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PAUL S. MINEAR: THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

This essay probes the complex interrelationships between the reality of God and the various methods for dealing with his self-revelation in the Bible. Certain problems are posed for the historical method by the Bible's witness to transcendence. Conversely, problems are posed for Christian faith in transcendence by the practice of historical methodology as applied to the canon.

As a foil for the analysis of historical science, we will first examine a recent appraisal of methodology in the physical sciences (T. S. Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, U. of Chicago Press, 1962). We will then rehearse several strategic deficiencies which have appeared in historical methodology as applied to the New Testament. The recent emergence of biblical hermeneutics as a theological program is seen as partially due to efforts to surmount those deficiencies (e.g., R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutics and Word of God*, New York, 1966). Proponents are not humble in advancing claims for the success of this development (e.g., "Theology must be conceived as hermeneutic" G. Ebeling, *Journal for Theology and the Church*, III, 163). A critique of these claims will be given, mainly in terms of inadequate treatments of God's transcendence. If history remains the deepest problem for the dogmatist, revelation remains the deepest problem for the historian. Therefore, biblical historians are desperately in need of theologians who are not so dependent on one method in dealing with the Scriptural presentation of God. The two disciplines, to be of maximum service to each other, should preserve independence in method as well as in objectives and obligations.

EDWARD MACKINNON, S.J.: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The techniques of linguistic analysis, as practiced by Anglo-American philosophers, have often been employed in defense of the thesis that religious language is not really meaningful. Essentially the same techniques, stripped of positivistic and anti-metaphysical presuppositions, can be usefully employed in clarifying religious language in general and the problem of divine transcendence in particular.

In speaking of God as transcendent one is using language in an apparently paradoxical way. To speak of God, while insisting that what he is cannot be said, would seem to violate the conditions for the meaningfulness of language. This is an old problem in a new dress. In an attempt to clarify the contemporary form of this problem some themes from contemporary analysis which supply the necessary background will be summarized briefly: the descriptive metaphysics implicit in ordinary language; the meaningfulness of language as something fundamentally public and derivatively private; and the relations between meaning, reference and use.

The central problem that emerges—from a linguistic point of view—is the methodology of language extension which allows one to refer to theoretical entities (i.e., entities that are inferred or postulated rather than observed) and to make true assertions concerning such entities. Here contemporary physics offers some interesting parallels. It would be impossible to understand the language of physics unless its meaningfulness were somehow rooted in ordinary language. Yet the explanations supplied by physics are based on the acceptance of such theoretical entities as particles and atoms and on the construction of conceptual frameworks in which the properties and interrelations of these entities can be discussed.

To speak of either God or atoms one must use terms whose meaning depends on ordinary language to refer to entities which transcend the conceptual framework proper to this language. Like the language of physics, theological language involves the extension of ordinary language to new domains and the construction of conceptual frameworks with their appropriate specialized languages. Here one must distinguish between internal questions, i.e., questions framed within a given conceptual framework, and external questions, or questions about that framework. Within theological language (where "language" is used in a technical restricted sense) internal questions about God, e.g., the questions St. Thomas asks in *S. T.*, I, qq. 3-26, are meaningful because of their relation to the basic commitments of this framework, i.e., the existence and fundamental attributes of God. Such internal discourse, however, must be coupled with a reflective evaluation of the limits and limitations of the conceptual system employed. The synthesis of internal and external viewpoints in reflective judgment allows one to speak meaningfully about that which can not be properly and directly understood, the transcendent God.

Some helpful background reading would be: P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (Doubleday pb.), chap. 1; T. R. Miles, *Religion and the Scientific Outlook* (Allen and Unwin), Part Three; and the articles by David Burrell, C. S. C. in *Theol. Stud.* 24 (1963) and in *Continuum* 2 (1964)—which was published as a book, *Spirit as Inquiry*.

JAMES GUSTAFSON: THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE.

I shall not try to make a kind of moral argument for the transcendence of God, or for the importance of belief in God's transcendence such as the following: 1) if human life is to be valued there *must* be a God who values it, or 2) if men are to believe in the value of human life they *must* believe in a God who values human life.

