

# TRANSCENDENCE, TRUTH, AND FAITH: THE ASCENDING EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN ALL HUMAN INQUIRY

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**T**HERE IS A TRAGEDY and a paradox in bad faith, in an explicit confessional stance which is rooted in anxiety and is sustained through dishonesty, pretense, and false apologetics. It appears in the manifold tensions of self-deception or in the falseness between verbal belief and actual practice. Bad faith constitutes a contradiction at the heart of consciousness, because what is projected as piety or orthodoxy or religious experience is actually a fearful attempt to evade the psychological and social costs of reflection and freedom. Paradoxically, this attempt to escape human responsibilities in the name of religion undermines any chance of genuine faith, because it disengages personal commitment from the truth within life. Bad faith destroys the experiential basis of authentic faith.

The following pages discuss something of this experiential basis of authentic faith—not in all of its dimensions, but in one series or unity of experiences: the movement toward truth within human transcendence. The question this paper treats is whether this movement is a fundamental experience of God which the graced acceptance of Jesus Christ develops, supports, and specifies, whether without this prior and sustaining surrender to the truth within life any explicit confessional stance is inauthentic. In order to specify this question, it is necessary to locate it within the general contemporary concern with experience.

## LOCATION OF THE QUESTION

The revolutions which radically alter the career of philosophic inquiry occur at those historical periods when the search for wisdom perceives the need to shift the fundamental area from which it derives its problems, data, and principles. The revolution lies in the displacement of what one inspects.<sup>1</sup> Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, and even the Sophists could meet in profitable controversy—in an agreement about issues and in radical divergence about their resolutions—because their clashes located common problems in the “nature of the real.” A revolution can be subsequently charted when the Hellenistic world turned the fundamental area

<sup>1</sup> For the concept of intellectual revolution in mathematical, scientific, and philosophic development, cf. Immanuel Kant, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1963) 19 ff.

of concern from the encounter with things to the processes of intentionality and thought which made this encounter possible. The philosophic displacement in Hellenistic culture lay with the demand that any discussion of the nature of the real begin with a prior epistemological grounding. Its beginnings can be mapped from Theophrastus' reformulations of Aristotelian theoretic sciences in terms of the apperceptive powers: physics now studies the sensible; mathematics, the objects of reason; first philosophy, the desired.<sup>2</sup> The Platonic Academy evolved into those of Arcesilas and Carneades, and the possibilities of knowledge and of probability became the central issues. Epicurus attempted to ground the physics of Democritus by the prior criteriology of the canonic, arguing that the three criteria for certitude were sensible perceptions, passions, and preconceptions. Finally, the Stoics also gave a priority to the theory of criteria and of demonstration, because this first "makes the intellect secure."<sup>3</sup> Stoic physics merged the mind that was divine with the world that was physical into a single reality, and each natural event became a theophany of the innately thinking cosmos.

As epistemologies multiplied endlessly, philosophic reflection became weary of their contradictions and gradually shifted its focus again, this time from a convergence on epistemological problems to a concentration on those of language and action, *verba et facta*. Many of the contradictions among the Platonists, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics could be resolved through an analysis of their language; philosophic discussion must begin with a determination of terms and their meanings.<sup>4</sup> Neither Scipio Africanus the Younger nor Laelius believed that speculative science should be studied before a prior and fundamental attention is given to political life and social action.<sup>5</sup> The gradual growth of propositional calculus and material implication, the *De lingua Latina* of Varro, the dialogues of Cicero, and the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias bear witness to this second revolution in philosophic concentration, one which would handle metaphysical questions through analysis of language and the devices of rhetoric and would ground theoretical problems in the pressing demands of social collaboration. One might despair of speaking definitively about the fundamental structures of reality or about the problematic nature of mental entities, but one could know the significance of statements and the implication of action. Through language and action Roman philosophy dealt with human expression as that which was closest to human experience and most comprehensible by human reflection.

<sup>2</sup> Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1, 23-26.

