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Mission and the Spirit

AS man's being is being-in-the-world, his self-understanding has to be not only of himself but also of his world. So biblical writers not only employed Babylonian cosmology but also re-interpreted it. In similar vein Arabic philosophers remodelled Ptolemy's heavens, and in turn Aquinas reformulated their views on the order of the universe. Today with evolution naming the shape of things, Karl Rahner has written on 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World'.¹

Rahner prudently omitted from his account the long series of discontinuities reaching from subatomic particles to mankind. But the omission only makes the more prominent the greatest discontinuity of all, the transition from the natural to the supernatural. Indeed, for Rahner this transition is especially arduous, for he is committed to the anthropological turn and, on that view, nature gives way to spirit, the supernatural at its root is divine self-communication in love, and the obedient potency of a formal ontology has to be translated into terms of consciousness.

I have been using Rahner to state the question I wish to discuss. It reads: What in terms of human consciousness is the transition from the natural to the supernatural? With that question alone am I at present concerned. No doubt, related questions abound. But in this paper I beg to leave them in abeyance.

I. VERTICAL FINALITY

By 'finality' I would name not the end itself but relation to the end, and I would distinguish absolute finality, horizontal finality, and

vertical finality.

Absolute finality is to God. For every end is an instance of the good, and every instance of the good has its ground and goal in absolute goodness.

Horizontal finality is to the proportionate end, the end that results from what a thing is, what follows from it, and what it may exact.

Vertical finality is to an end higher than the proportionate end. It supposes a hierarchy of entities and ends. It supposes a subordination of the lower to the higher. Such subordination may be merely instrumental, or participative, or both, inasmuch as the lower merely serves the higher, or enters into its being and functioning, or under one aspect serves and under another participates.²

The classicist view of the universe acknowledges hierarchy and the instrumental type of vertical finality. An evolutionary view adds the participative type: subatomic particles somehow enter into the elements of the periodic table; chemical elements enter into chemical compounds, compounds into cells, cells in myriad combinations and configurations into the constitution of plant and animal life.

Still one does not reach the evolutionary view simply by acknowledging hierarchy and the instrumental and participative types of vertical finality. An evolutionary view is a view of the universe. It can be fully grasped only by attending to the cause of the universe. For it is only as an instrument operating beyond its own proportion that the lower, as long as it is lower, can bring about and participate in the constitution of the higher; and it is only the cause of the whole universe that from lower species can bring about the emergence of successive higher species.

II. PROBABILITY AND PROVIDENCE

A theologian, if he thinks of evolution, turns to divine providence. A contemporary scientist that does so thinks of probabilities. Darwin's accumulations of chance variations have gained respectability as probabilities of emergence. His survival of the fittest becomes probabilities of survival. What holds for living things, also holds in inanimate nature. Quantum theory has ended the long reign of mechanist determinism and has enthroned statistical law.

An evolutionary view of the universe, at a first approximation, would be a conditioned sequence of assemblies. Each assembly would be an environment with its constituent species. It would function on the basis of classical law, and consequently it would continue to function until the disruption of its interdependent factors resulted from internal deterioration or external interference.

From any assembly to the next there would be a cumulative

sequence of elements, where each element had its probability of emergence from the probability of survival of previously realized assemblies and elements.

In some such fashion, from a minimal beginning, schedules of probabilities of elements would link the emergence of successive assemblies of interdependent and mutually supporting factors. Granted very large numbers and very long intervals of time, Bernoulli's theorem of large numbers or, better, the De Moivre-Laplace limit theorem would make all but certain some close approximation to each step in the process.

When men operate on the small scale and can take all eventualities into account, they plan. When relevant factors are too numerous, combinations of agents too complicated, sufficiently accurate enumerations and measurements too difficult, then they have recourse to statistical science. But the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the whole universe does not operate blindly. He plans where men turn to probabilities. Nor does there come into existence, outside his planning, any agent that could interfere with his comprehensive design.³

III. THE SUPERNATURAL

Contemporary English usage commonly associates the supernatural with the spooky. But the term has a far older meaning, to which we have already adverted in speaking of vertical finality. For in a hierarchy of beings, any higher order is beyond the proportion of lower orders and so is relatively supernatural to them. But the infinite absolutely transcends the finite. It follows that the divine order is beyond the proportion of any possible creature and so is absolutely supernatural.

Our inquiry is with the absolutely supernatural. It regards man's vertical finality to God. It regards such vertical finality in the strictest sense, so that man is not merely subordinate to God but also somehow enters into the divine life and participates in it. When Rahner writes on Christology within an evolutionary perspective, he very explicitly means that there is a threefold personal self-communication of divinity to humanity, first, when in Christ the Word becomes flesh, secondly, when through Christ men become temples of the Spirit and adoptive sons of the Father, thirdly, when in a final consummation the blessed know the Father as they are known by him.