I shall explore some aspects of "valuing" of human life as a phenomenon of human experience: respecting, appreciating, revering, caring, preserving, loving, sustaining, honoring, etc. I wish particularly to indicate the significance of "affections" in valuing; perhaps the difference between valuing in terms of the utility of that which is valued and valuing in terms of respecting and loving that which is valued is the kind and quality of affections that are involved.

This leads to an exploration of the sufficient conditions for these affections. Some of these might be a sense of limitation or finitude, a sense of dependence, a sense of the gift character of life, a sense of its inherent goodness, etc. The next step is to explore the more general convictions which might sustain these conditions: the extremes of the hard determinism of fatalism on the one hand, and the libertarianism of absolute human autonomy on the other are inadequate. Christian belief in the transcendence and goodness of God, and the affections toward God and toward human life that are nourished by this belief is a ground for valuing life.

The order of Christian life, however, is probably not the order of the above paragraphs: God is not believed to be transcendent and good in order to sustain the valuing of human life; human life is valued because God is its giver and its Lord.

MATTHEW J. O'CONNELL, S.J.: GOD'S INITIATIVE TOWARD MAN THE SYMBOL-MAKER

Man is a symbol-maker not by choice but by nature, and he himself (man-in-action) is the basic symbol present in all others. In his historical dealings with man God has used man's symbols to enter into relationship with him (finally himself becoming man-the-symbol-maker) and has oriented them to establish and express the covenantal relationship. The central symbols, though native to man, are not necessarily spontaneously experienced in depth. What kind of education is needed? What kind of "experience of symbols" is to be sought? To what extent can man vary or extend the range of appropriate symbols?

Suggested Readings: E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, chapters 1-2; Louis Beirnaert, S.J., "La dimension mythique dans le sacramentalisme chrétien," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 17 (1949) 255-86; reprinted in *Maison-Dieu* n.22 (1950, second quarter) 94-120, and in L. Beirnaert, *Expérience chrétienne et psychologie* (Paris: Editions de l'Epi, 1964), pp. 353-89; in English in *Cross-Currents* 2/5 (Fall, 1951) 68-86, and in *Selection I* (ed. by C. Hastings and D. Nicholl; New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), pp. 43-69.

WILLIAM J. RICHARDSON, S.J.: THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

This paper will deal with: 1) a description of existential phenomenology, current tendencies, significant authors, advantages and limitations; 2) the problem of divine transcendence within this method: how it fits into the method, authors who deal with it, approaches they take; 3) a personal appraisal.

JOHN RATTÉ: THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD AND THE MODERNIST CRISIS

The Modernist crisis, marked by the papal condemnations of 1907, was characterized by the convergence of several currents of thought and scholarship, some controversial in the 19th century, some so new that they had not yet been given full academic assessment. The nature of revelation in relation to dogmatic development, a modern psychological approach to traditional Christology, and a new attitude to more limited ecclesiological issues were all fostered by two initially complementary lines of intellectual development: biblical studies and philosophical apologetics. Divisions among the men grouped together in the condemnation were as intense and as significant as those established by the condemnation between the synthetic modernist position and orthodoxy, and this was especially true after the publication of Loisy's *L'Évangile et l'Église* in 1902. Documentary publications and several recent monographic studies enable us to take a fresh look at the theological currents of the crisis, especially the debate on immanentism and transcendence. A model for the discussion establishes hypothetical poles of opinion, a position at which

"religion is conceived as a purely intrahuman phenomenon, for which no evidence is to be found beyond the aspirations of humanity" and a position at which religion is conceived "as having a basis in evidence and metaphysics; as the effect on us of something greater than ourselves—of something greater than any purely human facts and desires" (von Hugel). The discussion of ideas grouped towards the second pole offers an opportunity for a comparative assessment of the dialectic between immanence and transcendence in contemporary theology and in the period before World War I.

BERNARD J. F. LONERGAN, S.J.: NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The shift from classical to modern culture has introduced notable changes in the context within which the question of natural knowledge of God may be raised and answered. It will be to these differences that, in the main, I shall attend.

On the Aristotelian-Thomist world-view the question of God was continuous with questions about this world. The round of the seasons and, generally, the whole of terrestrial process owed its continuity and *per se* perpetuity to the influence exercised by the heavenly bodies, and the heavenly bodies owed their motion to the First Mover. There was a single category of causality that could be divided into several species and could be applied analogously to creator and to creature.