<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *De finibus* 3, 2; 4, 2; 4, 6-8; *Tusculanae disputationes* 4, 3; 5, 11-12. For the Roman initiation of philosophic inquiry through linguistic concerns, cf. Michael J. Buckley, "Philosophic Method in Cicero," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8 (1970) 150-51.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, *De re publica* 1, 10; 1, 13; 1, 18-23.

These periodic revolutions—allowing for all the imperfections of broad brush strokes—can be found spelling one another off continually in the history of Western philosophy. Metaphysics gives way to epistemology as the fundamental science. Epistemology and cognitional theory in their turn are replaced by semantics and pragmatics. The circle is complete when these give way before revivals of metaphysics as a first philosophy. So Leibniz and Christian Wolff are overthrown in the Copernican revolution of Kant and surrender the field to the rich developments of German idealism. This reformation was itself attacked at the turn of the century by philosophers who found its language meaningless or its systems pretentiously out of contact with human experiences and the more immediate needs for social change. In the last hundred years epistemologies have once more been leveled by questions of meaning and action (“What *exactly* do you mean?”) which are exhibited in philosophies of language, praxis, and phenomenology.<sup>6</sup>

Theological reflection is profoundly affected by this reformulation of philosophic focus. “Just as the concrete reality of grace includes nature as an inner moment within itself, so also in our question . . . philosophy is an inner moment of theology.”<sup>7</sup> This is not simply true of theological reflection whose evidence is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The shift in philosophic focus necessarily entails a co-ordinate alteration in any discussion of divine reality. In a more metaphysical period God is reached as the ultimate principle of the generation of the universe and the final explanation of its perdurance. As philosophic issues obtain an epistemological emphasis, God becomes an assumption necessary for the moral life or an underlying dynamic which realizes itself in all mental activity and human history. In a third period, one of semantics and pragmatics, theological reflection is directed not so much to a cause of being or to a postulate of ethics and intentionality as to the meaningfulness of religious discourse, the divine relationship with personal and societal creativity, and to the phenomenology of religious experience. The “God question” is evoked not so much by the universe or by the prerequisites for a sense of duty as by the unavoidable nature of certain human experiences or by the interpersonal and societal responsibilities which necessitate (or obviate) religious language and faith commitments. Human experience, whether caught in language or embodied in action, is the fundamental object of contemporary theological discourse.

The simplicity of this formula, however, obscures the vast pluralism of realizations. Current theological reflection locates religious experience—either the presence or the absence of God—in quite different “places.”

<sup>6</sup> The above analysis of recurrent philosophic revolutions is derivative from Richard P. McKeon, *Freedom and History* (New York: Noonday, 1952) 7–14.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Rahner, “Philosophy and Theology,” *Theological Investigations* 6 (New York: Seabury, 1974) 72.

Carl Jung and those religious thinkers influenced by his thought place the divine as the God-archetype, an archetype of wholeness, in the underlying collective unconsciousness and find it rising symbolically into awareness with a dynamic ability to collect all other factors of human consciousness around it.<sup>8</sup> Contrasting sharply with this, though not necessarily in contradiction, Louis Dupré in a recent remarkable study advances the evidence of mystical experience to assert that the divine is that which transcends the human and draws it beyond ordinary consciousness, underlining the claim of Ruysbroeck that "this revelation of the Father, in fact, raises the soul above reason, to an imageless nakedness."<sup>9</sup> Religious experience lies not so much with an underlying archetype as with a superessential destiny. "Thus the ultimate message of the mystic about the nature of selfhood is that the self is *essentially* more than a mere self, that transcendence belongs to its nature as much as the act through which it is immanent to itself."<sup>10</sup> Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy, following a path laid by Karl Jaspers' *Grenzsituationen*, argue to the justification and possible validity of religious discourse from human limit-situations in which ultimacy is experienced, at least as a question, and for which only religious discourse is appropriate thematization—such experiences as deep joy in existence or an anxiety before the Void which contains an infinite threat to meaning and value. In these experiences "there is a dim, but present awareness of what is actually ultimate, unconditioned, and sacred, quite beyond the level of finitude in ourselves and around us."<sup>11</sup> Jung, Dupré, Gilkey, and Tracy represent modes of discovery of the divine within and through the human but at vastly different "levels" of human experience, even though the differentiations be those of complementarity rather than of contradiction. It is often difficult for the proponents of one of these modes to grasp the seriousness of the other. Edward C. Whitmont, for example, protests against the critics of Jung that "this does not reduce God to 'nothing but an archetype.'"<sup>12</sup> Peter Berger indicates his own agreement with the previous work of Dupré while launching a harshly unsympathetic attack on Gilkey and Tracy for failure to perceive that religious symbols "also adumbrate the limits of *another* world impinging on this one."<sup>13</sup> Berger seems not to grasp the problematic situation which engages their reflection, and he

