reason and what is in general, the *enigma of all enigmas*, has to become the actual theme of inquiry." [4] This inquiry ought to be the task for contemporary philosophy. Such a task has been recognized to a certain extent beginning with Hume and on through Kant and beyond. What Hume and Kant attempted with regard to the Renaissance renewal of the ancient Greek ideal of a universal philosophy, Husserl prescribes in a more radical way for Hume and Kant themselves, indeed, for the whole of the history of philosophy and (modern) science.[5]

Husserl's immediate task will be to overcome the naive rationalism of the eighteenth-century and the "unnoticed na'ivetes" of the present day, so that the genuine sense of rationalism may be established. A philosophy is needed which would bring the *entelechy* of reason to its realization; this is, Husserl explains, reason "... fully conscious of itself in its own essential form, i.e. the form of a universal philosophy which grows through consistent apodictic insight and supplies its own norms thl'ough an apodictic method." [6] Such a task is intrinsically historical since the manifestation of reason can only come about through concepts, problems, and methods which

s Husserl, p. 15.
4 *Ibid.,* p. 13.
s *Ibid.,* p. 1.
6 *Ibid.,* p. 16.

are themselves inescapably inherited. We must proceed, then, by "exhibiting" and "testing" the "inner meaning and hidden teleology" of philosophy's history. Husserl concludes:

> What is clearly necessary (what else could be of help here?) is that we *reflect back,* in a thorough *historical* and *critical* fashion, in order to provide, before *all decisions,* for a radical self-understanding; we must inquire back into what was originally and always sought in philosophy, what was continually sought by all the philosophers and philosophies that have communicated with one another historically; but this must include a *critical* consideration of what, in respect to the goals and methods (of philosophy), is ultimate, original, and genuine and which, once seen, apodictically conquers the will.[1]

This text is enormously important for resolving the question of the compatibility between historical and phenomenological analyses. It is a statement which contains the fundamental elements of the synthesis of historical and phenomenological investigation.

Husserl's parenthetical question at the beginning of the text indicates the inextricability of the connections which are to follow in the text; nothing else will be of help in the current philosophical predicament because there is *no need* for such help. The synthesis described is presented as the truth. Husserl tells us that we must "reflect back" *(Riickbesinnungen),* i.e. we must go back into the historical past, and we must at the same time go back reflectively, discovering the *telos* of reason.

Husserl's text allows one to conclude that the very meaning of presence and origin include historical genesis. If presence is the direct experience of the subject who is free from every prejudice, then this necessarily includes being present to a presence which was passed, i.e. to an original experience which is past, and which, perhaps, is an occluded one. Enzo Paci explains this point well in his *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man:*

> But the living presence (the present time) also contains the past, and retains and recollects the past that constitutes it, even if that

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 17-18.

past is occluded. The living presence contains its historical genesis, and the historical genesis contains the living presence: the point of arrival of the genesis, the present, coincides with the present that I rediscover by means of the reduction. [8]

Paci is quick to point out that this coincidence is never absolute, i.e. that the unity of presence as origin in the past and the presence of the present time cannot be an absolute identity. An origin as past is always in the origin of the present time as a representing:

It must he borne in mind that in fact I do not return to the past, but re-present it in remembrance, i.e., I recall (in an activity which is in the present). If in fact I do not flow back, but instead leap with " seven-league boots," it is because I am dealing with the actual time of memory and not with the past of what is being remembered. Historiography is free to skip from century to century precisely because it starts from the present, or because it follows a new interest in which the present becomes detached from itself owing to a new horizon. [9]

Thus, Husserl must proceed in what he calls a circle; he explains this circle in the following:

Thus we find ourselves in a sort of circle. The understanding of the beginning is to be gained fully only by starting with science as given in its present-day form, looking back at its development. But in the absence of an understanding of the beginnings the *development* is mute as a *development of meaning.* [10]

Paci emphasizes that in the search for the historical origin of the crisis we cannot return to or become the past; this much is clear from the nature of time consciousness.

However, I submit that in his zeal to be thorough in the critical aspect of the *Riiokbesinnungen,* Husserl failed to come to an understanding of the origin as past in the case of Galileo's motivation, i.e. in Galileo's own presence now a part of our

a Translated, with an Introduction, by Paul Picone and James E. Hansen (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 21-22.

o *Ibid.,* p. 23. This point can also be understood in terms of what Paci calls " temporal irreversibility."

io Husserl, p. 58.

origin as past. This claim is made despite Husserl's own admission that a much more exact historical analysis of Galileo is possible than the one given in the *Crisis:*

> ... I have linked all our considerations to his name (Galileo's) in a certain sense simplifying and idealizing the matter, a more exact historical analysis would have to take account of how much of his thought he owed to his "predecessors." . . . In respect to the situation as he found it and to the way in which it had to motivate him and did motivate him according to his known pronouncements, much can be established immediately so that we understand the beginning of the whole bestowal of meaning upon natural science.[11]

This text and the general approach which it represents beg the question of Galileo's motivation. Husserl's position depends on a suppressed assumption which need not be accepted. It is assumed that "a more exact historical analysis," repeating Husserl's words, "... of how much of his thought he owed to his 'predecessors,' " can be considered separately from, and has no significant bearing upon, Galileo's own motivation, and, hence, upon the question of Galileo's role in generating the crisis of the sciences. Only on such an assumption can Husserl's analysis proceed, but this assumption is the very thing which needs proof if the argument is to be successful. For it can be argued, as it will be in this essay, that just the converse is true; namely, that Galileo's motivation and role in the dawning of modern science cannot be understood apart from a careful look at what he assimilated from his predecessors, and that such an analysis presents a different picture of Galileo. (It is appropriate to point out at this juncture that this fallacious move by Husserl, and his historical misconception of Galileo, would seem to count as evidence of a more general failure in the *Crisis* to reach the goal of a synthesis between history and phenomenology. However, pursuing such a question is not the aim of this essay.)

[11] *Ibid.,* pp. 57-58. See Husserl, p. xxxii and David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 49 for the acknowledgement that the historical analysis should be done "in great detail."

## GALILEO'S "ORIGINAL" OCCLUSION

What, then, does Husserl say about Galileo? The answer to this question is our present concern. Today's crisis of the sciences has its origin, according to Husserl, in the particular way that the mathematization of nature took place, beginning with Galileo. Husserl points out that Galileo inherited the traditions of advanced pure and applied geometry. The mathematics of Galileo's day had, as Husserl explains it, accomplished two basic things: first, it had idealized the world of bodies through an " *a priori* all-encompassing method ... which is not just postulated but is actually created, apodictically generated;" [12] second, through its empirical application, mathematics presents a new objectively true knowledge understood in the form of " a methodology of measurement for objectively determining shapes in constantly increasing ' approximation ' to the geometric ideals, the limit-shapes." [13] Husserl claims that this sort of knowledge consummately fulfilled for Galileo the ancient postulate of *episteme* in the sphere of spatio-temporal shapes. [14]

In Galileo's continual pursuit to perfect methods of measurement there is an untested presupposition that the other aspects of nature can be " constructively determined " in the same way as nature in its spatio-temporal aspect; hence, even the sense-qualities of nature are truly known only through the corresponding" mathematical index." Husserl summarizes Galileo's unconscious generalization in this way:

> There must be measuring methods for everything encompassed by geometry, the mathematics of shapes with its *a priori* ideality. And the whole concrete world must turn out to be a mathematizable and objective world if we pursue those individual experiences and actually measure everything about them which, according to the presuppositions, comes under applied geometry-that is, if we work out the appropriate method of measuring. If we do that

[12] Husserl, p. 32.
[13] *Ibid.,* pp. 28-29.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 23.

the sphere of the specifically qualitative occurrences must *also* be mathematized *indirectly.* [15]

Galileo's idealization of the intuitively experienced world is thus really a "coidealization." [16] The spatio-temporal aspect of material bodies receives an idealization in " pure limit-shapes," and the material sense-qualities, the " plena " are idealized into objects such as " tone-vibrations," and " warmth-vibrations." [11]

Husserl is always careful to refer to mathematization as *indirect* mathematization (as is observed in the last text) since a direct mathematization is in principle impossible. This is so because the" empirical-intuitable world," or more generally, the life-world, does not of itself have a" mathematizable world-form." [18]

Husserl's term "indirect" also reminds us that Galileo's mathematization of nature in fact makes a surreptitious substitution; it is,

> . . . the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically constructed world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable-our every-day life-world. This substitution was promptly passed on to his successors, the physicists of all the succeeding centuries. . . . It was a fateful omission that Galileo did not inquire back into the original meaning-giving achievement which, as idealization practiced on the original ground of all theoretical and practical life-the immediately intuited world (and here especially the empirically intuited world of bodies)-resulted in the geometrical ideal constructions. He did not reflect closely on all this: on how the free, imaginative variation of this world and its shapes results only in possible empirically intuitable shapes and not in exact shapes; on what sort of motivation and what new achievement was required for genuinely geometric idealization. [19]

1s *Ibid.,* p. 38.

1a *Ibid,*

11 *Ibid.,* p. 36.

1s *Ibid.,* pp. 34-35. Husserl describes indirect mathematization as a result of a regulation or guidance by "a world of idealities . . . such a world having been objectified in advance through idealization and construction." (p. 34).

19 *Ibid.,* pp. 48-49.

We have quoted this lengthy text because, as Husserl states, the problem expressed therein is of the " highest importance;" it pinpoints the origin of the crisis in today's science as a surreptitious substitution. Moreover, the text proffers three ways in which the origin of the crisis can be ascribed to Galileo, which are here enumerated in their logical order. (I) Galileo did not conceptualize his mathematization in its original ground or "meaning-fundament," and this he did by omission-an omission which is actually a closing off of the life world, what Paci calls Galileo's occlusion. (2) This occlusion becomes (even for Galileo) a *substitution,* in which, Husserl states, "(n) ature is, in its 'true being-in-itself,' mathematical." [20] (3) Galileo did not consider why it is that mathematization can only be *indirect.* That is, he did not consider that genuine or legitimate geometric idealization is possible only when it is "... understood and practiced in a fully conscious way," which means two things for Husserl: (a) "... keeping always immediately in mind the original bestowal of meaning upon the method, through which it has the sense of achieving knowledge about the *world,"* and (b) the method must be freed from unquestioned traditions within which are presuppositions which obscure any truth the traditions may have.[21]

In the next section I will argue that just the opposite of these three points is the truth for Galileo. This will be accomplished by reference to a thorough historical analysis such as what is demanded in Husserl's *Rilckbesinnungen.*

## GALILEO'S INTENTIONALITY

The historical analysis which I will utilize is in the work done by William A. Wallace, O.P. His meticulous historiographical

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 54. These three points represent the critical side of one and the same historical analysis by Husserl. Carr, p. 124, puts it well: ". . . Galileo doubtless considered himself a philosopher and would probably not have recognized the Husserlian distinction between his methodological 'proposal' and an ontological claim. But Husserl is convinced that there is such a distinction to be made, and this reveals something about the character of his historical reflections, namely, the fact that they are critical as well." I agree with the second statement and disagree with the first.

[21] Husserl, p. 47.

and paleographical research provides convincing evidence that the methodology employed by Galileo in his scientific explanation was a realist methodology. Galileo was certainly no phenomenologist, and yet it is clear that the three phenomenological criticisms cited at the end of the previous section are proven untrue to the extent that Galileo had a realist methodology. It is not only significant that Galileo had a realist methodology contrary to the predominant interpretations that his methodology was either Platonistic, or the precursor to the hypothetico-deductive methodology used by modern science. I wish to draw out a further conclusion from Wallace's thesis: namely, that in virtue of its realism, Galileo's methodology did not generate the crisis of reason which Husserl argues is inherent to the methodology of modern science.

I will proceed by briefly tracing Galileo's realistic motivation through his early, middle and late periods. Some emphasis will be given to his *Two New Sciences* in his late period since it is by this work that he is recognized as inaugurating modern science, and because in this work as much as any other Galileo does the sort of thing Husserl claims he does not, i.e. he presents his idealizations in a fully conscious way.

Wallace shows in his" The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science" [22] that, beginning with a course on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in 1588 by Paolo Valla at the Collegio Romano, Galileo subscribed to a realist notion of scientific explanation. "Wallacehas enumerated the many Aristotelian causal concepts and methods of scientific demonstration adopted by Galileo in the early writings (1588-15!H) of the *Logical Questions, Physical Questions* and *De moto antiquiora.* For example, Galileo affirms causal distinctions such as between true causes *(verae causae)* and improper causes,

*22Review of Metaphysics,* 36 (March 1983): 607-632. For Wallace's comprehensive account of the sources for Galileo's *Logical Questions and Physical Questions,* and the development of Galileo's early concepts throughout his writings, see Wallace's *Galileo and His Sources: The Heritage of the Oollegio Romano in Galileo's Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

... between causes *per se* and those *per accidens;* between univocal and equivocal causes; between internal causes, matter and form, and external agent and end; between the four kinds of physical cause-efficient, material, formal and final-and then between the two subspecies of final cause, intrinsic and extrinsic; between creating and conserving causes; between proximate or immediate causes and those that are remote; between causes *in essendo* and those *in cognoscendo;* between causes more known to us and those more known in themselves; between causes convertible with their effects and those that are not; and so on.[23]

Such realistic aspects of nature indicate that nature is something very different from what Husserl ascribes to Galileo; and it was a concept which remained essentially the same for Galileo from beginning to end of his career. "\-Vallace remarks that, "(n) ature is for him a principle of motion, and thus different motions reveal different natures; nature, moreover, does not tend to anything infinite and indeterminate but rather acts for a specific end." [24] All such claims of Wallace's are well-documented, but even a cursory glance at the pages of the *Physical Questions,* for instance, exhibits Wallace's point about nature, and about Galileo's affirmation of Aristotelian concepts; the following is a good example:

... each element has a proper substantial form that is distinct and different from its alterative and motive qualities. This is obvious from its various operations and properties, which must proceed from different forms. Finally, it follows from all the arguments given in the first *Physics* proving that there is such a thing as substantial form.[25]

Wallace also reports that Galileo fully utilized the two main types of demonstration in Aristotelian science, *propter quid*

[23] *Ibid.,* pp. 611-612. All of the influences in Galileo's causal explanation, and other aspects of his thought are fully documented in Wallace's *Prelude to Galileo: Essays on Medieval and Si(J)teenth-Oentury Sources of Galileo's Thought* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1981).