In contrast, modern science is specialized knowledge of this world and only of this world. It is empirical, and so it always proceeds from data. To the data it adds no intelligible unities or relationships that are not verifiable in the data, and it is subject to confrontation with further data and, if need be, to correction by them. But God is not a datum of sense and he is not a datum of consciousness. He cannot fall within the purview of an empirical science. Moreover, there can be no verifiable principle or law relating this world to God, for verifiable principles or laws hold only between data. A relation between the given and the non-given cannot be verified. So the contemporary question about God is, very bluntly, by what non-verifiable principle do you propose to conclude from this world to God's existence.

There is a further difference between the classical and the modern approach. The classicist was concerned, not with the conclusions actually reached by concrete men and women, but with the conclusions to be reached by an ideal named right reason. Classical proofs of God's existence were conducted, not by existential subjects, but by an abstract, *per se, de iure* subject. Such abstractness is foreign to us inasmuch as we have grasped the thought of even such forerunners as Newman and Blondel. The thinker is always the concrete man and his thinking goes on, not in some hypothetical vacuum, but under the decree of his free, deliberate decision to devote himself to the pursuit of the good of his intellect, the good that is truth. Besides the spontaneous openness by which we inquire, doubt, deliberate, there is the deliberate openness by which we persevere in raising and resolving all relevant questions. Such deliberate openness is needed to bring to term the question of God, and so that question is not merely a question of theoretical possibility but also of efficacious good will.

Finally, knowledge of God is not complete without knowledge of God's goodness. But knowledge of goodness, of the true as opposed to the apparent good, of value, occurs on the existential level of human consciousness, on the level on which we deliberate, evaluate, decide, act. Further, knowledge of God's goodness implies that the world God made and governs also is good; it implies that evils of this world are, not intended, but permissible and permitted; accordingly it involves a process of deliberation and evaluation that, so far from occurring within an already settled horizon, rather settles what one's horizon is to be. There is involved an exercise of what Joseph de Finance would name vertical liberty.

Such seems to be the contemporary context of the question of God and it will be with reference to that context that I shall treat the issues raised by asking whether our knowledge of God is natural.

LEO FARLEY: THE MEANING OF LIFE AND DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

Is the reality of divine transcendence rejected as an unverifiable assumption? A discarded theory? A non-fact? Is the existence or non-existence of God really a problem for man? Or does the critical question turn about co-existence? Whether meaning can survive in the face of God?

Meaning is the irreducible datum of human being. Man *is* meaning. If we dare assert this then does it make much sense to ask "What is the meaning of my life?" Is not the pointedly human question "What do I mean my life to be?" A failure of nerve either in raising this question or in responding to it begets pseudo-transcendence.

Pseudo-transcendence is inhibited or restricted intentionality. When man consigns himself to the matter of factness of everything that is or can be, or assigns to a wholly other the meaning he dares not be, intention dissolves into resignation, transcendence into matter of factness.

The meaning that is man rather than the meaning of man provides a challenging starting point for ethical reflection. Does man mean only man? Or does he mean God?

JAMES J. MULLIGAN: GOD'S ACTION IMMANENT IN THE WORLD OF THE SACRAMENTS

The question of God's action as immanent in the world of sacraments is of necessity connected with the question of God's continuing revelation. It is impossible to view the sacraments in the context of "acts of faith" without at the same time seeing them as "acts of revelation." This follows from the correlation of faith and revelation, each intelligible only in the light of the other.

The topic will be treated from two points of view. We will first consider the immanence of God's action as it is contained in the theology of Saint Paul. We will then change the context of his theology into categories of later theology, and especially into the context of a theory of transcendental causality.

From the preceding considerations we will draw conclusions leading to an understanding of the sacraments as revelatory. This revelatory notion of the sacraments, however, will not be concerned with the noetic aspect of revelation, but with its dynamic aspect. Thus the revelatory action of the sacraments does not so much imply communication of knowledge of God as it does communication of God himself. This leads to the final conclusion that sacramental revelation is in itself responsible for the transformation of the individual.