<sup>8</sup> Carl Jung, "Answer to Job," in *Psychology and Religion: West and East. Collected Works* 9 (Princeton: Princeton University, 1973) 468–69.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood* (New York: Seabury, 1976) 95.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>11</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 85.

<sup>12</sup> Edward C. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 85.

<sup>13</sup> Peter L. Berger, "Secular Theology and the Supernatural," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 38 (1977) 53.

elevates their dialectical beginnings with contemporary secularity to an ontological commitment which would dismiss the very disclosures of God which they have been at pains to describe. Actually, within the pluralism of contemporary theology, each of these phenomenologies of experience has made its own contribution to the comprehensive appropriation of religious experience and has raised prospects of enormous promise.

Can there still be another "level of experience," one which neither entitatively underlies or mystically transcends ordinary human consciousness nor existentially evokes the divine question from human awareness at moments of poignant sensibility? Can it be asserted that the experience of the Transcendent, of God, is also an abiding involvement of the most ordinary human activity, pervasively present and borne nonthematically upon consciousness in all that human beings do? Must the circuit of everyday consciousness be "closed"?<sup>14</sup> This is a critical issue, and it constitutes the question of this paper.

This study proposes to examine the process of inquiry as an example of such routine activity and to argue that there are three distinct and ascending moments of the experience of God in any serious search for knowledge. It does not maintain that inquiry is the "highest" human activity or that these three moments exhaust the presence of God in the process that is examined, or (even less) that these moments are often religiously thematized. It does maintain, however, that one can establish and distinguish three stages in the very ordinary process of human inquiry in which the immanence of the transcendent God can be found. Finally, it is the contention of this paper that these three moments constitute an ascending and cumulative experience of commitment which must underlie any confessional faith-commitment if it is to be authentic, if faith is not to be based on bad faith.

By way of overview, it might be helpful to summarize the content of what these pages will later develop.

1) *The process of inquiry itself as a movement of continuous transcendence.* In the dynamic contained in any serious investigation, there is a fundamental orientation toward that which is qualitatively different from any single thing of our experience—an orientation toward that which is endlessly the content of explanation, beyond which the movement of the mind cannot pass and which the inquisitive powers of the mind cannot in any way comprehend or exhaust.

God is present here as this asymptotic horizon or as the never comprehended "lure of transcendence," as the complete intelligibility which gives "context" to everything else encountered and understood but is endlessly other. God is the direction toward which human transcendence moves.

<sup>14</sup> Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood* vii.

2) *The claim of truth to be acknowledged.* When a person begins to recognize the truth of any particular situation, he or she experiences the absolute claim that truth makes upon a human being for full acknowledgment. (By "absolute" I mean that the truth makes this claim simply by being what it is, independent of any other considerations.) One is obliged or is called to acknowledge the truth, at least to oneself, simply because it is the truth. In this, one experiences the fundamental responsibility of the human person to the truth in a claim that is pervasively present in any inquiry undertaken.

God is present here in this absolute and endless claim of truth upon the human conscience. This claim is the offer of grace, i.e., it presents the possibility that one will unconditionally and absolutely accept truth as that which will govern one's life. God is present as that possibility which waits upon the free decision of the human person.

3) *The acknowledgment of truth through assent.* When I acknowledge freely the truth whose claim upon me I have felt, and acknowledge it simply because it is the truth, I have consented to a radical priority which gives definition to my life. I have given truth an absolute obedience and fidelity irrespective of its difficulties and of my own weakness, an obedience and fidelity which nothing else rivals.