This threefold personal self-communication of divinity is the end. On this end much has been written. It need not be recalled here, for our concern is not with the end but with finality to it, with that finality as evolutionary, with that evolutionary finality as it enters into human consciousness.

Vertical finality is to its end, not as inevitable, but as a possibility.

Its ends can be attained. They need not be attained. They may or may not be attained.

Vertical finality is multivalent. There need not be just one end beyond a given proper proportion. Indeed, the lower a being is in a hierarchic scale, the more numerous are the higher ends beyond its proper reach.

Vertical finality is obscure. When it has been realized in full, it can be known. When it is in process, what has been attained can be known, but what has not, remains obscure. When the process has not yet begun, obscurity prevails and questions abound. Is it somehow intimated? Is the intimation fleeting? Does it touch our deepest aspirations? Might it awaken such striving and groaning as would announce a new and higher birth?

Vertical finality to God himself is not merely obscure but shrouded in mystery. In this life we can know God, not as he is in himself, but only by deficient analogy. God himself remains mystery. Since potency is known by its act, relation by its term, it follows that vertical finality to God himself can be known only in the measure that God is known, that it can be revealed only in the measure that God himself has been revealed, that it can be intimated perhaps but hardly in a manner that is unambiguous since vertical finality is multivalent and obscure, and intimations are not apt to make clear which of many possibilities lies in store.

Vertical finality enters into evolutionary perspective. It does so inasmuch as emergence, unfolding, development, maturity follow the analogy of evolutionary process. Such process is to be understood in accord with emergent probabilities and under divine planning and action. By the analogy of that process is meant, not some basis for *a priori* prediction, but only a basis for *a posteriori* interpretation. Here as elsewhere, things are known in so far as they are in act.

IV. THE HUMAN SUBJECT

In a celebrated passage Aristotle granted that his ideal of the theoretic life was too high for man and that, if one lived it, one would do so not as a man but as having something divine present within one. None the less he went on to urge us to dismiss those that would have us resign ourselves to our mortal lot. He pressed us to strive to the utmost to make ourselves immortal and to live out what was finest in us. For that finest, though slight in bulk, still surpassed by far all else in power and in value.⁴

It is not hard to discern in this passage an acknowledgement of vertical finality in its multivalence and in its obscurity. In its multivalence, for there is in man a finest; it surpasses all else in power and in

value; it is to be let go all the way. In its obscurity, for what is the divine in man, and what would be going all the way?

One has only to shift, however, from the corpus of Aristotelian writings to that of the Christian tradition, to recognize in Aristotle's position a sign of things to come. So Christian humanists have spoken of a *praeparatio evangelica* in the gentile world and, more bluntly, St Paul said to the Athenians: 'What you worship but do not know - that is what I now proclaim' (Acts 17.23).

If in the Greek patristic tradition *theoria* became the name of contemplative prayer, if medieval theologians derived from Aristotle's principles an argument that man naturally desired to know God by his essence, it still remains that Aristotle's thought offered rather stony ground for the objectification of the life of the spirit. For the priority accorded the object gave metaphysics a dominant role. Psychology had to think in terms of potencies, or faculties, that were not among the data of consciousness. Worse, since psychology envisaged plant as well as animal and human life, the relation of operation to object was conceived, not precisely as intentionality, but vaguely as causality.⁵ Further, the priority of objects entailed a priority of intellect over will, since will was conceived as rational appetite; and on the priority of intellect over will, there somehow followed a priority of speculative over practical intellect.

Intentionality analysis yields a contrasting picture of the subject. Along with the rest of modern science, it eschews dependence on metaphysics. For metaphysicians do not agree. A critically constructed metaphysics presupposes a theory of objectivity, an epistemology. An epistemology has to distinguish between knowing, as illustrated by any cognitional operation, and adult human knowing, which is constituted by a set of cognitional operations that satisfy a normative pattern. It follows that the single cognitional operation is neither a merely immanent psychological event nor yet a properly objective cognitional attainment. It has the intermediate status of an intentional act: as given, it refers to some other; but the precise nature and validity of that reference remains to be determined; and such determination is reached through the further intentional operations needed to complete the pattern constitutive of full objectivity. In a word, phenomenology brackets reality to study acts in their intentionality. In the very measure that it prescind from questions of objectivity, it all the more efficaciously prepares the way for a convincing epistemology.

Intentionality analysis, like the rest of modern science, begins from the given. Unlike the rest of modern science, which dilates upon electrons and viruses, it can remain with the given, with human intentional operations dynamically related in their self-assembling pattern.

In its broad lines this dynamism rests on operators that promote

activity from one level to the next. The operators are *a priori*, and they alone are *a priori*. Their content is ever an anticipation of the next level of operations and thereby is not to be found in the contents of the previous level.