[24] Wallace, "The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science," p. 613.

[25] *Galileo's Early Notebooks: The Physical Questions: A Translation from the Latin, with Historical and Paleographical Commentary,* trans. by William A. Wallace (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977) p. 190.

and the *quia,* and that these were carried out within the procedure of demonstrative *regressus,* which will be treated below. As for the notions of the *propter quid* and the *quia,* Wallace explains that "... the first .*[propter quid]* is made through proximate causes that are true and proper *in essendo* and these may be either intrinsic or extrinsic; *quia* demonstration, on the other hand, is from a remote cause or from an effect, the latter when the effect is more known to us." [26]

One finds in Galileo's middle works as well the same sort of search for the *verae causae* in nature. For example, in the *Letters on Sunspots* (1613) Galileo criticizes the German Jesuit Christopher Scheiner for adhering

> ... to the theory of eccentrics, deferents, equants, epicycles, and the like as if they were real, actual and distinct things. These, however, are merely assumed by mathematical astronomers in order to facilitate their calculations. They are not retained by philosophical astronomers who, going beyond the demand that they somehow save the appearances, seek to investigate the true constitution of the universe-the most important and most admirable problem that there is. For such a constitution exists; it is unique, true, real and could not possibly be otherwise. [27]

Galileo explicitly shows here that he is aware of the significance of the difference between " convenience in astronomical computations " and the integrity of nature. As a matter of fact, if we did not know any better we would be inclined to think that Husserl had the above quotation in mind what he wrote the .following in the *Crisis:* "This actually intuited, actually experienced and experienceable world, in which practically our whole life takes place, remains unchanged as what it is, in its own essential structure and its own concrete causal style, whatever we may do with or without techniques." [28]

Galileo's consciousness of the meaning-fundament of the life-world is found in his use of demonstrative *regressus* and reason-

[26] Wallace, The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science," p. 614.

[21] *Disaoveries and Opmions of Galileo,* ed. and trans. by Stillman Drake (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1957), pp. 46-47.

[2s] Husserl, pp. 50-51.

ing *ex suppo.ntione.* Wallace summarizes the *regres.'IU8*method-ology stated in Galileo's Latin manuscript, *Logical Questions:*

> . . . the demonstrative *regressus* . . . is made up of a two-fold *progressus* or two *progressiones.* The first *progressus* is from effect to cause and the second from cause to effect. The charge of circularity can be avoided, he (Galileo) points out, because it is one thing to come to know a cause *materialiter* and quite another to come to recognize it *formaliti:;r,* i.e., precisely as it is the cause of a proper effect. The first *progressus* must be a *quia* demonstration that concludes from a more known effect to the existence of an unsuspected cause, which at first is grasped only in a material way. Then, after due consideration of the mind, one sees that the newly discovered cause properly and formally accounts for the effect from which the first *progressus* started; at this point one can proceed to the second *progressus* that makes explicit the *propter quid* explanation of the effect.[29]

This methodology, under which reasoning *ex sitppositione* is subsumed, is used in the later works, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1630) and the *Two New Sciences* (1638) . Its use in these works will serve to show that intrinsic to the methodology is the preservation of what for Husserl is the meaning-fundament of the life-world.

Reasoning *ex suppositione* dates back to Aristotle's works, and in its classical and Renaissance meaning it did not have the sense of simply being a hypothesis which contains probable truth. [30] A *suppositio* could mean the latter but its most significant meaning was a condition or cause in nature which is known to be true. *Ex suppositione* reasoning, then, can proceed from a *suppositio,* which has already been established *a posteriori,* to its necessary cause, the *vera caiwa.* The reasoning involving the conjectural meaning of *siippositio* begins

[29] Wallace, "The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science," pp. 614-615.

[30] See William A. Wallace, "Aristotle and Galileo: The Uses of *hypothesi (supposito)* in Scientific Reasoning," *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy,* Vol. 9, Studies in Aristotle, ed. by Dominic J. O'Meara. See p. 75 where Wallace translates a passage from a letter (1640), in which Galileo states that he has been a true Aristotelian philosopher in the *sup·posizioni* he has used in his reasoning.

with an unobservable antecedent condition or cause in a conditional "if p then q;" if the consequent is empirically verified, then the antecedent (the *suppo.'fitio)* obtains with only probably truth (otherwise there is a *fallacia consequentis),* if not, then the antecedent is false.[31] Wallace points out here that this latter sort of hypothetical reasoning was usually distinguished as *ex hypothesi.* Reasoning *e:r suppositione* can also be formally expressed as " if p then q," according to Wallace, but the " p " pertains to the order of appearance where an effect takes place always or for the most part, and the "q" designates " an antecedent cause or condition necessary to produce that result." [32]

In the case of the *Two Chief World* Galileo has Salviati criticize the conclusiveness of the Ptolemaic arguments in the Third Day because of their merely hypothetical chararter. But in the Fourth Day, Galileo indicates, according to my reading of the argument, that he will employ the *regresstui* method to demonstrate the true cause of the tides. This is initially apparent from his claim that, "reciprocally, this ebb and flow itself cooperates in confirming the earth's mobility." [33] Galileo then goes on to argue in the reciprocal fashion of the *regressus.* Salviati argues in the preliminary *progressus* from the *suppositio* of the tidal phenomena to their necessary cause in the earth's motion, albeit not known in a formal way. This he does by recalling with Sagredo their knowledge of the tides in different parts of the world, and by disproving previous theories of the tides which presumed an immobile earth. His next step is to show that the motions of a barge filled with water are proportionate to the motions required to produce the observed effects of the tides. After this point, the second *progressus* is made in which there is a geometrical explanation

[31] See William A. Wallace, *Causality and Scientific Explanation* Vol. I. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 95.

[32] *Ibid.,* p. 95.

[33] Translated by Stillman Drake (Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1967), p. 416.

of the annual and diurnal motions of the earth, which are analogous to the motions of the barge; this explanation is the formal account of the effect given in the first *progressns.* Aside from the particular defects of Galileo's barge analogy, the pertinent point is that the methodology used to prove the Copernican theory incorporates the starting point in the intuited world of experience as a *sine qua non* of the second *progressus* which formally identifies the *vera causa.* The inclusion is a *methodological* one, i.e. it is conscious and deliberate.

Galileo's procedure for demonstrating " naturally accelerated motion " in the *Two New Sciences* is even more revealing of his conscious effort not to occlude the intuited world of experience, because his argument depends on mathematical idealizations. [34] Wallace quite legitimately interprets the passage where Galileo reports his procedure as a procedure which begins *a posteriori* from experiments with a ball rolling down an inclined plane at measured heights of fall and distances of projection (without recording elapsed times)-this comprises the first *progressus.* The second *progressus* concludes in the times squared law of accelerated motion which can be verified in nature; that is to say, the law is consciously known as the formal expression of

34 See *Two New Sciences,* trans. with Introduction and Notes, by Stillman Drake (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974) p. 153 for Galileo's statement of the theory: "... it is appropriate to seek out and clarify the definition that best agrees with that (accelerated motion) which nature employs. Not that there is anything wrong with inventing at pleasure some kind of motion and theorizing about its consequent properties, in the way that some men have derived spiral and conchoidal lines from certain motions, though nature makes no use of these (paths) ; and by pretending these, men have laudably demonstrated their essentials from assumptions *(ex suppositione.)* But since nature does employ a certain kind of acceleration for descending heavy things, we decided to look into their properties so that we might be sure that the definition of accelerated motion which we are about to adduce agrees with the essence of naturally accelerated motion. And at length, after continual agitation of mind, we are confident that this has been found chiefly for the very powerful reason that the essentials successively demonstrated by us correspond to, and are seen to be in agreement with, that which physical experiments (*naturalia experimenta)* show forth to the senses."

how *nature* causes bodies to fall.[35] Galileo explicitly states that nature is the cause of accelerated motion, the properties of which he is investigating: "But since nature does employ a certain kind of acceleration for descending heavy things, we decided to look into their properties so that we might be sure that the definition of accelerated motion which we are about to adduce agrees with the essence of naturally accelerated motion." [36] He is also well aware that in nature there are *impedimenta* such as the law of accelerated motion, preventing the law-like idealization, from ever being realized *as such.* On the one hand, Galileo is looking for the best agreement between mathematics and nature, and yet he is fully aware that the uniformities of times and spaces in the law, as such, have their being in the mind: "And by this same equality of parts of time, we can perceive the increase of swiftness to be made simply, conceiving mentally that this motion is uniformly and continually accelerated in the same way whenever, in any equal times, equal additions of swiftness are added on." [37] Contrary to Husserl, then, nature for Galileo was not " nature " in quotation marks. The text quoted earlier from the *Letters on Sunspots* and Galieo's statement of the theory of naturally accelerated motion are but two examples of his use of the idea of nature which explicitly illustrate that his idea does not conceal, as Husserl claims it does, the " universal causality of the intuitively given world (as its invariant form) ." [38]

Galileo's appreciation of the *impedimenta* in nature, alluded to earlier, is yet another aspect of his concept of nature which is important for evaluating Husserl's assessment in the *Crisi,s.* Like Aristotle, Galileo acknowledged two kinds of impediments to the application of mathematical definitions: they are, in Wallace's words, impediments due to the "imperfections in

35 See Wallace, "The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science," pp. 630-631.

36 Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* p. 153.

37 *Ibid.,* p. 154.

38 Husserl pp. 52-53.

the matter involved or in the deficiencies of agent causes." [39] As Wallace remarks, the fact that Galileo was not overly concerned with the deficiencies of the agents involved is a sign that he understood the basic internal cause of falling motion to be in nature as such, and not in its accidental causes.

There are two points I would like to make concerning Galileo's awareness of the problem of the *impedimento* or the applicability of mathematics. First, Galileo's clear knowledge of this problem, and its traditions, makes the following claim by Husserl simply false: "That this obviousness [of the applicability of the absolute, self-sufficient truth of geometry] was an illusion . . . that even the meaning of the application of geometry has complicated sources: this remained hidden for Galileo ..." [40] Second, Galileo's awareness of different kinds of *suppositio* and their use in *regressus* methodology, shows that he actively reflected, for more than 50 years, on the problem of the applicability of mathematics. Wallace formulates four types of *suppositio* which were used by Galileo:

(I) *suppositio* of a mathematical principle of definition that is merely posited for computational purposes and is not true in nature.

(2) *suppositio* of a mathematical principle or definition that is true and absolute and has a valid application in nature.

(3) *suppositio* of one or more conditions under which a mathematical principle or definition will be verified in nature to a determinate degree of approximation.

(4) *suppositio* of one or more conditions of extraneous efficient causes that permit a mathematical principle or definition to be similarly verified.[41]

This division of the *suppositio* reveals a recognition by Galileo of the precision and refinement of meaning necessary for an adequate understanding of the indirect and limited relation

39 Wallace, *Prelude to Galileo,* pp. 147-148.

40 Husserl, p. 49.

41 Wallace, "Aristotle and Galileo," pp. 72-73. See also *Prelude to Galileo,* pp. 140-144; *Galileo and His Sources,* pp. 293-294, 324-325.

between scientific formalization and nature, and for an understanding of the applicability of mathematics to nature.