God is present here as the realization of grace, and the actualization of the nearness of His incomprehensible mystery which a person takes for the meaning and the government of his or her life in a total way and which is realized categorically in one's relationship with each concrete thing. It is a commitment which dominates all one's relationships and yet is identical with none of them.

The first part of this study will examine the dynamic of the human spirit toward the Transcendent (stage 1), while the second part will take up the experience of both the claim and the acknowledgment of truth (stages 2 and 3). The contrast can be put more sharply: the first part deals with the movement of the human person toward the absolute; the second part, with the movement of the absolute in upon the human person.

#### THE MOVEMENT TOWARD TRANSCENDENCE

##### *Transcendence in Theoretic Science*

When Albert Einstein described the processes of ordinary knowledge or the procedures of theoretic science, he did so as a movement toward a higher unity, toward a basic concept or a theoretical structure which would co-ordinate "the chaotic diversity of our sense-experience" and give it rationality and sense. "The scientific way of forming concepts differs from that which we use in our daily life, not basically, but merely in the more precise definition of concepts and conclusions; more pains-

taking and systematic choice of experimental material; and a greater logical economy."<sup>15</sup> In both ordinary knowledge and in theoretical physics the process of inquiry moves toward subsuming the individual subjects or the particular instances under concepts and formulations that give them sense and co-ordination.

The history of modern astrophysics, for example, finds its beginnings in the labored and particularized registration of astral phenomena over twenty years by Tycho Brahe. This enormous amount of data was subsumed by Kepler into the brilliant simplicity of the three laws of planetary motion. Within the century these three descriptions of elliptical movement would be subsumed as the diverse realization of the single concept of universal gravitation. In other words, in each of these stages the intelligibility or understanding of the subject matter was obtained by going beyond ("transcending") the particularity of the things or facts which were to be understood. The painstaking and individual observations were understood in the general mathematical structures of conic sections which unified them all. These mathematical structures, of elliptical paths and of angular surface velocity and of the relation between orbital periods and solar distances, were in their turn transcended or subsumed under a more general law by which all material bodies attract each other with a force directly proportional to their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. In each of these stages of celestial mechanics, knowledge of the particulars came about by moving beyond the subject which posed the immediate problematic situation (i.e., by transcending it) through a conceptual structure, a meaning in which the brute fact was subsumed and understood in a new context.

But the history of the development of mechanics was not simply from the particulars to the general. The generality of the very abstract mathematical formula can itself be transcended; one can move beyond it to additional instances in which the general law is realized. In other words, one can move not only from subject to predicate, but from predicate to subject. One can move beyond general possibility to concrete actuality or realization. So it was that the general laws which were elaborated for celestial mechanics would be progressively applied—in what Mach called "the extended application of mechanics and the deductive development of the science"—to hydrodynamics, elasticity, thermodynamics, optics, magnetism, and electricity.<sup>16</sup> And it was here that the process began

<sup>15</sup> "The Fundamentals of Theoretical Physics," first published in *Science* (Washington, D.C.) May 24, 1940; republished in *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950) 95.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics: A Critical and Historical Account of its Development*, tr. from 9th German ed. (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1969) 342.

again. In Faraday's attempt to subsume electromagnetic phenomena under Newtonian mechanics, new descriptions were elaborated of fields of force distributed through space which would find their precise mathematical formulation in the differential equations of Maxwell and their general conceptual structure in the theory of special relativity.<sup>17</sup> So in the development of physics the movement of knowledge has been either to go beyond the particularity of individual data and measurements to a more general conceptual scheme in which these are co-ordinated and illumined, or to go beyond the potentiality of a theoretical structure—say, Riemannian geometry—to the particular and actual instances in which it is realized and, consequently, of which it can be predicated. In either case, knowledge is advanced or meaning realized in the experience of transcendence.