EUGENE FONTINELL: TRANSCENDENT DIVINITY AND PROCESS

The controlling assumption of the paper is that "transcendent divinity," except as the emptiest of abstractions, has no meaning in itself apart from the culture, age and individual philosophy or theology in which it is employed. Similarly, there is no "process philosophy" as such but rather a variety of process philosophies each characterized and nuanced by cultural, sociological, historical and individual factors.

In order to focus the discussion, the paper will be restricted to the expression of process philosophy which emerged in the classical American philosophy particularly in the writings of William James and John Dewey. The world as described by these thinkers is *unfinished* and gives rise to *real* novelties. It is within such a world that the question of "transcendent divinity" will be explored.

It will be suggested that only by radically transforming the traditional meaning of "transcendent divinity" can it be affirmed as compatible with a processive world. More specifically, any absolutely transcendent divinity, characterized by immutability, omniscience and omnipotence, is called into question by the processive world-view being affirmed. Nevertheless, a radically reconstructed and relatively transcendent divinity is not excluded. As a minimum, the notion of "transcendent divinity" might still be useful to account for and safeguard the dimensions of *otherness* and *mystery*.

Suggested Readings: E. Fontinell, "Reflections on Faith and Metaphysics," *Cross Currents* (Winter, 1966), 15-40; "Religious Truth in a Relational and Processive World," *Cross Currents* (Summer, 1967), 283-315.

ROBERT F. DRINAN, S.J.: CATHOLIC MORAL TEACHING AND ABORTION LAWS IN AMERICA

Catholic teaching on abortion was reaffirmed by Vatican II which called abortion an "unspeakable crime." Although there may be some possibility of Catholic moral thought easing a bit with respect to rare medical conditions it would appear that the direct killing of a fetus will continue to be condemned as a grave wrong.

At the same time the law in England and America will presumably continue to be "liberalized." Catholics have been articulate and sometimes adamant in their opposition to any change in the law of the 50 states which until 1967 permitted an abortion only if the mother's *life* was endangered or, in some five states, if the mother's health was gravely endangered.

Non-Catholic support of a limited nature has been received for the moral position of Catholics with respect to abortion. Very little assistance has been, however, offered to Catholics in their opposition to the legalization of abortion.

Scholars must consider the following questions in arriving at a desirable public policy on this question for America:

1. Would the respect for the sanctity of life which Anglo-American society has always had be impaired by the legalization of the destruction of fetal life?

2. Could Catholics insist that public policy remain virtually unchanged and declare that if Catholics did not vigorously enunciate such a policy they would be guilty of the sin of silence?

3. How should Catholic moral thought treat the contention that Catholics and others who oppose abortion are imposing their own morality upon a minority or a majority of the nation and thereby are violating the civil liberties of these groups?

4. Does the Catholic conviction that abortion is immoral—a conviction which is based on the natural moral law as well as Catholic teaching—necessarily mean that Catholic spokesmen in America must insist that this question of life and death is not negotiable and that Catholics must oppose any legalization of "murder"?

5. If it appears clear that a law is about to be enacted in a particular state allowing abortion for the usual reasons (the health of the mother, rape or incest, and a predictively defective fetus) would it be wise for Catholics to insist that, rather than having the state decide who shall live and who shall die, all criminal sanctions against abortion should be withdrawn allowing this matter to be handled by doctors and hospitals?

6. In view of the fact that abortion in many states is now a legislative and political question to what extent should Catholic bishops require the episcopal letters against the liberalization of the abortion law be read from the pulpit or inserted in the diocesan weekly as an "official" pronouncement?

Some discussion will also be given to ways by which Catholic thought and Catholic leadership could fashion a public policy which would make responsible parenthood more easily attainable so that the desire for abortions would be diminished.

SUGGESTED READINGS: "New Problems in Medical Ethics" by Dom Peter Flood (Mercier Press 1953) pp. 125-171. "The Terrible Choice: The Abortion Dilemma"—an account of the International Conference on Abortion in September 1967, Bantam Book, 1968. "Abortion and the Law," Ed. Smith, Western Reserve Univ. Press 1967.