## CONCLUSION

All of the information about Galileo's thought given in the preceding section is evidence that just the opposite is the truth with respect to the three criticisms cited earlier. The *regressus* methodology itself entails that the immediate intuited world as the meaning-fundament for Galileo's physics js not occluded. On the contrary, in the *regres8us* methodology the meaning-fundament is consciously upheld in the unity of the two *progressiones.* The very meaning of the second *progressus* includes both its being an explanation of the first *progressus,* and its derivation from the first *progressus.* The references to Galileo's concept of nature, and his many meanings for *suppositio* are also evidence that he did not make the substitution claimed by Husserl. Lastly, that Galileo reflectively considered the problem of the applicability of mathematics is evidenced in his handling of the *impedimenta,* i.e. through his knowledge of the genesis of that problem, and in his plural meaning for *suppositio.*

Hence, even Galileo's celebrated statements about the book *oi* nature being read ju the language of mathematics and the quantification of sense-qualities cannot be adequately understood apart from all the aspects of his career-long realist methodology. Moreover, Husserl seems to misinterpret Galileo's theory of sense-qualities. Galileo does not deny the existence of sense-qualities *qua* perceptual; rather, he is in effect claiming something similar to Husserl's notion of kinesthesis. Galileo's point, like Husserl's, is that the sense-qualities are a result of a unity between consciousness and physical properties in the living body:

> Hence I think that tastes, odors, colors, and so on are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we place them is concerned, and that they reside only in the consciousness. Hence if the living creature were removed, all these qualities would be

wiped away and annihilated. But since we have imposed upon them special names, distinct from those of the other and real qualities mentioned previously [i.e. physical properties such as being bounded, or having place, etc.], we wish to believe that they really exist as actually different from those. [42]

Galileo's emphasis is that sense-qualities *per se* do not exist in things; this does not entail, however, the denial that they exist by the combination of consciousness with living body- this much is essentially the same in Husserl's kinesthesis. [43]

The evidence of the sort cited in this essay illustrates that there was nothing surreptitious, in the sense that Husserl claims there was, about Galileo's physics. Rather, he reflectively brought to theoretical consciousness the very problems which Husserl states form the origin of the crisis of European sciences. Galileo's reflections obviously did not take on the phenomenological genre; nevertheless, in just those basic ways in which Husserl sees Galileo at the historical origin of the crisis, Galileo's writings prove the opposite.

What can be said for Galileo's genius? Husserl claims that it is a " discovering and concealing genius; [44] a genius which discovered new methods of measurement but which conceals pernicious presuppositions of the sort we have examined. Husserl describes Galileo the discoverer as a " consummating discoverer." This is quite true, but it is unfortunate that Husserl's question-begging assumption about Galileo prevented him from appreciating the phenomenological significance of this truth. Because it is in this consummating asepect of Galileo's discovering genius that his own origin, his intentionality,

[42] Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo,* p. 274.

[43] See Husserl, pp. 106-107: "Thus sensibility, the ego's active functioning of the living body or the bodily organs, belongs in a fundamental, essential way to all experience of bodies. It proceeds in consciousness not as a mere series of body-appearance, as if these in themselves, though themselves alone and their coalescences, were appearance of bodies; rather, they are such in consciousness only in combination with the kinesthetically functioning living body *[Leibichkeit],* the ego functioning here in a peculiar sort of activity and habituality."

[44] Ibid., p. 53.

is to be historically found. What is found is a scientific intentionality which was understood and practiced in a fully conscious way, and which did not leave unquestioned the traditions which it inherited. This same intentionality retained a realist methodology within which, Wallace acknowledges, was " erected a mathematical physics that has come to serve as the prototype for modern science." [45] To the extent that Galileo formulated this prototype, he is rightly called the " Father of Modern Science," but he does not thereby also merit the title, " Father of the Crisis of the Sciences."

PETER J. CATALDO

*Stonehill OoUege*
*North Easton, Massachusetts*

4.5 Wallace, "The Problem of Causality in Galileo's Science," p. 609.

# ON "KNOWING THE UNKNOWABLE GOD": A REVIEW DISCUSSION *

DAVID BURRELI!S *Knowing the Unknowable God: lbn-Sina, Maimonides, Aqttinas* is a sequel to his earlier (1979) study, *Aquinas: God and Action, and* is best understood against that background. **It** represents a coming to maturity of a consistent proje.ct on Burrell's part going all the way back to his 1973 work, *Analogy and Philo-S<Yphical Language.* Undergirding this impressive effort is the influence of Bernard Lonergan whose " turn to the subject" is represented by Burrell in terms of contemporary language analysis. The turn to the subject becomes in fact a turn to the originator of language. What issues from all this is an original, illuminating and coherent interpretation of Aquinas's philosophical theology on the question of God. Within that narrow compass at least, it rivals all other interpretations of Thomas presently vying for recognition. At the very outset it should be noted that Burrell understands his exercise as " clearly a philosophical one, however theological be its goal " (p. 3) , but one which lies at " the intersection of reason with faith" (p. 4). The project then is one of philosophical theology whose concern is with the conceptual clarification of a basic belief in the sense of a *Weltanschauung-or* more accurately what Wittgenstein calls *eine Lebensform-not* an apologetics or natural theology reasoning its way to the *Prima Causa Enti..s.* The starting point for reflection on God then is praxis-not that of the isolated Cartesian-Kantian thinking and willing self, but that of communal humanity, a praxis into which

**Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas.* By DAVID BURRELL, C.S.C., Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. Pp.130. $15.95. (Cloth).

religious tradition enters from the beginning, giving rise to an imaginative picturing of the connection between God and world that is neither a privileged intuition nor an arbitrary postulation. The *paint de depart* then is a preunderstanding, or what Heidegger calls" situatedness "-not knowledge-claims already established but understandings that are taken for granted and considered in practice as beyond the need for justification. In the present case, that of the doctrine on God, the preunderstanding is one of an imaginative picturing of the relation between God and world, one in which God is seen as the origin and end of everything else. The conceptual clarification of this turns on the real distinction between essence and existence, and the denial of that distinction in God. Burrell views this as an intercultural and interfaith achievement. Thus "to understand an apparently philosophical conclusion, then, one does best to try to identify the religious strands of which it is woven" (p. 111).

Understandably enough, one does not tend to think of the high Middle Ages as a period that accentuated ecumenical concerns. But this most recent volume of Burrell's highlights a common search by an Islamic (Ibn-Sina or Avicenna) , a Jewish (Moses Maimonides), and a Christian (Thomas Aquinas) thinker, for a way in which to conceptualize divinity in its distinction from world. It is not so much a matter of material influence but a formal procedure in which a thinker enters upon the way of an earlier one in the ·search for the proper category. The process is not unlike Heidegger's "step backward " for the sake of forward progress along the way *of* thinking. What the three thinkers had in common was a conviction of the real distinction between essence and existence in the order of finite beings, and a negation of that distinction in clarifying speech about God. But how that distinction was variously understood marked a genuine development in the history of thought.

Ibn-Sina, following a lead of Alfarabi, was the first to make capital of the distinction. He did so, however, through a mis-

reading of Aristotle who distinguishes in the *Posterior Analytics* (Bk. II, Chap. I; 89b33) between awareness *that* something is and the awareness of *what* it is. lbn-Sina's Moslem faith led him to read this as a distinction between essence and existence, whereas Aristotle meant only that it is one thing to acknowledge that an object is something and another thing entirely to acknowledge what kind of thing it is. What Avicenna knew was that if one came across something as a "given", presenting itself as "existing", this was not explainable on its own terms but due entirely to the will of Allah. Its essence, however, manifested a kind of necessity, in the sense for example that every triangle could not be other than three-sided. Also at work here was the doctrine of emanationism that Ibn-Sina inherited from Neo-platonism, a world view going all the way back to Plotinus and the early books of the *Enneads*, which delivered to the Moslem thinker the conviction that the ultimate distinction was that between necessary being (God) and possible being (creatures). If the latter was" found", i.e. discovered in the world as existing, such existence was an accident of the given essence; only in God was existence identical with the (divine) essence.

Moses hen Maimon appropriated the real distinction in basically the same sense as did Avicenna-existence is simply an accident of essence. Its denial in God's case explained the clear teaching of the Torah that God was radically distinct from everything else. Some remnant of the emanationistic scheme remains-1\!Iaimonides speaks of ten spheres of separated intelligences mediating between God and world-but the creationist theme, owed to the Torah and Talmud, predominates; it is God who creates the separated substances. This led Maimonides to accentuate the identity of the divine essence as existence to the point of a through-going *theologia negativa* which precluded the application to God of any positive attributes; God was indeed wise but not by wisdom.

Aquinas's thought moved along similar lines but resisted the radical agnosticism of Maimonides and opened itself instead to another influence coming from Pseudo-Dionysius which al-

lowed that creaturely names could be used to designate the Creator in an improper and totally relative way. The basis for this was the causal relationship which established at least a minimal resemblance of effect to cause (not of cause to effect, however) , so that an affirmation about God preceded the immediately following negation. God was said to be good before denying that he was good in the manner of anything finite. This turned for Thomas on the distinction between the *ratio significata* and its *modus significandi.* The latter was necessarily some noun or verb form conveying either composition (whatever existed concretely was composed of its elements) or temporality, neither of which could be attributed to God. But it was possible for human understanding to negate the mode of signifying while continuing to affirm the perfection intended which was in God "eminently", that is to say in some modeless manner beyond our conceptual powers. But all of this was a way of clarifying what it meant to understand the identity of essence and existence in God. Acknowledging that distinction in the finite world and negating it of God manifested a distinctively Christian component, namely the revelation of God as creator of everything, including matter, *ex nihilo.*

What was distinctive for Aquinas in all this is the insight or discovery of existence as *actus essendi,* as *esse* meaning the act of " to be ". God exclusively then was the cause *primo* and *per se* of whatever existed by way participating in being. The earlier triad of Avicenna and Maimonides: emanation, essence, and reception (of the intelligible species for understanding) was replaced by that of Aquinas, namely: creation, *esse,* and judgment (as the consummation of knowledge by way of abstraction) .

All this is well known to students of Aquinas and has been rehearsed frequently and richly. Burrell's treatment, however, is a reinterpretation whose originality has to be taken into account as an attempt to carry the discussion forward. Methodologically, Burrell, as already noted, views his project as one of philosophical theology, whose concern is with conceptual clarification, something different from natural theology, espe-

cially in the pejorative sense that phrase acquired in the early 19th century, and from apologetics. This presupposes an imaginative scheme which is elaborated but not established, which Burrell characterizes as " picturing the connection" between God and world, as one in which the former is the source and destiny of all else. This delivers the identity of God as the One whose essence is identical with his existence, and the further insight that existence is the act of essence, the act of " to be"; the relationship of essence to existence then is an extrapolation of Aristotle's potency to act relationship. But Burrell's originality takes him one step further allowing him to envisage the analogy for act in God as human intentional activity, scil. knowing and loving, more specifically the act of judgment. By this he is able to say that existence does not simply come to essence any more than truth comes to the statement; truth is rather established in the very act of judgment. Judgment then supplies the analogy which enables us to speak of God's existing, i.e. his *actus essendi*, as constituting his very essence.

Pivotal to all this is Burrell's conviction (developed in detail in his earlier *Aquinas: God and Action)* that Thomas presents us not with a doctrine of God at all but with the proper way to go about talking of God. The issue is not whether our concepts apply to God but how they might be used in discourse about deity; thus he notes with approval David Kolb's remark about an Aquinas who "looks more like Wittgenstein than Avicenna" (p. 37) . What is not infrequently referred to as Thomas's "agnosticism" looms large here in what is less Christian theology than theology in a Christian mode. Theological reflection is seen here not as science, nor as transcendental reflection, nor even as hermeneutics, but as skill in the discriminating use of language about God, clarifying what can and cannot legitimately be said of God. Thus Burrell finds no neat theory of analogy in Thomas but a sensitivity to the :flexibility and even the ambiguity of language when it is deployed in thought about the transcendent, with meaning emerging from the usage to which language is put. Perfective terms

undergo an a.Iteration of meaning as they are placed in differing contexts. It follows from this that analogy always retains a dimension of metaphor.

Distinguishing God from the world then is a matter of how to formulate the essence/existence distinction and its denial in God's case, so as to safeguard God's unknowability and at the same time, paradoxically, to indicate how he may also be known. The distinction in short, is found *in* the world but is not *of* the world. Denying it of God means that we can employ expressions that are legitimate as long as we do not pretend to know what they mean. He who is the pure act of" to be" must lack all limitation, all mutation, all temporal measure; God is thus spoken of as simple, as immutable, and as eternal. These are not precisely attributes (such as living, wise, merciful, etc.) but " formal features ", i.e. negative ways of saying that God is his very act of existing. Burrell does not discuss in any detail what these expressions might mean to us but he does note (by way of citing W. Norris Clarke) that God is responsive to the initiatives of his human creatures and that this does not call into question his unchangeableness since intentional interaction is not change but the responsiveness of knowing and loving (pp. 105-106). Also, he spells out clearly how eternity is something more than timelessness, closer perhaps to timefullness. That we cannot formulate the relationship between time and eternity " argues its transcendence, not its incoherence" (p. 104). It is precisely in attempting such a formulation that the *scientia media* comes to grief, misconstruing God's eternity and conceiving" of God as knowing what will happen from within a temporal perspective " (p. 105). Even God cannot know what lacks all knowability because it lacks all existence-apart from a purely speculative knowledge of something as a mere possibility.

Two initial *caveats* may be felt on the starting point of this brilliant and illumining study of Burrell's, namely his imaginative picturing of the connection between world and God which is neither a privileged intuition nor an arbitrary postulation, and which philosophical theology seeks to clarify. First, it can

be asked if this takes with sufficient seriousness the radical secularism of the contemporary world, at least the Western world which no longer feels the need of recourse to God as a working hypothesis. Secondly, this thesis tends to suggest the sort of fideism associated with the thought of Wittgenstein: the world is a mere factual " given " which determines the grammar that can be deployed in speaking about it; the rules of such discourse (like those of chess) are neither true nor false but only govern what can and cannot be said in the particular language game. Yet Burrell fends off this criticism by acknowledging that religious tradition unavoidably enters in from the very beginning in forming the imaginative schema, moveover, the schema that is entertained is not a matter of merely postulated belief but of a primordial experience that grounds belief. God is only the mysterious and unknown origin and end of the known world. Fergus Kerr, in paraphrasing Wittgenstein, clarifies and supports this view of things: " It is because people exult and lament, sing for joy, bewail their sins, and so on, that they are able to have thoughts about God. Worship is not the result but the precondition of believing in God" *(Theology after Wittgenstein,* p. 183) .