### *Transcendence in Ordinary Knowledge*

But this is true, as Einstein noted, in ordinary experience as well—either in new meanings which we achieve and invent, or in new referents in which these are demonstrated or realized. In daily experience we learn what things are by a complicated process of recognition and induction. We formulate concepts or structures of meaning which we apply to everything in our experience, and everything in our experience ministers to this process. In her study of Merleau-Ponty, Marjorie Grene cites the example of seeing: "Seeing is not intellection; it is not the thought of seeing, Merleau-Ponty keeps insisting; yet neither is it a dumb show. It is the coming into being of meanings, of beings with meaning, at the pre-conceptual, pre-thetic level which has to support all conceptualization."<sup>18</sup>

What I am typing on, for example, I have learned to call a desk; another larger object in my office is also a desk; what my students use during

<sup>17</sup> Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* 98–101: "The theory of relativity arose out of efforts to improve, with reference to logical economy, the foundation of physics as it existed at the turn of the century. The so-called special or restricted relativity theory is based on the fact that Maxwell's equations (and thus the law of propagation of light in empty space) are converted into equations of the same form, when they undergo Lorentz transformation. This formal property of the Maxwell equations is supplemented by our fairly secure empirical knowledge that the laws of physics are the same with respect to all inertial systems. This leads to the result that the Lorentz transformation—applied to space and time coordinates—must govern the transition from one inertial system to another. The content of the restricted relativity theory can accordingly be summarized in one sentence: all natural laws must be so conditioned that they are covariant with respect to Lorentz transformations." Obviously this description of scientific inquiry as a movement towards a more comprehensive unity, or what Einstein calls here "logical economy," does not touch the further question of the reality of the objects dealt with by the structure.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Grene, "Merleau-Ponty and the Renewal of Ontology," *Review of Metaphysics* 29 (1976) 618.



classes are also called desks; this vastly different fourth is a desk. We go beyond each desk by the formation of the meaning "desk." This meaning is initially clumsy, vague, is only gradually made more precise—a concept which applies to many more individual things than to this single desk. Yet, paradoxically, it is this "going beyond" which allows us to know what this single thing is: we know what it is by going beyond it, either in terms of the description of its behavior or the definition by its make-up and purposes. We relate this meaning to an indefinite number of objects, some of which I have seen and touched, some of which I will never experience, some of which may never exist.

This "going beyond," it should be clear by now, is what I mean by the word "transcend": we transcend any individual object in the formulation of a concept which is common to it and to others. We transcend anything when we know it; we transcend anything in order to know it. We subsume it into a new context.

From this single meaning "desk" we can go on to chairs, papers, typewriters, and begin to consider them all as things that human beings have made, as "artificial things." The concept "artificial things" goes beyond any of them in particular—as particular things and as particular concepts which differ so profoundly among themselves—to something that is more general and that unites as it transcends each of these particular meanings. Meaning, as Michael Polanyi has indicated, is a matter of total context. Meaning is a focal whole which integrates subsidiarily intended particulars, whether that unity comes out of a general formal structure or out of a single influence which explains a multiplicity of data. Whether as predicate or as causal factor, the focal whole brings a context which "makes sense" of variance and plurality. The central, as well as the most ordinary, act of human knowing is the awareness or the formulation of these meaning-units in which the most divergent particulars can be co-ordinated and grasped in a unity.<sup>19</sup>

Or one can go in the opposite direction, moving beyond abstract and general concepts to their application and realization in vastly different cases. One can go beyond the "artificial things" in its abstractness, which one has gathered or induced from desks and chairs, paper and typewriter, and see it realized in painting, poems, opera, and the novel, and from this realization construct an entirely different form of literary criticism. This is to transcend the abstract and potential by a movement toward the actual, as one can transcend the concrete individual by an elaboration or

<sup>19</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962) 57–58, 63–65. Cf. also Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975). In his review of this latter work, Robert E. Innis characterizes this as "Polanyi's principal contribution to philosophy" (*Journal of Religion* 57 [1977] 421).

a recognition of universal structures of meaning. In other words, one can move from the abstract toward the individual as the transcending of abstraction and potentiality, just as one can move beyond the individual to different levels of meaning and predication.