ANSELM ATKINS, O.C.S.O.: TRANSCENDENCE AND THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

To what extent do the official teachings of the church embody or express ultimate religious truth? When we consider the teachings of the Church as "expression," our problem lies largely in the area of linguistics. We must inquire whether human language is capable of expressing the transcendent. It is either helpful or permissible—or necessary—to speak of "more and less" religious truth being expressed in Church teaching? Might some ways of speaking be potentially more effective for expressing the transcendent than others? It will be natural at this point to examine the resources of symbolic, mythic, poetic, parabolic, paradoxical, and dialectically negative language. Do magisterial expressions belong in these categories? Apparently much magisterial teaching intends to be emphatic, literal, matter-of-fact propositional assertion rather than poetic suggestion. How might the transcendent be expressed in this sort of language? What shall we say, in either case, of the success or failure of the magisterium in expressing the transcendent? Or would we perhaps prefer to interpret Church teaching in a way other than that probably intended by its formulators? What would be presupposed by, and follow from, such an approach? Will theories of "interpretation" or the tactics of Scriptural hermeneutics be helpful here? Finally, two antecedent problems may dictate or surreptitiously influence our views as to the expressibility of transcendent reality. First, how have we decided to situate the transcendent with respect to everyday reality? Second, what is our commitment concerning the magisterium's access to religious truth? It appears that the problem of expression cannot be neatly isolated from ontology and epistemology. Meanwhile, back at the Church. . . .

READINGS: E. Voegelin, "Immortality: Experience and Symbol," *HTR*, July 1967; F. Steing, "The Problem of Symbolic Structures in Religious Apprehension," *Hist. of Rel.*, Summer 1964; R. Neville, "Some Historical Prob-

lems About the Transcendence of God," *JR*, January 1967; A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, chaps. 2, 4; S. Beckett, *The Unnamable*. ALSO: P. Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," *IPQ*, June 1962; P. Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain*; A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, introductory and summary sections; K. Rahner, *Theol. Inv. V*, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?"; and books recently published by Streng, Neville, and Ricoeur (above).

RICHARD A. McCORMICK, S.J.: PAST CHURCH TEACHING ON ABORTION

Contemporary theological developments encourage the theologian constantly to review and reexamine his formulations, but precisely to guarantee his fidelity to basic and abiding moral insights. Church formulations in the recent past (Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, Vatican II) could be summarized under the general statement: direct taking of innocent human life is immoral. Behind such statements is the conviction that human life is a basic value or good. Since it is truly basic, it resists subordination to lesser goods. Therefore man's ability to dispose of or destroy human life is sharply limited. While it is always risky to distinguish a formulation from an abiding teaching, it seems fair to say that the *minimal* burden of past teaching is that destruction of human life is morally acceptable only when higher values are at stake. Only then can such destruction conform to the basic requirements of Christian love of neighbor.

Past Church teaching raises the following questions for the contemporary theologian. (1) Is the product of conception a human being from the moment of its conception? And what is the relevance of this determination? (2) If the conceptus is a human being, is it ever permissible directly to destroy it? If it is not fully human, is it ever permissible to destroy what is becoming a human being? (3) Is induced abortion always a direct killing?

ERNEST E. LARKIN, O.Carm.: TRANSCENDENT GOD AND PRAYER AS ENCOUNTER WITH PERSON

Prayer traditionally is conversation with God. This concept may sit uneasily with an exaggerated incarnationism that conceives encounter with God in predominantly, if not exclusively horizontal terms. If God is known and loved only in human relationships, if celebration of community is identical with worship of God and the love of God reduced to love of one's fellowmen, what happens to the traditional concept of prayer? What becomes of the Christian vocation of knowing the Father and the Son (John 17:3)? The Christian is called to dialogue with God himself and not merely to apostolic action, which has been called "worldly prayer" (G. M. Schutte, "Reflections on Prayer and Worldly Holiness," *Worship*, 41 (1967) 105-114). We argue for the retention of the classical definition of prayer and the reality of dialogue with the transcendent God. Such dialogue, however, is had whenever there is reflection with affective response on the values of faith present in life. Such reflection is explicit or implicit formal prayer and does not necessarily include a definable (even in the wide sense) experience of God.

(READING: The essays by H.-M. Féret, O. P. and H. Urs von Balthasar in *Concilium*, vol. 29 (1967), *Opportunities for Belief and Behavior*.)