Quite simply, Burrell is interpreting Thomas's treatise on God not as a metaphysics of faith but as a metalanguage. It does not dispel the question as to what or who God is; it rather supplies us with a grammar governing our talk about God so that such talk does not deteriorate into what E. J-iingel calls a " garrulous silencing of him ". The grammar is of course for Aquinas that of analogy which Burrell views as carrying meaning, not on the basis of any preconceived theory, but on the basis of the flexible use of language by the speaker.

Theology is of course talk about God as even its etymology makes clear. The nerve of such speech for Aquinas is analogy, which he views as a matter of "naming"; this is the rubric under which he treats analogy in Question 13 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae.* Such naming can originate only from our knowledge of creatures: *Non enim possumus*

*nominare Deum n?si, ex creaturis* (Art..5). Yet this does not imply any commonality between God and world in the sense of some third thing to which they can bear differing proportions, not even to being. The sole possibility then is one of a direct proportion whose underpinning is the principle of causality: *Quidquid dicitur de Deo et creaturis, dicitur secundum quod est aliquis ordo creaturae ad Deum ut ad principium et causam* (Art. 5). First of all, then, we are enabled to say, e.g., that "God is good" because he is the cause of goodness in things. But this tells us nothing about what divine goodness might be like. It is merely the origin of the words we can use in speaking of the unknown. In a second step, we then deny that God is good in any of the creaturely senses of the word-thus we arrive at the *via negativa* of Maimonides. But there remains a crucial third step: beyond relational and negative names are others that designate God *811bstantialiter.* Some do so only figuratively (e.g., in the instance of J,uther's singing "a mighty fortress is my God") because the meaning of the name cannot be distinguished from its creaturely instantiation; here the likeness between God and creature is only one of effect, and so leaves us with a use of language that Maimonides views as equivocal and that Tillich understands as symbolic only. But there are other perfective words in which meaning can be distinguished (not separated) from the mode of signifying that always remains finite. And the former can be said of God literally *(proprie)* though never univocally. Indeed, the *ratio signifwata* is predicated of God primarily and of the creature only in a derivative sense; the perfection is said to belong to God *eminenter,* that is transendently, which means escaping our powers of understanding or representing.

The difference, then, between metaphorical and analogical terms as said of God is the causal basis of the latter (though much more is being said in the latter case than that God is the cause of the perfection in question). Ultimately, however, the concern here is with the causality of being as such. This requires only that God be in act and that the creature exist in real dependence upon the divine *actus essendi.* Nothing

needs to be added to God to render him the sole source of finite beingness-just as nothing needs to be added to the fire which burns the log other than the proximity of the log to the fire. Burrell points out that this notion of finite existence is in fact a new understanding of contingency. Contingency means not merely that something exists in such wise that it need not exist (Avicenna's understanding), but that for things to exist is for them to be in a state of real dependence upon the Creator. From this it follows that God knows all individual existents not simply as instantiations of the species but in their proper individuality. Thus does God call each of us by name (as Maimonides understood but failed to explain). The divine knowledge at work here is practical in kind, a knowledge that precedes the thing known and calls it into existence. This solves at one stroke the problem of God's knowledge of the future; he knows everything that exists in the very act of calling it into existence. What lacks all existence is thus simply unknowable, other than as a possibility of the divine omnipotence, and granting his eternity nothing is future for God. One final conclusion drawn by Burrell is less clear, namely that God's creating *ex nihilo* is an act of divine freedom but not in the sense of choosing among the infinite possibilities open to him. The creative activity is not canvassing alternatives and selecting among them. The failure to grasp this is one of the origins of such explanation as the *scientia media.* Burrell is seeking for a more radical notion of divine freedom. But this must be protected against collapsing such freedom into the spontaneous self-diffusion of goodness and the consequent retrogression to emanationism.

The upshot of all this is that theology is indeed a metalanguage; its concern is with the process of naming, and we cannot speak of the transcendent in such wise as to despoil it covertly of its transcendence. (Moses sees only the back of God as he passes, and Wittgenstein cautions us to be silent about that of which we cannot speak) . Burrell's strong point is his trenchant affirmation of this. Thus, the incomprehensibility of God remains uncompromised; perfective terms said

literally of God do not enable us to grasp the mystery of God in himself anymore than do the terms we use only in a metaphorical sense. Such language merely provides a vector in whose direction we can signify God without representing him. "It is the knowledge we have of creatures that enable us to use words to refer to God, and so these words do not express the divine essence as it is in itself" (Q. 13, a.I) . But even such language is ultimately determined by reality in its objectivity, by what we encounter as recalcitrant to any imposition of meaning on things by the mind. Ultimately, it is not language that structures the world of which it speaks, but reality that offers itself to the mind in such wise as to give birth to the language event. Aquinas after all does not develop his thought in the ambiance of a William of Ockham. The metalanguage at work here does not displace metaphysics but presupposes it; it does not cease to be an object language for all its finite and so imperfect mode of signifying. This is not at all incompatible with Gadamer's insistence on the role of preunderstanding which the knower brings to the act of knowledge and whose content is linguistically mediated. We do think linguistically and so language does not alienate us from reality but is the only way we achieve meaningful contact with what is real.

If Burrell's earlier work, *Aquinas: God and Action,* seemingly overstated his case in suggesting that language grounds metaphysics rather than vice versa, this present volume moderates that stance by dispelling any notion that theology, philosophical or otherwise, treats language about God as formal and grammatical entities without material content applicable to God himself in a known unknowing. What continues to be true is that theology remains incapable of any proper concept of God and so functions as a metalanguage in discerning what can and cannot be said about an unknowable God. Burrell of course is aware that he is calling our attention to an intelligibility that is only latent in Aquinas's thought never explicitly exploited by him. What Burrell has achieved here is

a retrieval of Aquinas's thought on God, in dialogue with Avicenna and Maimonides, that allows it to appear in all its illuminative power. H contemporary theological thought chooses to pursue the search in different directions-e.g. with an antimetaphysical bias that collapses being into time and historicizes God himself, with a reduction of divine eternity into what is rather an infinite temporality, with the " new orthodoxy" of a suffering God, etc.-studies such as this one remind us of how much we are shaped by the past. In our human historicity we continuously reinterpret that past thus contributing to its outcome. But our response to the past out of present concerns, both theoretical and practical, cannot treat it as an antiquarian deposit of irrelevant facts. Rather, what Heidegger calls the " step back " must be a retrieval of the past in its authenticity. Only thus can we dialogue with the subject matter in such wise as to make possible the " linguistic event " that represents genuine advance in understanding.

WILLIAM J. HILL, O.P.

*The Catholic University of America*
*Washington, D.O.*

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics,* III: *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles.* By HANS URS VON BALTHASAR. Translated by Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon, and Rowan Williams. Edited by John Riches. San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1986. Pp. 524.

In this third volume of the Ignatius Press translation of *Herrlichkeit,* von Balthasar examines the more significant developments within the tradition of theological aesthetics-as ancient as Irenaeus-from the failure of " clerical " theology in the late medieval period down to the early twentieth century. He treats here of Dante, John of the Cross, Pascal, Hamann, Soloviev, and Peguy, finding in each of them a relatively free-standing and harmonious exploitation of themes emerging from the coincidence of free historicity and lucid rationality which is the splendor of the Christian revelation, of the *forma Christi.* Von Balthasar's interest in these "lay " theologians focuses upon their failure or success in providing an aesthetic resolution of the problems posed by the fact, no longer capable of being ignored or transmitted, of human solidarity. This solidarity, in sin and in redemption, challenges the very possibility of a theological aesthetics, for it requires an aesthetically satisfying integration of the divine justice and the divine mercy, of the human community as *simul justus et peccator,* redeemed and yet capable of damnation. This is finally the problem of reconciling divine and human freedom, and no theology which fails to face it is worthy of the name. The theologians under discussion in this volume did face it, however unsuccessfully for the most part, and their having done so constitutes their interest.

Other issues provide a variable framework for the posing of this radically Christocentric question: the relation of grace and nature, the sinfulness or not of the Church, the tension between a Platonizing reading of the Pauline marital symbolism and the covenantal content of that symbolism, the debate with the Reformation's refusal of theological aesthetics, and a rationalist reduction of beauty to formal necessity. It is also notable that the aesthetic stress of these theologians upon the concrete individual tends to locate them in the Neoplatonic-Augustinian hermeneutic whose ontological expression is a universal hylemorphism, in which matter and form express the paradoxical dichotomies of being rather than its logical integration as in the Aristotelian-Thomist hermeneutic governed by the act-potency analysis. In fact the rejection of the

sterility of the essentialist logic of the latter hermeneutic is a frequent, .even an insistent, theme among these theologians.

Perhaps the identification of the fundamental problem of theological aesthetics as the aesthetic integration of our solidarity with the damned is most evident in the first and last authors discussed, but even in John of the Cross, whose refusal of historical content to the faith is almost Bultmannian, the emphasis upon the experiential dimension of our appropriation of the revelation is maintained, and therefore, at least by implication and in the breach, the question of the experiential or aesthetic synthesis of God's redemptive love with his justice is in issue.

The theological problem which emerges with clarity in this profoundly instructive inquiry is more properly that of our human solidarity in sin and in redemption, in the first Adam and in the last. This emphasis is of course a Pauline inheritance, whose initial exploration by way of the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus is the beginning of Christian theological aesthetics, but the task of integrating the dialectic of our human solidarity, as at once in the sin and death caused by the disobedience of the first Adam, and in the redemption and resurrection worked by the obedience of the last Adam, constitutes now as then the permanent because fundamental question before any theology which would be responsive, as an aesthetics, to the "ancient beauty, forever new," whose aesthetic integration von Balthasar considers to be the single responsibility and therefore the hallmark of any adequate Christian theology.

The perennial attempts to meet this responsibility have forced Christian theology to abandon the cosmological preoccupations inherited from Plato and Aristotle as the price of loyalty to the free historical context which is alone possible for theology whether it be labelled systematics or aesthetics. Von Balthasar here echoes the impatience and disillusion of theologians from the fourteenth century to our own day with a predominantly Aristotelian metaphysical tradition which could not or would not free itself from the timeless, static cosmos of the Greek philosophers, and which since Scotus's dismissal of the need for illumination has supposed the immanent, unillumined structures of a rationality henceforth autonomous to be adequate to the knowledge of God. The aesthetic tradition in theology has preferred another sort of rational coherence or intelligibility, in which the rational articulation of thought is a priori responsive not to the immanent necessities of a determinist and moribund Aristotelian universe, but rather to the Truth which as freely human reveals itself to be at once beautiful and Triune.

Irenaeus, inspired by Paul, developed that free spontaneity of the truth as beautiful by tracing the redemptive recapitulation of fallen humanity in the last Adam, the Christ. The later Augustinian tradition, perhaps influenced also by Plotinus's insistence upon the coincidence of

necessity and freedom, has increasingly focused upon what Pascal called the *cor rectum,* the " organ " by which this beauty is known and appropriated, and thus upon what Anselm had termed the *rectitudo,* and Pascal the *esprit de justesse,* that marks the graced existence which is in Christ.

Over the centuries, this stress upon the inner " rectitude " (whose exquisite precision of free and concrete articulation in history transcends all cosmological necessity, and so can only be pointed to by the category, now seen to be theological, of the beautiful) of this existence in Christ has forced the discovery of the incompatibility of the old cosmological aesthetics with the historical freedom, the gratuity, of our relation to God-which is at once our redemption in Christ and our judgment by him. In the six authors examined by von Balthasar in this volume, the passage from cosmology to history (von Balthasar prefers to speak rather of the shift to anthropology, using the term in the sense of a humanity specified by its common recognition of mankind's existential transcendence of all innercosmic categories of necessary causality) demanded by this implicitly Christocentric aesthetic has entailed a rejection of all "natural theology " in the sense of an achievement of a supposedly autonomous rationality, and a correspondingly explicit Christocentrism whose scope becomes ever more universal. This Christocentrism is paralleled by a rejection also of the classic problematic presented by the old cosmologically-controlled theology of nature and grace in favor of an exploration of the historical dialectic involving the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Kingdom, a dialectic whose contemporary exposition by de Lubac is the most important speculative development by Catholic theology in this century.

In close association with this Christocentrism, Johannine as well as Pauline in its inspiration, is a theological re-entry into the inseparable Adam-Eve marital symbolism of the New Covenant, increasingly understood in the historical or non-Platonized terms of marital love rather than, as by most of the patristic sources, as an allegory of the non-historical (because taken to be cosmic and structural, not covenantal and free) relation between God and the soul or between God and humanity. This historical emphasis is also upon the free reality of the historical individual rather than upon the necessities of ideal human essence or nature; it is incidentally underwritten also by the universal hylemorphism of Augustinian theology, at least since Duns Scotus's development, perhaps compensatory for his denial of illumination, of the intellectual intuition of the *haecceitas* of the singular. This stress upon the free intelligibility of the individual corresponds to a recognition of the theological significance of sexual differentiation which the Aristotelian and Thomist metaphysics had ignored, and reinforces the growing tendency to find in the *marital* union

(not organic or physical, as St. Thomas supposed) of Christ and the Church the free historical integration of humanity which can displace the nonhistorical essences and ideal forms of the cosmological speculation still dominating the clerical metaphysical theology well into the twentieth century, even in the thought of a Teilhard or a Rahner.