*Beyond the Finite*

My question is: Why does the mind move in this constantly transcending fashion? Why must it always "move beyond"? It is simply a fact that nothing, neither abstract formulae nor concrete data, either exhausts its progress or arrests its inquiry. On the contrary, each of them makes this transcendence imperative. The concept's limitation to abstraction and potentiality points to the possibility of its realization in the concrete, and any datum of experience raises the question of its behavior, its definition, and the causal factors which have brought about its condition. It is the limitation of each which allows and even pushes the mind to go on, to go beyond, to transcend it, and through that transcendence to know and explain it.

This limitation is not just the quantitative limitation of time and space, but the qualitative limitation that each of these does not explain itself. Each of these is understood, explained, grasped in terms of what is other than itself: either the description of its behavior, the internal factors which account for its make-up, the generic horizon against which it is placed, the causal influences which have constituted it or affected its behavior; or what is its concrete meaning in human experience, what is its relevance, its realization and instantiation. For the predicate is always "more" than the subject, and the subject is always richer and more complex than any of its single predicates. Neither of these is perfectly clear in terms of itself, so that its opaqueness drives the inquiry on. The mind that is looking for understanding not only can go on, it must go on. It must transcend. The limitations of whatever is the object of problematic investigation make this transcendence imperative.

This is a critically important point to underline: it is the nonbeing that lies at the heart, and constitutes the essential limitation, of anything we encounter or understand, that makes the mind move on. It is the finiteness of the finite, i.e., it is what the "thing" or the "concept" is not, that makes the inquiry go beyond. The movement is away from the nonbeing (that is essential to this finite reality) toward something that is more—either the inclusive "more" of a meaning-unit which will contextualize the most diverse objects of our experience, or the inclusive "more" of the actual concrete reality which is both above and beyond the potentiality of a conceptual structure and which unites in its concrete actuality many diverse predicates. And yet each of these, formula and concrete object, has its own limitations which point to its own need to be

transcended in order to be understood. The experience of this limitation is "wonder," and it lies at the basis of all inquiry.

For what is it about anything which makes it questionable? What is it about any datum of experience or formal structure which makes us raise the question, what, or how, or why? Wonder is a double experience: the mind is not satisfied with what it has—it experiences limitation; at the same time it intuits that more intelligibility, more understanding, and more explanation of what is before it, is not only possible but demanded for its satisfaction.

### *Toward the Infinite*

This opens up the question of direction. The line indicated by the vector of the mind is consistently and necessarily beyond anything finite. In fact, it is this limitation of what we encounter and understand that makes this "going beyond" a rational imperative. Once the limitation of any context, however inclusive, has been grasped, the mind must move beyond in order to understand this context, which was itself the source of explanation of what had gone before. But what is the direction toward which this transcendence radically and always moves? If the mind must move beyond the limited, what is it moving toward—even if it is towards an asymptotic limit which is never reached, but which is always "intended"?

The mind must be moving toward that which is not finite, that which is qualitatively other than what makes this movement an internal necessity. The "toward which" is other than the "beyond which." For the limited is always being transcended, always being understood through being transcended. The movement is toward complete understanding, toward that which constitutes a context both for its own rationality and for the understanding of that which has driven the mind on. One may well deny that complete understanding of so qualitatively infinite a context will ever be accessible to human beings; but it is hard to see how one could deny that it is the direction toward which the mind is moving. Wonder and inquiry are awakened by the experience that the direction of the mind in its transcendence is beyond the limitations of the finite.