Such operators are questions for intelligence: with respect to data they ask why, and what, and what for, and how, and how often. Such also are questions for reflection: with respect to the guesses, inventions, discoveries of human understanding they ask: Is that so? Are you sure? Such thirdly are questions for deliberation: they ask whether suggested courses of action are feasible, worth while, truly good or only apparently good.

Three types of operator yield four levels of operation. Each lower level is an instance of vertical finality, and that finality is already realized as the higher levels function. The lower level, accordingly, prepares for the higher and sublated by it.

We experience to have the materials for understanding; and understanding, so far from cramping experience, organizes it, enlarges its range, refines its content, and directs it to a higher goal. We understand and formulate to be able to judge, but judgment calls for ever fuller experience and better understanding; and that demand has us clarifying and expanding and applying our distinctions between astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy, history and legend, philosophy and myth, fact and fiction. We experience and understand and judge to become moral: to become moral practically, for our decisions affect things; to become moral interpersonally, for our decisions affect other persons; to become moral existentially, for by our decisions we constitute what we are to be.

Such vertical finality is another name for self-transcendence. By experience we attend to the other; by understanding we gradually construct our world; by judgment we discern its independence of ourselves; by deliberate and responsible freedom we move beyond merely self-regarding notions and make ourselves moral beings.

The disinterestedness of morality is fully compatible with the passionateness of being. For that passionateness has a dimension of its own: it underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, intelligently, rationally, morally conscious.

Its underpinning is the quasi-operator that presides over the transition from the neural to the psychic. It ushers into consciousness not only the demands of unconscious vitality but also the exigences of vertical finality. It obtrudes deficiency needs. In the self-actualizing subject⁶ it shapes the images that release insight; it recalls evidence that is being overlooked; it may embarrass wakefulness, as it disturbs sleep, with the spectre, the shock, the shame of misdeeds. As it channels into consciousness the feedback of our aberrations and our

unfulfilled strivings, so for the Jungians it manifests its archetypes through symbols to preside over the genesis of the ego and to guide the individuation process from the ego to the self.⁷

As it underpins, so too it accompanies the subject's conscious and intentional operations. There it is the mass and momentum of our lives, the colour and tone and power of feeling, that fleshes out and gives substance to what otherwise would be no more than a Shakespearian 'pale cast of thought'.

As it underpins and accompanies, so too it overarches conscious intentionality. There it is the topmost quasi-operator that by intersubjectivity prepares, by solidarity entices, by falling in love establishes us as members of community. Within each individual vertical finality heads for self-transcendence. In an aggregate of self-transcending individuals there is the significant coincidental manifold in which can emerge a new creation. Possibility yields to fact and fact bears witness to its originality and power in the fidelity that makes families, in the loyalty that makes peoples, in the faith that makes religions.

But here we meet the ambiguity of man's vertical finality. It is natural to man to love with the domestic love that unites parents with each other and with their children, with the civil love that can face death for the sake of one's fellow men, with the all-embracing love that loves God above all.⁸ But in fact man lives under the reign of sin, and his redemption lies not in what is possible to nature but in what is effected by the grace of Christ.

Before advancing to that high theme, let us remark that an intentionality analysis can provide an apt vehicle for the self-objectification of the human subject. Let us note too that the old questions of priority, of intellectualism and voluntarism and the like, are removed and in their stead comes what at once is simple and clear. Lower levels of operation are prior as presupposed by the higher, as preparing materials for them, as providing them with an underfooting and, in that sense, with foundations. But the higher have a priority of their own. They sublate the lower, preserving them indeed in their proper perfection and significance, but also using them, endowing them with a new and fuller and higher significance, and so promoting them to ends beyond their proper scope.

Further, when so understood, priorities lose their rigidities. One might accord metaphysical necessity to such adages as *ignoti nulla cupido* and *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*. But while they assert the priority of knowledge as one ascends from the lower to the higher, they tend to overlook the inverse priority by which the higher sublates the lower. It is in the latter fashion that orthopraxy has a value beyond orthodoxy. And surely the priority of the lower sets no rule that God must observe when he floods our inmost hearts with his love through

the Holy Spirit he has given us (Rom. 5.5).

V. MISSION OF THE SON AND GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

The divine secret, kept in silence for long ages but now disclosed (Rom. 16.25), has been conceived as the self-communication of divinity in love. It resides in the sending of the Son, in the gift of the Spirit, in the hope of being united with the Father. Our question has been how to apprehend this economy of grace and salvation in an evolutionary perspective and, more precisely, how it enters into the consciousness of man.