Integral to this development of theological aesthetics is the recognition of the *prius* of theological aesthetics, which is to say, the a priori of our .experience of God in Christ. This *prius* is the free concrete historicity, the unique Christocentricity, of our relation to God, and the essays at such an aesthetics reviewed in the present volume manifest a growing impatience with the cosmological *prius* which would divide as between nature and grace, cosmos and history, the unity of that aesthetic relation. Now and again there is a more or less fugitive recognition of the primordiality of the Christ, an ancient insight renewed in this century especially by Rousselot. We see that Dante knows a pre-existent Church, however deficient his Christology, while Pascal and Hamann know a pre-existent Christ, and the Christological *prius* which informs Bonaventure's theological aesthetics also informs Hopkins's theological poetry.

This recognition has its correlative in the rediscovery of the illumination by, or intellectual intuition of, the Truth, a light which Irenaeus as well as Augustine knew to be indispensable to our understanding, but which at the end of a long journey can now be seen to be no timeless cosmological structure but quite simply the utterly radical gift, given universally, the historical *gratia Christi,* the first of all His gifts, identical with creation in Christ, without which we are nothing, but with which we can appropriate in freedom the splendor of the Son's free revelation of the Triune God.

Von Balthasar requires of any aesthetic synthesis the integration of the dialectic heretofore described; this integration has not been achieved by any of the authors whose work he examines in this volume, as it was not in the 'clerical styles' of theological aesthetics to whose examination he devoted the previous volume. The question is thus raised as to the reality of the claimed advantage of the aesthetic theological project over the metaphysical theological project of the Thomist schools. While it is too early to judge the matter, it may be that the intractability of the aesthetic problem thus far encountered is rooted in the pervasive tendency to visualize its elements in cosmic terms of structure rather than those of free historical event, a tendency as manifest in Peguy's work as in Dante's. Tillich observes somewhere that Hell must be understood existentially, viz., as an actual threat, not as a place where we may, in virtue of an usurpation *sub specie aeternitatis* of a divine judgment, locate our acquaintances. This perhaps rather obvious statement corresponds to the far more profound dictum of Augustine that the same vision of the risen

Christ is both beatific and damnific: as you know him, so you have him. The point of such an observation may be that the theological synthesis must be a human one, and that it must not presume to include the divine judgment: it must be historical if it is to be aesthetic. The aesthetic integration of humanity is in Christ, and *it* is not and cannot be simply eschatological as the theologians so far examined tend to suppose. As de Lubac, in congruence with the entir,e patristic tradition, points out, the one theological synthesis is that which joins the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Kingdom of God under the three senses of Scripture, as type, as antetype, as fulfillment. These must be held in their actual unity, for it is the unity of Scripture, of history, the unity of man, whose solidarity in the first Adam is understandable only in terms of solidarity with the second Adam, Christ the King. This synthesis is that of a sacramental humanity, a sacramental history, whose unity is at once covenantal, Christocentric, historical, and Eucharistic: that of the interrelated *sacramentum tantum, res et sacramentum, res tantum* of the Augustinian analysis. This is the unity of the *Christus totus,* whose splendor is the sole subject of theological aesthetics. Taken seriously, it bars, as infected with a cosmological *prius,* much of the usual statement of the problem, out of which the classic errors of *apokatastasis* and predestination have emerged.

The cosmological reversion which tempts all Christian theology consists in the rationalizing attempt to transcend the obscurity of our fallen historicity, and the theologians examined in this volume show the mistake to be as possible to a theological aesthetics as to a theological metaphysics. Von Balthasar has done more than any other contemporary Catholic theologian with the possible exception of de Lubac to lead theology beyond cosmology, and in this as in many other things we are all in his debt.

(A small number of misprints mar this edition, notably on pp. 355 and 417.)

DONALD J. KEEFE, S.J.

*Marquette University*
*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

*Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context.* By BREVARD S. CHILDS. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Pp. 255, incl. Index.

Brevard Childs has already written two major books detailing a canonical criticism approach to reading the Bible: *.An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* and *.An Introduction to the New Testament as Scripture.* These are landmark studies of the last decade which have

effectively challenged the undisputed reign of the tradition-history approach which emphasized the tracing of the different strands of tradition in all their stages of development, in order to understand how Israel or the early Christian Church came to its final biblical expression of faith. Canon criticism insists that biblical theology focus on the received text of the Scriptures, and not merely on the events and development behind the texts. The concrete shapes and order of all the books influence the further reading of any individual book; and the tradition of how the books have been and are to he read gives essential clues to why they assumed the shape and order in which we find them in the canon. To neglect this aspect is to risk reducing biblical theology to a history of religion in the Old Testament and New Testament.

In this present volume, Childs continues his work by sketching a program for doing Old Testament theology according to a canonical approach. It is not really a full theology, but contents itself with identifying problems and discussing canonical method while providing a loose framework of major themes and some sample texts to illustrate the proper use of that method. The author is also at pains not to reject the fruitful results of the historical-critical method. Indeed he defines Old Testament theology as precisely the theological reflection on a received body of ;;cripture whose formation was the result of a lengthy history of development (p. 6). He firmly maintains that Old Testament theology is a Christian discipline that deals with the problem of interpreting and appropriating the two testaments in relation to faith in Jesus Christ. But the task of Old Testament theology is not to Christianize the Old Testament by identifying it with the New Testament witness, but to hear its own theological testimony to the God of Israel whom the Church also confesses to worship.

At the beginning, he acknowledges his debt to his teachers, the great German tradition-critical scholars, Eichrodt, von Rad, and Zimmerli-and his appreciation for and use of their methods shows throughout his book. Yet, in treating each theme, Childs usually subjects his masters to critical evaluation. He often faults von Rad and Eichrodt for not pursuing the literary effects of juxtaposed texts, and Zimmerli for not doing more with the results of canonical combining, before he himself draws out what he considers a more adequate description of the theological shape of a given body of material. As in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, this leads to a rather impressive command of the history and message of each major literary collection in the Old Testament, as well as numerous strong individual insights into single passages and their meaning. Examples of the latter include his remarks on the book of Leviticus, Ezekiel 20, and the concept of *sedeqah* (righteousness) in the Psalms.

Other strengths in Childs's presentation are (1) his excellent bibliogra-

phies for each section (20 in all); (2) the summaries of major conclusions at the end of many chapters; (2) the explanations of how one body of texts (or its traditions) has been re-read (i.e., re-worked) by later texts; and (4) how one body of texts (e.g., the Psalms), provides for understanding a certain perspective other parts of the Old Testament (e.g., the Pentateuch).

Some shortcomings are evident. He relies heavily on the prophets for guiding insights, while law, priesthood, temple, and blessing play minor roles. Is this really faithful to the canonical shape of the Old Testament in its pre-Christian I find particularly inadequate the treatment of purity laws (p. 86) and priestly roles (pp. 150-53), and suspect the author needs to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to his own Protestant presuppositions! In a similar way, the decalogue gets extended attention because Childs sees its theology as relevant to modern questions of violence, war, etc.; but he never seriously wrestles with those counter-passages whose theology encourages a divine warrior or a conquest motif. A similar problem arises when he ends the book with the theme of "Life under Promise." This is a judicious choice for the summarizing theme of the Old Testament and includes treatment of judgment versus salvation, .eschatology, messianic hope, the promise of the land, and eternal life. But it lacks any reference to liturgy and temple as symbols of hope, the book of the law, or the commandments of Torah, and no mention at all of the " blessing " theology of P that informs the whole Old Testament from Genesis 1 onwards.

Clearly Childs has begun an important project, but much more clarity and balance is still needed in his continuing work during the years ahead.

LAWRENCE BOADT, C.S.P.

*Washington Theological Union*
*Silver Spring, Maryland*

*Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish and Christian Perspectives.* Edited by TAMAR RUDAVSKY. Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1985. Pp. ix + 299. $54 (cloth).

Since this book originated from revised papers and commentaries presented at a conference (held at the Ohio State University on March 3 and 4, 1982.), it is not surprising to find that the completed edition displays wide variety both in its subject matter and in the quality of the chapters. The chapters reflect the quality of papers very often presented at conferences-some are excellent, others are not. In addition, some chapters deal

with problems and solutions which help significantly to advance medieval scholarship, while the problems and solutions raised in other chapters do. not add much to medieval research; indeed, some chapters seem to present arguments lacking both in plausibility and in an understanding of the dominant spirit of medieval thought. The book is divided into three specific parts which deal with Islamic, Jewish, and Christian authors respectively, and the chapters in each part are arranged in historical order. There is also an introduction and an extensive bibliography.

In chapter 1, Calvin Normore gives a helpful, but tediously written, introduction and overview of the logical and epistemological problems which were involved in medieval discussions of divine omniscience and omnipotence. Chapter 2 focuses upon Boethius's account of the nature of contingency, and adopts a view which i;e:fl.ectsa misunderstanding both of Boethius and of the theological spirit of medieval thought in general. Ignoring sage comments from Richard Sorabji (see p. 49, footnote 68), Norman Kretzmann argues that for Boethius free human choice is the source of all contingency. How the Christian, Boethius, could so badly confuse human choice with divine choice, Kretzmann fails to explain.

Chapters 3-6 constitute Part Two of the text and contain some of the most scholarly research in the book. In chapters 3 and 4, Josef Van Ess, rightly noting the juridical foundations of Mu'tazilite thought, examines wrongdoing and divine omnipotence in the fragmentary work of Abu Ishaq An-Nazzam. His discussion is particularly helpful in its treatment of the Islamic understanding of God as not *physei agathos,* but good merely by doing what is good. This understanding is a necessary element for any sound grasp of the treatment of divine omnipotence and omniscienc.ein Islamic thought.

In chapter 4, Richard Frank c-0ntinues and amplifies the discussion initiated by Van Ess by contrasting the position of An-Nazzam with that of the Basrian school of the Mu'tazila. Michael Marmura follows this discussion in chapter 6 with an excellent analysis and summation of the views of Alfarabi and Avicenna on divine omniscience and future contingents. Barry Kogan adds a further dimension to the preceding examinations by treating of the problem of future contingency not only in Alfarabi and Avicenna but also in Averroes.

The excellent selections contained in Part Two are followed by discussions of Judaic themes focusing mainly upon Maimonides and Gersonides. Seymour Feldman begins Part Three by centering a number of Jewish formulations of divine foreknowledge around the story of the Binding of Isaac. Feldman's study is helpful and enlightening for the most part, in general because it locates the discussion within its proper medieval theological context. Nonetheless, both he and Jeremy Cohen (chapter 8) seem not to comprehend the distinctive manner in which medieval theologians studied the works of philosophers for purely theological ends.

Both seem to think that Maimonides and other Jewish "philosophers" were engaged in the philosophical study of the Bible rather than in the formally religious study of the philosophers for uniquely religious goals (see pp.129and135).

Neither Feldman nor Cohen, however, confuses philosophy and theology as much as is done by Alfred Ivy in chapter 8. According to Ivy, Maimonides, it seems, was a closet Neoplatonist who considered God's intellect to be essentially impersonal, functioning out of necessity (p. 152). In Ivy's view, in addition, Maimonides was " irrationally set against matter," considering it to be basically a necessary evil (p. 148). Furthermore, for Ivy Maimonides restricted God's knowledge to universals, despite his frequent assertions to the contrary (p. 149). Such interpretations of Rabbi Moses seem to be nothing short of outrageous.

Tamar Rudavsky returns the book to more sober ground in chapter 10 by giving an interestingly written analysis of divine omniscience and prophecy for Gersonides. She discusses, in particular, the difficulties which confronted Gersonides in attempting to reconcile prophetic human knowledge and an indeterministic view of divine foreknowledge of future contingents.

Part Four ends the book with a flurry of solid scholarship by Ivan Boh, John Wippel, and William Courtenay dealing with medieval Christian writers. In chapter 11, Ivan Boh examines the development of the problem of divine omnipotence in the early *Sentence* literature. In chapter 12, John Wippel turns in his typically lucid performance by analyzing the views of Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent with respect to divine omniscience. William Courtenay concludes the book in chapter 13 by tracing the development of the distinction between the absolute and ordained powers of God from the mid-eleventh century through the fourteenth century. Courtenay's work is excellent. It is, perhaps, the best article in the book from the standpoint of sound scholarship, clarity, and potential fruitfulness for generating problems of major importance requiring further scholarly examination. In particular, his work throws light upon the dependence of later political disagreements regarding absolute and ordinary power of popes and kings. This chapter, by itself, establishes the worth of an otherwise somewhat shaky collection of articles as a text containing valuable research material.

The book, in general, is a good work. In those areas where it is weak, it is seriously flawed. In those areas where it is solid, the scholarship is admirable. To sum up, it is a mixed bag which can be a valuable research tool for many contemporary scholars.

PETER A. REDPATH

*St. John's University*
*Staten Island, New York*

*Metaphor and Religious Language.* By JANET MARTIN SosKICE. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985. Pp. 191. Cloth, $25.00.

This book combines two excellent studies: the first is a critical analysis of theories of metaphor and topics in contemporary philosophy of language which are especially relevant to theories of metaphor; the second is an examination of the way in which models and the metaphorical language based on them are understood in a critical realism concerning scientific explanation, and so can support the possibility of a critical realism in theology. The second study is premised on the first, but the first (Chapters I-V) can be read independently and is valuable in its own right whether or not the reader has theological concerns.