For the encounter with the finite itself is the experience of the mind's movement toward a reality which is other. In fact, the very experience of the blockage, or of the limitation, of the finite precisely as finite is given only in the drive to go beyond it—sometimes experienced as question, sometimes as anxiety, sometimes as frustration. In all of these situations one recognizes that this content does not satisfy. Satisfy what? Satisfy the mind's drive for complete understanding. One encounters here, precisely in the experience of limitation, a horizon of consciousness (toward which the mind is moving) which is other than every direct object of its

experience. For what is encountered in anything which is questionable is something whose dependencies upon other factors indicate its profound and essential relativity, possessing its meaning and its explanation by reference to something else. This is basically Hegel's assertion against Kant: "A very little consideration might show that to call a thing finite or limited proves by implication the very presence of the infinite and the unlimited, and our knowledge of a limit can only be when the unlimited is on this side of consciousness."<sup>20</sup>

What the mind is "toward" is the infinite. If the direction of the mind is toward that which is other than the limited rationality of data and formulae, and if this movement is made imperative by the very limitations of the limited, then the only reality that can be its direction or the "object" of its "intention" is the infinite. What cannot be transcended is the infinite/endless—not the concept of the endless, which is as finite as any other concept, but the reality of the infinite/endless. The infinite makes transcendence a possibility. It is a condition for the possibility of inquiry.

This "endless" which is the condition and "intention" of what Merleau-Ponty called "the volubility of the mind" is not the indefinite extension of material things or the indeterminate application to an ever-widening multiplicity of the concept.<sup>21</sup> Human transcendence is not toward "more of the same." For it is this "same" which demands further transcendence to be understood. It is toward that which is other than this "same," and which gives this "same" its context and rationality. It is toward the endlessness, which is both real and rational, of that which is present to human awareness as an asymptotic horizon, one never realized, one hauntingly present as the "toward" in every act of inquiry and knowledge and one which keeps drawing the inquiring mind on—what Rahner refers to as the *Woraufhin der Transzendenz*.<sup>22</sup> Einstein found the uncovering of this presence the major contribution which the scientist makes to religion:

By way of understanding, he achieves a far-reaching emancipation from the shackles of personal hopes and desires, and thereby attains the humble attitude of mind towards the *grandeur of reason, incarnate in existence, and which, in its profoundest depth, is inaccessible to man*. This attitude, however, appears to me to be religious, in the highest sense of the word. And so it seems to me that

<sup>20</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, as in *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, no 60 (tr. and ed. William Wallace; Oxford. Clarendon, 1904) 117

<sup>21</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1968) 151, as cited in Grene, "Merleau-Ponty" 622.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* (Freiburg Herder, 1977) 61-76 This entire study stands deeply and obviously in debt to the work and thought of Rahner.

science not only purifies the religious impulse of the dross of its anthropomorphism but also contributes to a religious spiritualization of our understanding of life.<sup>23</sup>

### *Reality of the Infinite*

It is toward this that the passion of the mind moves, that which gives the constant dynamic of transcendence its direction and energy. For the movement of the human spirit is not a movement of despair, the eternal myth of Sisyphus; it is energized with the confidence that things can be made intelligible—even further, by a faith in a final rationality toward which the finiteness of things points—as each of them and their sum point beyond themselves toward their final and definitive context and meaning.

Herein lies the ground for the conviction that the infinite which lies asymptotically as the horizon of all inquiry, no matter how extended, is neither the nothingness of Heidegger nor the empty transcendence of Bloch. The drive of the mind is toward the real. The drive of the intellectual search is for more inclusive contexts in which the real, either understood or simply encountered, exists. Even the drive for meaning is not for abstract formulae which bear no relationship to existence, whether possible or actual, but toward those which provide an understanding of and a context for everything affirmed as real. Human inquiry takes place within a primordial grasp of the real and is an effort to deepen and expand that grasp. The real is found—or, rather, speaks to me—right from the beginnings of rationality.

Thus, to affirm anything finite as real and as intelligible is to affirm implicitly the reality of its most inclusive context. Inquiry takes place within that double affirmation, moving from the initial subject matter to discover the context which constitutes the condition of its possibility, its fundamental explanation. The movement of inquiry is the progressive movement toward that horizon which has already been implicitly affirmed as real and as the source of understanding.