First, I think, there is an awareness of a need for redemption. Human progress is a fact. There is a wheel that, as it turns, moves forward. Situations give rise to insights; insights into new courses of action; new courses of action to changed situations; changed situations to still further insights, further action, further change in situations. But such progress is only a first approximation to fact, for it is marred and distorted by sin. There is the egoism of individuals, the securer egoism of groups, the over-confident short-sightedness of common sense. So the intelligence of progress is twisted into the objectification of irrational bias. Worse, to simple-minded sins of greed there is added the higher organization of sophistry. One must attend to the facts. One must deal with them as in fact they are and, as they are irrational, obviously the mere dictates of reason are never going to work. So rationalization enters the inner citadel. There is opened a gap between the essential freedom all men have and the effective freedom that in fact they exercise. Impotent in his situation and impotent in his soul, man needs and may seek redemption, deliverance, salvation. But when it comes, it comes as the charity that dissolves the hostility and the divisions of past injustice and present hatred; it comes as the hope that withstands psychological, economic, political, social, cultural determinisms; it comes with the faith that can liberate reason from the rationalizations that blinded it.⁹

Secondly, the new order (2 Cor. 5.17) comes in the visible mission of the Son. In him is presented: (1) the absolutely supernatural object, for he is God; (2) the object for us, for he is man; (3) for us as to be redeemed, for he dies to rise again. As visible, he is the sacrament of man's encounter with God. As dying and rising, he shows the way to the new creation. As himself God, already he is Emmanuel, God with us.

Thirdly, besides the visible mission of the Son there is the invisible mission of the Spirit. Besides *fides ex auditu*, there is *fides ex infusione*.¹⁰ The former mounts up the successive levels of experiencing, understanding, judging, deliberating. The latter descends from the gift

of God's love through religious conversion to moral, and through religious and moral to intellectual conversion.¹¹

These three are cumulative. Revulsion from the objective reign of sin and from the subject's own moral impotence heightens vertical finality. Without the visible mission of the Word, the gift of the Spirit is a being-in-love without a proper object; it remains simply an orientation to mystery that awaits its interpretation. Without the invisible mission of the Spirit, the Word enters into his own, but his own receive him not.

Such Christian origins are exemplary. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sent the disciples on a mission to continue to the end of time. As the Father and the Son sent the Spirit to the disciples, so they continue to bestow the Spirit on the ever oncoming members of Christ. So the self-communication of the Son and the Spirit proceeds through history by a communication that at once is cognitive, constitutive, and redemptive: it is cognitive, for it discloses in whom we are to believe; it is constitutive, for it crystallizes the inner gift of the love of God into overt Christian fellowship; it is redemptive, for it liberates human liberty from thralldom to sin, and it guides those it liberates to the kingdom of the Father.

Experience of grace, then, is as large as the Christian experience of life. It is experience of man's capacity for self-transcendence, of his unrestricted openness to the intelligible, the true, the good. It is experience of a twofold frustration of that capacity: the objective frustration of life in a world distorted by sin; the subjective frustration of one's incapacity to break with one's own evil ways. It is experience of a transformation one did not bring about but rather underwent, as divine providence let evil take its course and vertical finality be heightened, as it let one's circumstances shift, one's dispositions change, new encounters occur, and — so gently and quietly — one's heart be touched. It is the experience of a new community, in which faith and hope and charity dissolve rationalizations, break determinisms, and reconcile the estranged and the alienated, and there is reaped the harvest of the Spirit that is '... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control' (Gal. 5.22).

Notes

¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (London and Baltimore, 1966), V, pp. 157-192.

² On vertical finality see my papers 'Finality, Love and Marriage' and 'The Natural Desire to See God', *Collection, Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. F. E. Crowe (New York and London, 1967), pp. 16-53 and 84-95.

³ On statistical inquiry, B. Lonergan, *Insight* (London and New York, 1957), pp. 53 ff.; on emergent probability, *ibid.*, pp. 121 ff., 259 ff. On Aristotle and Aquinas on world order, B. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom, Operative Grace in*

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the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. J. Patout Burns (London and New York, 1971), ch. 4. One the origins of the notion of the supernatural, *ibid.*, pp. 13-19.

⁴ Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.*, X, 7, 1177b 26 and 32.

⁵ Aquinas, *In II de Anima*, lect. 6 #305 (Marietti).

⁶ On deficiency and growth motivation, Abraham Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being* (Princeton, 1962), ch. 3.

⁷ Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (Princeton, 1970) (original German edition: *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins* [Zürich, 1949]). Gerhard Adler, *The Living Symbol. A Case Study in the Process of Individuation*, Bollingen Series LXII (New York, 1961).

⁸ Aquinas holds that apart from corrupt nature man naturally loves God above all: *Sum. theol.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 3 c. and as 1m.

⁹ This paragraph summarizes what I wrote in *Insight*, pp. 214-242, 619-633, 688-703, 718-730.

¹⁰ *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 6, a. 1.

¹¹ B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London and New York, 1972), pp. 122, 243.

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