Though the author's ultimate aim is to provide a defense of the "theist's right to make metaphysical claims" (a defense of "theological realism") by arguing for the "conceptual possibility" of a *referential* religious language (148), she is well aware that any adequate account of religious language has to be informed by a proper understanding of the variety of forms (literal and non-literal) our non-religious language takes. In particular, "no philosophical account of religious language will be either complete or sufficient if it fails to take account of the way forms of figurative discourse, like metaphor, function in the task of saying that which cannot be said in other ways " (63). The first five chapters of the book then are devoted to a detailed and comprehensive analysis of metaphor in ordinary language, beginning with classical accounts (Ch. 1), distinguishing metaphor both from non-linguistic entities and from other figures of speech (Chs. II and IV), and critically examining standard theories of metaphor (Ch. III) and issues concerning' metaphorical meaning,' 'metaphorical truth,' and the irreducibility of metaphor (Ch. V).

Soskice begins (and ends) by defining metaphor as a "figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another" (15, 49) and argues for an "interanimative" account of metaphor (which is presented as a refinement of the insights of I. A. Richards). In relatively small compass she presents a formally comprehensive survey and critical analysis of competing theories of metaphor. The criticisms are simple, straightforward, and radical. For example, she concludes that, at bottom, emotive accounts are inadequate because " there must be some guiding cognitive features which the emotive response is the response to" (27). (This sort of consideration later figures in her criticism of accounts which see a merely affective role for models.) She argues that theories which see the heart of metaphor in a self-contradictory at-

tribution ignore those acknowledged metaphors which do not imply logical conflict, those metaphors which are such only because of context or intention; however, they fail adequately to distinguish such logical conflict from nonsense (32ff). Substitution theories and comparison theories fail to see that " the very thinking is undertaken in terms of the metaphor" (25)-there are not two things antecedently known. Here begins her criticism of a thesis-the 'two subjects' thesis-which underlies much theorizing about metaphor. The criticism is an important and sustained one; it is addressed to sophisticated versions of the potentially promising "interactive " accounts of metaphor, like Black's (46ff), and comes into play '..:1 her analysis of Ricoeur's work on metaphor (Ch. V). Though I have only pointed in a sketchy way to the kind of criticism the author offers of the major theories of metaphor, I should emphasize that her criticism is detailed, careful, and cogent, and engages in illuminating give-and-take with contemporary philosophical discussions of metaphor and related linguistic issues (a la Davidson, Searle, et al.). It is, moreover, presented with such clarity and helpful examples as to make it both an excellent introduction to the topic and a useful study for those with some familiarity with the contemporary debate.

The " interanimative " theory of metaphor which Soskice proposes holds that metaphor is in an important sense 'two ideas for one,' though it does not involve a duality of reference. Metaphor is not generated simply by " conflict of meaning" or by " interaction of two subjects," out rather is a "form of language use with a unity of subject-matter . . . which yet draws upon two (or more) sets of associations, and does so, characteristically, by involving the consideration of a model or models " (49). There are not two subjects, but there must be "at least two different networks of associations " : " while duality of associative networks is integral to metaphor, a duality of reference would undercut the whole of what makes metaphor interesting" (51). But in addition to the tension between associative networks, there must be as well a " reliance on an underlying model " in terms of which we are enabled to ' go on ' extending attributions to the subject. A model is an object or state of affairs which is taken to be such-that is, "when it is viewed in terms of its resemblance, real or hypothetical, to some other object or state of affairs" (101)-and metaphorical language is what we speak on the basis of a particular model. The exploration of the relation between model and metaphor is, for Soskice, an integral but inadequately appreciated element in a discussion of metaphor: it is the potential of the model which accounts for the richness of metaphor; moreover, the model guides metaphorical extension-it is not an arbitrary open-endedness.

In Chapter V Soskice provides some much-needed clarity on issues of ' metaphorical truth,' 'metaphorical meaning,' and the demand for re-

ducibility of metaphor. She argues against those who claim that metaphors are necessarily false or that there is a duality of truth or meaning or reference (literal vs. metaphorical}. "The metaphorical format," she suggests, "is neutral between the truth and falsity of the claim made" (for example, as with a ' gnawing pain') (90). Moreover, the reference of such a metaphor is not problematical. The tie between model and metaphor surfaces in the treatment of the challenge that, unless metaphors are reducible to literal expression, they lack cognitive force. She writes:

> No metaphor is reducible to a literal equivalent without consequent loss of content, not even those metaphors for which one can specify an ostensive referent. When we speak of the camel as 'the ship of the desert', the relational irreducibility of the metaphor lies in the potentially limitless suggestions that are evoked by considering the camel on the model of a ship: the implied corollaries of a swaying motion, a heavy and precious cargo, a broad wilderness a route mapped by stars, distant ports of call, and so on. Saying merely ' camel ' does not bring in these associations at all. . . . (94-5)

The discussion of these sorts of issues, addressed to those critics who maintain that metaphor (unless reducible) lacks cognitive force, does not yet begin to address those who suggest that, though some metaphors have cognitive force or refer, the metaphors of the theist are peculiarly problematical precisely because of the problem of reference to what is transcendent. The author faces that particular challenge in the remaining three chapters of the book.

Chapter VI initiates an examination of the possibility of cognitively meaningful talk about God, of religious language that refers, by considering the use of models and metaphor in science. The suggestion that religious thought can be best understood in terms of the models within it is not new (she refers to work by Ramsey and Ferre, for example}, but Soskice adds precision to the discussion. She argues against the conflation of the categories of 'model' and 'metaphor' often found in the literature on religion, noting that models, unlike metaphors, can be nonlinguistic, and that metaphorical language is what we speak on the basis of a particular model. She points to superficial comparisons made between religion and science which make an unnecessarily sharp dichotomy between the two. Some comparisons do not fully appreciate the role of models within scientific theorizing and so make a misleading contrast between science and religion which rests on the contrast between 'no model/ model.' Others recognize the role of explanatory models and metaphors based on them in science, but limit religion to the realm of affective, rather than explanatory, models (as if we do not need to provide reasons for orienting ourselves in one way rather than another-111-12). Still others, with less consistency, posit religious models as explanatory while denying the possibility of assessing them in terms of truth and reference (105).

All such comparisons result from an insufficient appreciation of the point and limits of competing philosophies of scientific explanation, and she attempts to redress that neglect through an assessment of varieties of scientific realism and its alternatives. Here the tie is made between linguistic and epistemological concerns; the earlier concern with reference in terms of the single (rather than dual) subject of metaphor gives way to the concern with referenc.e in terms of epistemological access which is preliminary to a discussion of theological realism.

The attempt to support a cognitivist account of religious belief and language, to support an account in which models have explanatory, rather than merely affective, force, depends on the possibility of a non-reductively empirical account of epistemic access. The argument underlying the final chapters of the book is that language can successfully refer without ' defining,' and this account of reference is at the heart of the critical realism she defends in Chapter VII. On a critical realist understanding of scientific explanation not only does referring not require knowledge, it need not involve "unrevisable or exhaustive description "-reference is possible without infallibility or claimed access to ultimate essences. On such a view theoretical posits need not simply be heuristic aids; they can make claims, to "reality-depiction." Theoretical terms generated by a given scientific model are metaphorical, but they can guide our access to something without defining it. In fact, she writes, " the vagueness of metaphorical terms, rather than rendering metaphors unsuited to scientific language, is just what makes them indispensable to it," for "it is just that vagueness ... the lack of strict definitional stipulation, which *allows* for the revisability necessary to any account that aims to adapt itself to the world" (133). The metaphorical language generated by the model can " designate theoretical entities " and " depict relations," without exhaustively defining or describing.

Although the task of reality-depiction in theology is "admittedly very different" (137), Soskice concludes that there are analogies to be drawn. What grounds the possibility of referring to the transcendent is that one can designate theoretical entities in the absence of unrevisable or exhaustive description. Given the distinction between "referring to God and defining Him," theological realism thus obviates the "criticism customarily levelled at the theological realist, that he claims to describe God" (140). Drawing on what she argues is partially right about causal theories of reference, she parallels reference to "that which caused this state of affairs" with the religious reference-" We do not claim to describe God, but to point through His effects, and beyond His effects, to Him." To sum up,

> this separation of referring and defining is at the very heart of metaphorical speaking and is what makes it not only possible but

> necessary that in our stammering after a transcendent God we must speak, for the most part, metaphorically or not at all (140).

Such theological realism denies the need to resort to non-cognitivism because it is founded on a theory of reference which allows designation without description. It implies a commitment to the relevance to theology of concepts of explanation, justification, and corrigibility. Soskice emphatically claims that in both science and religion.

> "to be a realist about reference is to be a 'fallibilist' about knowledge of the referent. Speakers may refer and yet be mistaken, even quite radically mistaken, as to the nature of that to which they refer " (139),

I have only one real reservation about this book, and it concerns what the author terms a second feature of critical realism. The first feature is that it is not committed to arguing that any particular view of the world is privileged; the second is "that it has a social and context-relative nature " (131). This second feature, its contextualism, is expressed, for example, in terms of the claim that " reference is linked to the context of inquiry " because "it is not words but speakers using them who refer " (150). This, she continues, has "commonly" (though incorrectly) "been taken to imply a relativism like that of Nietzsche." Moreover, she writes that the insight that, when people pick particular models or images, " they do so as heirs to an established tradition of explanation and a common descriptive vocabulary " is often " deprived of its value by being linked to the relativist arguments which vitiate the ' religious language-games ' approach. . . ." (150-51). It should be noted that proponents of the ' religious language-games ' approach need have nothing even remotely resembling a relativism "like that of Nietzsche." But more importantly, the attempt to emphasize contextualism and to link reference to the context of inquiry while avoiding the insularity and uncriticizability commonly thought to follow from a 'language-games' approach is one I wholeheartedly applaud, but one which Soskice's account does not sufficiently support. The claim that " terms can be coreferential across theories" (150), which she offers in passing as an answer to Nietzschean relativism, needs a good deal of support to show how it can function in the needed way when it is claimed as well that "there are religious communities of interest (Christians, for example) which are bound by shared assumptions, interests, and traditions of interpretation, and share a descriptive vocabulary " and that it is " speakers using words who refer, and that speakers use words according to established patterns of investigation and interest " (150). Not that I deny any of the latter-but what makes coreference across theories possible on such an account is not obvious, and the defense of that possibility is crucial to any attempt to dis-

tinguish one's approach (as Soskice wants) from the 'language-games ' approach. The very difficult and much-debated questions concerning cross-contextual criteria and overlap between contexts need to be addressed-otherwise such an ' answer ' to relativism is merely distinguished assertion. In sum, the relation between intra-theory reference and co-reference across theories requires more than what seems to me to be the short-shrift the author provides.

The issue can be pressed a little further, for it bears on the concessions concerning fallibility or corrigibility which the author (correctly, I think) makes. She writes boldly:

> the theist may be mistaken in his beliefs about the source and cause of all and assume it to be something of which one can appropriately predicate personalistic terms when one cannot, or assume it to be a unified source when it is not, and so on. This fallibilism should not trouble the Christian realist if he acknowledges that he may simply be wrong in his various beliefs and that some of them are so central that, if he is wrong concerning them, his whole structure of belief is gravely flawed. If that which the Christian refers to as the source and cause of all bears no conceivable resemblance to God as conceived by Christianity, then he must admit himself to be so deluded as to the nature of the referent that his faith must be lost. This possibility of being in error is the risk such a realist takes (139).

The question remains, however, whether on such an account of reference this can be a real " risk" at all. In the absence of more than mere assertion of coreference across theories it is difficult to see what bite such concessions have. Where reference is interest-bound, and communities of interest are specified as narrowly as " Christians, for example", what could count as supporting the claim that the Christian conception bears no resemblance to that to which the Christian What epistemological considerations could ever force the Christian to admit he was deluded as to the nature of the referent (except the internal constraint of consistency) Whether or not such coreference across theories (as would decisively distinguish this account from the 'language-games' approach) is possible, Soskice's account neither explains nor supports the possibility. One could, of course, reply that this is beyond the scope of the book, but I suggest that the author's express desire to avoid particular kinds of relativism generates some kind of responsibility to engage the problem more seriously.

That reservation aside, the latter part of the book is a well-argued (and, I should add, extremely well-written) defense of a cognitivist account of religious belief, with a remarkable sensitivity to the intricacies of the bearing of metaphor in such an account. The aim-to advocate a theological critical realism-is understood in terms of defending the "conceptual possibility" of a theological realism which parallels in important

respects a critical realist philosophy of science, rather than in terms of arguing that any particular reference is correct, or even justified. The project is an important one because, as the author correctly notes, "much of the Christian tradition has been undeniably realist in sensibility," whereas much modern philosophical theology has an "anti-realist drift" (137). In sum, the quality of the book as a whole makes it one which deserves to be widely read.

M. JAMIE FERREIRA

*University of Virginia*
*Charlottesville, Virginia*

*Moral Action: A Phenomemological Study.* By ROBERT SOKOLOWSKI. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985, Pp. ix + 225. $24.95 (cloth).

In this carefully written study of the constituents of human decision making, the author lays an elaborate groundwork to develop the importance of the distinction between choice and the voluntary in moral discourse. In order to differentiate between choice and the simple voluntary, we must look at that which is chosen. Choice leaves its mark. There is a difference between doing something willingly and choosing to do something. I give my child medicine. He takes it willingly, but he may not have chosen it. Everything chosen is voluntary, but not everything that is voluntary is chosen. The voluntary is a genus with two species: the chosen and the willed but not chosen.

Choice emanates from a simple voluntary. It is done with a view to an end, although not simply as a means to an end. Still, the distinction between the chosen and the voluntary lies in the end results. In the former a thing is done for something else, while in the latter voluntary actions are done for themselves.

Choice can also be the preference of one voluntary over another. When I am thirsty, for example, I can drink water or milk. By my choice I am comparing one drink to another. This differs from the choice made in view of something. Finally, routine choices can become simple voluntaries, which the author calls " sedimented " voluntaries. These, in turn, may become the base or matrix for further articulated choices.

Choice and the chosen can be further analyzed as one option among many: one choice may be substituted by another. If it can't be, it is not a choice. Furthermore, as a possibility among alternatives, the chosen is involved in a chain of consequences and implications: a concatenation. In order to bring about a simple choice, many words and events are required.

Thus, a chosen is always seen against a background of purpose, substitution, and concatenation. These the author calls the "categorialities" of choice. A practical, responsible, clear-thinking agent articulates choice in all three directions. This is triangulating the chosen, according to the author.

Two factors enter in this triangulating process. Imagination allows the possibilities of choice to arise. Ambiguity, on the other hand, can suffocate the process. Thus, **if** one is slothful, dim, or mindless, the triangulation analysis will not work. If, however, the choice is thoughtfully made, the analysis can be effective. We can readily distinguish between the two. Choice in view of something can be triangulated; choice as preference cannot be because it is done simply because we want to do it, or have it over another. **It** is based on taste. Likewise, the simple voluntary is done for itself. Simple observation usually enables us to distinguish whether a thing was chosen in view of something else, over against something else, or simply willed for itself.

The simple voluntary immediately .engages us. We are always involved **in** it. **It** is the most elemental of our realities, and it becomes the matrix for the chosen. The chosen is a voluntary but it is no longer simple since it is done in view of something else. **It** pushes me away from my immediate conscious experience, away from my consciousness of what I am doing now, and what I will do. This is the mediated voluntary, and it is philosophically different from the simple voluntary.

All moral acts are embodied in the human performance of them. They are affected by the historical situation in which they are performed. What we do in these situations are moves in human relationships, whieh measure and manifest our humanity. A human action is never just its situation. My act of kindness is unique, even though someone else could have done it as easily.

Moral action is immersed in, but distinguishable from, material performances.

We can distort human action in two ways:

**1.** We can suggest that the moral action is essentially an internal achievement. This distorts human action by separating the external action from the internal.

2. We can suggest that the moral act follows the material performance: I gave you food; now you are my friend. I strike you; now we are enemies. This involves two actions, yet the moral act is one.

The author argues that the moral act occurs publicly in the material performance, not just in the mind or heart. **It** does not occur in anything other than the material performance.

Material performance becomes a moral act when it is recognized or identified as mine, and when it is recognized as good or bad. Recognition

is what is added to the performance. It has a presentational quality-a kind of epiphany of meaning.

The moral character of the act cannot lie in the intention or in the consequences.

The author rejects the distinctions of act, intention, and circumstance as separable components of the phenomenon of moral acts. He opts for an interrelationship in such a way that intention is only intention when actualized.

Intention cannot really be separated from actions. Performance actualizes intentions and actions characterize the performer. These make their marks on the world.

The author believes that his approach establishes what he calls the moral category which is concerned with presentation since it establishes a relationship between agents and target. A moral theory based on the category of choice is utilitarian or consequential; one based on judgment is deontological. Because neither concentrates on the moral action itself, they are both incomplete.

With his theory, the author believes he provides the answer to the ambiguities of moral actions, thus eliminating the need for theories that permit evil effects in order to achieve the good, such as the principle of double effect and the theory of ontic evil of Fuchs, Jansens, and Keane. He applies his analysis of choice and theory of moral categoriality to an analysis of the virtues, and the being of human agents.

This work is challenging and novel. It breaks new ground in phenomenological studies and overcomes polarities and dichotomies which characterized older and more venerable moral theories. These theories have tried with difficulty to reconcile anomalies of freedom and necessity, good and evil, and means and ends in problematic instances. Robert Sokolowski offers a new way of looking at moral actions which will have a profound effect in academia and pastoral practice.

WALTER BILDSTEIN

*St. Jerome's College*
*Waterloo, Ontario*
*Canada*

*Essays in Phenomenological Theology*. Edited by STEVEN W. LAYCOCK and JAMES G. HART. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986. Pp. 219. $12.95, paper; $39.50, cloth.

Readers of this volume will find a collection of essays that represent a spectrum of approaches to phenomenology and to phenomenological theology and that draw inspiration from thinkers as varied as Confucius,

Plotinus, Aquinas, Dumery, Hegel, Ricoeur, and Derrida, as well as from Edmund Husserl. Those readers who are unfamiliar with phenomenological theology will most likely expect the collection to answer the question, What is phenomenological theology, and what is the relationship between phenomenology and phenomenological Some of the contributors do attempt to address this question, but their answers vary, from the modest claim that phenomenology can provide descriptive guidelines to the theological task to the more ambitious claim that phenomenology can provide an ontological/phenomenological proof for the existence of God and synthetic *a priori* statements concerning his nature.

Iso Kern, in "Trinity: Theological Reflections of a Phenomenologist ", makes fairly mod.est claims for phenomenology as far as its ability to make theological statements is concerned. He states that phenomenology is not theology, because it describes and does not postulate. Nevertheless, he believes that "metaphysical postulates can be raised" on the basis of its description (p. 36). Phenomenological description for Kern takes the form of a delineation of three dimensions of human experience-nature, sociality and self. He correlates these dimensions of human experience with the Chinese awareness of their cultural tradition as determined through "The Three Doctrines", Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. He also correlates these dimensions with the Christian concept of the Trinity. According to Kern, metaphysical philosophies and religions, in their attempts to articulate a non-transitory, unconditioned metaphysical cause for human existence, must be cognizant of these three irreducible dimensions of human reality and reflect this triad or else risk being distorted and one-sided. Thus phenomenology can prepare the way for true theology by clearing away the false gods which are created through absolutizing relativities, such as would be the case if any one of the three dimensions of human existence were to be absolutized.

Charles Courtney's discussion of "Henry Dumery's Phenomenology of Transcending " makes similar claims for phenomenology and phenomenollogical theology. According to Dumery and Courtney, phenomenology cannot make judgments concerning reality or value, or concerning religious truth or falsity. "Philosophy can, however, specify the conditions according to which a religion or religious act is not unreasonable" (p. 55). Phenomenology can study sacralization, the action of "projecting onto a thing the intention of, or aspiration for, the Absolute" (p. 56), and also provide a critique of idolatry and superstition, instances in which religious intention is being "fixed on an object rather than - - - using the object as a springboard for attaining the Absolute" (p. 59).

J. N. Findlay also sees phenomenology as providing descriptive guidelines, but in his essay, "Some Thoughts Regarding The Holy Spirit", Findlay makes it clear that the function of phenomenology extends to

the founding of the existence and the nature of the divine. The object of phenomenological theology is a "consummating point ", a " central unity", which Findlay correlates with the Christian ideas of the Word and the Holy Spirit, both of which he sees as having the function of connecting "the Center of all being with its periphery ", or of connecting "one aspect of the absolute Center with another" (p. 39). But Findlay goes further than making suggestions as to how theology should conceptualize the object of worship. The living presence of the Divine Center, as connecting and unifying everything that is, is an undeniable aspect of human experience. Findlay claims that reflection on our impersonal values "necessarily leads to the constitution ... of an object in which all supra-personal Values will be present together, and in an absolutely transcendent, all-surpassing form" (p. 42), that "everyone in fact falls back in thought on an irremovable Absolute of some sort " (p. 43), and that " everyone thinks in terms of a something or other that he cannot think away" (p. 44). Thus Findlay's conception of phenomenological theology equates the foundational efficacy of phenomenology for theology with the validity of a version of the ontological argument.

In the introductory essay, "Introduction : Toward an Overview of Phenomenological Theology", Steven W. Laycock concurs with the view that phenomenological theology constitutes an ontological argument for the existence of God. Laycock contrasts the method of phenomenological theology both with the method of 'positive' theology, which assumes a " textual or traditional authoritarianism", and also with the method of speculative-natural theology, which attempts to deduce or induce "the existence, essence, and modes of relatedness of God " from principles which are more fundamental than the conclusions (p. 5). According to Laycock, both of the latter are somewhat circular; phenomenological theology, by means of the phenomenological method, avoids pulling " the same rabbit out of the hat that was previously surreptitiously concealed within it" (p. 7). It is descriptive of the structure of human consciousness, and its descriptions provide a guide to theologizing. But phenomenological theology is more than theology that takes account of phenomenological descriptions of human experience. Phenomenological theology attempts to discover the divine in human experience by means of " the reductive-eidetic-reconstructive technique characteristic of phenomenology " and thereby claims to make synthetic *a priori statements* about the divine.

In his other essay in this volume, " The Intersubjective Dimension of Husserl's Theology", Laycock argues that the natural attitude towards the world includes a commitment to the reality of the world. This includes "a commitment to the relative approximability of the *Gotteswelt* ", or a commitment to the existence of a universal "view of all views" (p.

184). This " view of all views" refers to the divine consciousness (p. 173). "Intersubjectivity *is* the divine envisionment" (p. 173). Com· munalization, which establishes a vantage point that all parties may share, but which does not thereby demolish individual viewpoints but rather acknowledges them, leads towards the "God-world", "the *telos* of communalization, the ideal of maximal, apperceptive interpenetration of finite minds" (pp. 178-179). In Laycock's words, "we thus have an ' ontological ' (or more precisely, phenomenological) argument for th!J existence of a universal view of all views" (p. 184).

If, according to the words of Edmund Husserl, phenomenology attempts "to arrive at God without God", the question arises whether the God of phenomenological inquiry is dependent upon human consciousness in such a way that it represents an atheistic option, at least from the point of view of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Robert R. Williams article, " Phenomenology and Theology: Hegel's Alternative to Dogmatism and Idealism" begins with a discussion of Ricoeur's belief that Husserl's phenomenological idealism does in fact lead to an atheistic interpretation of religion and theology. lE this is true, the whole phenomenological tradition, from Hegel through Henry Dumery in their " use of the transcendental turn, and accompanying derivation of objectivity from subjectivity, deprives God of any existence apart from transcendental consciousness" (p. 68). Williams argues, against Ricoeur, that there is a difference between Hegel and Feuerbach. For Hegel, *Geist* is not only an anthropological reality but also a theological concept. The reality that " is produced by consciousness is not dependent on consciousness, but rather exists 'in and for itself '" (p. 81). In Williams's interpretation, both classical theism and critical philosophy tend to be one-sided, the former in its reduction of all being to God and the latter in the reduction of God's existence to a phenomenon of human subjectivity. According to Williams, " Hegel contends that the ontological proof establishes a reciprocal relationship of the divine and the human" (p. 82). Thus consciousness and its object are equiprimordial.

Given that phenomenology does not reduce God to a projection of human consciousness, the question still remains whether the God of phenomenology is adequate to the Judaeo-Christian conception of a transcendent Creator-God. Thomas Prufer's " Creation, Solitude, and Publicity" is in part about the impossibility of a phenomenology of religion which takes account of the classical Christian doctrine of creation. Creation, in classi· cal Christian tradition, is gratuitous, and the revelation of its gratuitousness is itself gratuitous. Both of these claims seem to be at odds with the assumptions on which phenomenological theology is founded. If human consciousness necessarily reveals the necessary interconnection between human nature and divine nature, then it seems that neither the creature-

liness of human consciousness nor the gratuitousness of God's revelation is accounted for. The contingency of human nature and of human consciousness of God both seem to contradict the possibility of a theology that is phenomenological in the more ambitious sense of phenomenological theology.

James G. Hart, in his essay, "A Precis of an Husserlian Philosophical Theology", contends that there is a contingency to Husserl's concept of the stream of primal presencing, but that this contingency is not a characteristic of the ongoingness of the stream but of its rationality and teleology. Thus "the Husserlian version of the question, Why is there something rather than nothing?, is not a reference to *creatio ex nihilo,* not to the 'existential' . . . fact that there is a mind presencing, but to the rational-teleological way in which the primal presencing occurs" (p. 126). In Hart's interpretation of Husserl, the divine is dependent upon the world as well as the world being in some sense dependent upon the divine. It is true that "the divine is the entelechy for the monadic *prate hyle"* but it is also the case that " the entelechy (or formal and final cause) of the monadic universe is the essence of the divine" (p. 145) and that " divinity is actual only through the mediation of the monadic universe as the eternal product of divinity's informing its Other, the *prate hyle"* (p. 146). Thus Hart notes that, in contrast to Prufer's essay, within the context of his own understanding of transcendental phnomenology, "it is not true that God and the world are not greater than God alone" (p. 145).

As Laycock notes in his introduction, James Buchanan, in " The Rhetorics of Appropriation/Transgression: Postmodernity and Religious Discourse", presents an even more comprehensive challenge to the phenomenological project as conceived by Husserl than does Prufer. Buchanan discusses the departure of post-modern continental philosophy from Husserlian phenomenology. According to Buchanan, Derrida and Ricoeur are indebted to Husserl in that both take their point of departure from Husserl. But in contrast to Husserl, who speaks from the transcendental standpoint, they are " dwellers in the gap " and speak from the gap. Both of them are postmodern and deal in rhetoric rather than in classical "ontotheology ". The difference between Derrida and Ricoeur is that for Derrida, glimpses of the WORD only serve to remind us of our blindness, not to gnide us, whereas for Ricoeur there is hope in community and in practical action. Thus for Buchanan, Husserlian transcendental phenomenology contrasts with post-modern theology and philosophy in that it is based on "faith in a region of consciousness in which being is presence" (p. 188). Husserl holds on to faith in the WORD, despite the fact that "the density of human subjectivity" and "the contingencies of

the historical subj.ect" threaten to destroy the transcendental project (p. 190).

The variety of approaches to phenomenological theology that are represented in this collection, with the inclusion even of essays that present challenges to the phenomenological project, is a strength in that it provides something to stimulate every reader's interest and prevents the book from being doctrinaire. Steven Laycock's introductory essay goes a long way towards making explicit some of the implications of the various essays and towards sorting out the interrelationships among the views of the contributors. Nevertheless, this reviewer was left with the wish that there had been more of an attempt on the part of the editors to have the individual contributors directly address one another's differing views. This may be an unfair criticism, however, since it is in effect a request for another, more narrowly focused kind of book about phenomenological theology.

TIINA ALLIK

*Loyola Marymount University*
*Los Angeles, California*

*The Mental Philosophy of John Henry Newman.* By JAY NEWMAN. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: The Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986. Pp. xii + 209. $22.95. Cloth.

" It is obvious," wrote the literary critic George Levine in his study of John Henry Newman in *The Boundaries of Fiction* (Princeton, 1968, p. 195), "that everything [Newman] wrote was aimed at producing an effect, or, to use Mill's terms, at working 'upon the feeling, or upon the belief, or the will of another.' " Whatever else he may or may not have been, Newman was .ever the skilled, even consummate rhetorician-a fact which has been for many tantamount to an admission of his having been, at best an equivocator, at worst a calculating liar. "Like the sophists of old," Kingsley charged Newman in 1864, " he has used reason to destroy reason" *(Apologia,* Oxford, 1967, p. 370). Of course, Aristotle had a high regard for rhetoric, not as sophistry but as an art of informed argument on contingent matters, so the mere fact that Newman sought to persuade may be itself no argument as to the quality of the rhetoric he produced. Admirers of Newman hear in his writings notes of moral and religious truth, and have claimed to have found there intellectual riches to last more than a season. Indeed, nearly a hundred years after his death Newman speaks *cor ad cor* to increasing numbers. Among commentators, however, it is still something of an issue whether or to what

extent critics like Kingsley were correct: even if Newman was sincere enough in practice (which is not always conceded), the question remains whether his theory of reason skeptically undermines the enterprise of philosophy.

This question, and others connected with it, provide the *leitmotif* for Professor Newman's book. Like others before him (e.g., Pailin, Price, Boekraad, Cronin, D'Arcy, Zeno, Juergens), Jay Newman seeks to understand and assess Newman's theory of belief as set forth in the *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870), but unlike them he undertakes "to provide an analytical philosophical criticism" (p. 202), that is, a chapter-by-chapter examination of the *Grammar* alone, "using only the logical tools of the analytical philosopher" (p. 7). Despite its title, then, this work is not designed to have the sweep that a Vargish or Sillem offers of Newman's "mental philosophy," nor in any way to serve as an introductory survey of Newman's work. And though there are disadvantages to reading the *Grammar* apart from Newman's work as a whole, students of Newman's thought will find here a clearly-written, careful, and above all provocative discussion which will occasion new reflections on Newman's treatment of enduring philosophical problems. What I perceive to be serious problems with this study-of method, argument, and interpretation-considerably tempers my enthusiasm (these problems I will mention after a description of the book's contents). But it is to be hoped that the serious student of Newman's work will weigh these difficulties against the real gains that Professor Newman offers.

Chapter One, "Newman's Philosophical Proj.ect," is a polemical introduction to Newman the man and to the *Grammar*. Its general *effect* is to cast Newman as a thinker whose sentimentalism (p. 3), self-obsession (p. 23), association with irrationalism (p. 4), self-serving and apologetical motives (pp. 18, 21), "distrust and resentment" of philosophers (p. 5), "workaholic" personality (p. 13), and treason to the Protestant cause (p. 19), combine to render him an unattractive and not-altogether trustworthy guide or subject for philosophical inquiry. This is the effect of the chapter, not its explicit purpose or content, which is to explain the object and structure of the *Grammar,* to allege a tension between its phenomenological and epistemological dimensions, to uncover its personal and political ideology, and to suggest that, as a philosophical treatise of sorts, the *Grammar* merits more philosophical attention than it has received.

Chatper Two, "Modes of Apprehension and Belief," corresponds with chapters one through four in the *Grammar*. Professor Newman begins by questioning Newman's three-fold classification of propositions (pp. 37-38) as question-begging and apologetically motivated. Raising (only to waive) the issue of Newman's nominalism, the author concentrates most of the

chapter on exposing confusions of thought (and craftiness of motive) in Newman's treatment of the modes of apprehending propositions as "real" or "notional." According to the author Newman fails to identify apprehension clearly (p. 45), to specify how much apprehension is sufficient for assent (p. 43), to present a plausible typology of notions (p. 57), or-most importantly-to distinguish adequately or consistently between real and notional apprehension (p. 63). All of these claims naturally involve close reading and arguing which it is impossible to do justice to here. It may be useful to observe that Professor Newman is convinced that the project of the *Grammar* is held aloft on apologetical struts which, when philosophically undermined, send the whole thing crashing down (which, however, is not equivalent to saying that it is useless: "The *Grammar* ... gives us a great deal to reflect upon, and that alone would justify its fame; p.196).

Chapter Three, "Religious Belief as 'Real'," correlates with chapter five of the *Grammar,* and Chapter Four, "Degrees of Belief," with chapters six and seven. Again, both entail close reasoning which it is not possible to reproduce here. Chapter Four in any event is the more important of the two, and in my view the best chapter of the book. Here Professor Newman painstakingly dissects Newman's four major lines of argument supporting the view that an "assent" to a proposition is always unconditional, and thus absolutely distinct from an "inference," which is always conditional. Potentially, at least, much is at stake here, for on this distinction turns part of Newman's legitimation of the absoluteness or unconditionality of religion belief. In the *Grammar,* it may be recalled, Newman had objected to Locke's view that one must adjust his degree of assent to a belief to the evidence he possesses for it. Since the evidence in contingent matters is always materially probable at best, our assents (except in a handful of cases, according to Locke) should also be only probable. Though Locke himself believed that the existence of God could be demonstrated (hence was unconditional), followers, like Newman's own friend, William Froude, resolutely held to the uncertain nature of beliefs in science, history, politics, and *a fortiori* in matters of religion and theology. Religious belief was thus at best only "morally certain," that is, sufficient for action, insufficient for intellectual certainty. For Newman, of course, this would not do. Religious belief was unconditionally certain belief, and the challenge was to show how and why. As the author observes, "Newman must ultimately show either that evidence and the ethics of belief are not nearly as intimately related as the Lockeans claim or that the peasant has important evidence [for his religious belief] of a kind that Lockeans tend to ignore" (p. 122). In this chapter Professor Newman's ordinary language analysis goes far in dismantling the first part of this alternative, and-after exposing further

difficulties in Newman's doctrine on certitude-the author proceeds in the next chapter to direct it against the second, more important part.

Chapter Fiv:e, "Formal and Informal Inference," corresponds with chapter eight in the *Grammar,* and Chapter Six, "The Illative Sense," with chapters nine and ten. Once more the reasoning is tight; it is not, however, nearly as disclosive or compelling, although it is quite impossible to rebut it effectively here. What is ultimately at stake is the rationality of real assents, including of course religious beliefs. According to the author, however, it is just this rationality that Newman subverts. For example, by associating formal inference with logic, and by thus implying that the world of concrete "things " is something other than logical (p 141), Newman implies our inability to reason about it at all (we are thus brought full circle to Kingsley's charge of sophistic rhetoric). This conclusion is confirmed for the author when it is seen how all reasoning seems to rest for Newman on "first principles," which, since they involve unanalyzable "sentiments of age, religion, ... social habit" (p. 143) and the like, do not provide the objective validity required for rational argument. The author concludes the first section of Chapter Five in this way: He [Newman] throws the baby out with the bath water, reduces apologetic to rhetoric, and makes the resolution of ideological conflict a matter of *force majeure"* (p. 144). This line of reasoning is continued in the next section on informal inference, which is " so central to [Newman's] project" (p. 145) that confusion or collapse here could spell the total incompetency of Newman's "mental philosophy." And in fact, by making informal inference (and the illative sense) "mysteriously incomprehensible," and by placing its operations and results "beyond criticism" (p. 157), Newman, it is argued, effectively removes it from the realm of rationality altogether. In his final Chapter Seven ("Mens ad Cor Loquitur ") the author concludes: "If my analysis in the foregoing chapters has been a reasonably accurate one, then most of the major theses in the *Grammar* are false, and most of its major arguments are unsound" (p. 196).

It is difficult to give an adequate impression of the problems of this otherwise well-written (sometimes even breezily-written) book because some of them at least are cumulative and matters of subtle overall effect (as Newman said complex "things " in the world often are). Least damaging of these problems, perhaps, is the author's highly selective use of the secondary literature on Newman. A fairly consistent side-stepping of rival interpretations-for example, on the question of Newman's character, or his supposed nominalism, or his "irrationalism," or his understanding of formal and informal inference-gives the impression that matters are simpler than they are, or solved when they are not, or that they fall one way when general consensus would suggest the opposite.

This practice may well derive from a much larger and more serious flaw in the book as a whole, namely the author's considerable lack of sympathy for Newman as man or thinker. It goes without saying that, if Newman is in fact as bigoted (p. 31), elitist (p. 32), and designing (pp. 35, 37, *passim)* as the author thinks, we need to be apprised of this fact. The problem is that this claim is never *argued.* Indeed, for all his understandable disdain for what he takes to be sophistic rhetoric, the author has readily availed himself of generally fallacious strategies: insinuation, name-calling, *ad hominem* arguments, false pretense to knowledge of Newman's motives, a sometimes mocking irony, and aggressive attacks quietly qualified or withdrawn later. All of this is distracting in the extreme, and does nothing to further the author's claim.

But the most serious problem of this work is the author's choice to read the *Grammar* in isolation from Newman's work as a *whole-meaning* not only his other statements on faith and reason (most notably in the Oxford sermons and the *Theological Papers on Faith and Certainty),* but also his *practice* of " informal" reasoning throughout all of his works. It is one of Newman's most important epistemological insights that " facts " or " things " in the world (under which rubrics he included even highly complex "ideas," such as Christianity or Platonism), *if* they are to be "really " apprehended as irreducible and unique complex particulars and not be attenuated into abstractions, cannot themselves be abstracted from the cumulative " circumstances" and converging facts and probabilities which go to make them up. Now, Newman's thought on assent is just such a complex "fact," and constituted by the full body of theory *and* practice distributed throughout the Newman *corpus.* To gain an adequate apprehension of it, and not merely a " theoretical and abstract" account which attacks one set of particulars only because it does not have other sets to qualify and balance it, requires a sensitive and sympathetic reading which *strictly* logical tools cannot provide. This is not a retreat into obscurantism. Chapter-by-chapter and line-by-line analysis with the most rigorous tools is necessary and, as the author points out, too infrequently performed on Newman's work. But such analysis is doomed to frustration (and even resentment p. 140) if we read Newman solely with the expectations we bring to the professional philosopher. Newman says as much in the beginning of the *Grammar* (Oxford, 1985, p. 21) : "... in a philosopher it is a merit even to be not utterly vague;" hearers must "throw their minds into the matters in discussion, must accompany his treatment of them with an active, personal concurrence, and interpret for themselves, as he proceeds, the dim suggestions and adumbrations of objects, which he has a right to presuppose, while he uses them, as images existing in their apprehension as well as in his own." Newman was a " philosopher" in much the way a rhetorician like

Cicero was: non-technical, unsystematic, and geared to the pragmatic, popular, and persuasive (which is not simply equivalent to saying that he is not principled and disclosive). While we may have just grounds to complain of the obscurity and contradictoriness we sometimes find, we do not get any closer to understanding Newman's thought by wrenching a part from the whole and complaining that it is inadequate.

Finally, there are in my judgment innumerable mistakes in interpretation, both small and large, occasioned for the most part by this unsympathetic and decontextualized reading: to cite but one example, Professor Newman's admitted confusion about informal inference, and his mistaken conclusion that such inference is non-verbal, illogical, and beyond the reach of rational criticism. Closer correlation of the *Grammar* with Newman's theory and practice elsewhere, and attention to (for example) Brian Wicker's well-known essay on Newman and logic in *Newman-Studien* V, might have prevented these errors. And yet, flawed as it may be, we might do well to say of this book what the author said of the *Grammar,* that it "gives us a great deal to reflect upon, and that alone would justify its fame."

WALTER JOST

*University of Virginia*
*Charlottesville, Virginia*

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