For Ricoeur, this is the tension which constitutes the “geological fault” within the human person. I am at once infinite in my striving for knowledge and finite in my perspective.<sup>24</sup>

This direction, this *Woraufhin*, is radically different from anything we have ever encountered or understood. It always lies as the limitless horizon of whatever we have grasped. What we touch, what we under-

<sup>23</sup> Albert Einstein, “Science and Religion,” first published in *Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium* (published by the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, Inc., New York, 1941); republished in *Out of My Later Years* (n. 15 above) 33 (italics added).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man* (Chicago: Regnery, 1965).

stand, that meaning by which we understand conceptually, is always limited. The attempt to focus upon it directly (as we are doing in these paragraphs) is only, in point of fact, to elaborate a concept whose reality is finite and which itself points to that which it is not and which it is attempting to present to awareness.

This direction, toward which all knowing points and which it never realizes, has figured differently in different philosophers in the history of Western thought. Kant called it the proper use of the term "absolute": "that which is valid in all respects, *without limitation*."<sup>25</sup> Aquinas spoke of formal infinity, which he defined as that complete actuality which in no way was contextualized by another: "Esse Dei est per se subsistens *non receptum in aliquo*, prout dicitur infinitum."<sup>26</sup> However one names it and however one defends or counters its reality, not even Kant denied its presence to consciousness, though he failed to give adequate weight to the drive of human knowledge to understand things as they are, to its inability to rest content with appearances, to its abiding intending of the real. The whole dynamism of the mind is toward the real.

### *Experience of Mystery*

As the Absolute or as the Infinite, the endlessly intelligible or infinitely rational becomes paradoxically incomprehensible. Not that "it" cannot in any way be object of awareness or discussion, but because it cannot be even rudimentarily comprehended. It is never directly encountered or understood. It is "intended" in every movement of inquiry; it is adequately conceptualized by none of them. It can endlessly be the "object" of human investigation and desire, is endlessly intelligible; but all that we establish only indicates how profoundly incomprehensible it is. This is why we call it mystery—not opaqueness but inexhaustible intelligibility. Human inquiry is always toward and within mystery.

A distinction of Bonaventure is useful here: *apprehendere* vs. *comprehendere*.<sup>27</sup> To "apprehend" is to grasp something of reality—but only to touch on it, not to encircle it, not to grasp it definitionally. To "comprehend" is to encircle, to grasp something in description and definition. I can apprehend the mystery within which I live and toward which my every conscious act moves; I can comprehend that there is this mystery and that the dynamic of my mind and of its inquiries is oriented toward

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 381 (London: Macmillan, 1963) 317 (italics added).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, 7, 1, ad 3 (italics added).

<sup>27</sup> *In 1 Sent.* 3, 1, 1, ad 1: "Dicendum quod est cognitio per comprehensionem et apprehensionem: cognitio per apprehensionem consistit in manifestatione veritatis rei cognitae; cognitio vero comprehensionis, in inclusione totalitatis. Ad primam cognitionem requiritur proportio convenientiae . . . quantum ad cognitionem comprehensionis requiritur proportio aequalitatis et aequiparantiae."

it. I cannot comprehend the mystery within which I think. It is infinitely—literally—beyond my powers.

What should we call this absolute mystery present to consciousness as the asymptotic horizon of its transcendence, if not God? Supremely above everything we encounter and understand, yet present in this haunting manner in everything encountered and understood. Infinite and dependent upon nothing, endlessly drawing us through what we directly experience, contextualizing every context.

Can one call this the “experience of God”? Not in the sense that we experience anything within our world, not as something thematically present to sensibility and consciousness. What we experience is our transcendence. Within this experience we experience the direction of the transcendence. It is as direction, outside of the horizon of attended consciousness, that the mystery lies. If one can experience the direction of tendency or of “intention,” then one can speak of God as experienced in any act of knowledge. With anything known, the orientation of transcendence is initiated and established, “the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated.”<sup>28</sup> It is almost imperceptibly present, always on the outside of that which is thematically considered, always other, yet always somehow present.

#### THE CLAIM OF TRUTH

##### *Experience*

The experience I want to describe has six dimensions. The first dimension is *movement*. A person can and often does have the experience—either in a personal inquiry or in a serious discussion—of moving toward the truth of a particular situation, toward what is really the case. This is a process of dawning awareness of what the matter actually is or what the answer to my question is or what the truth in this argument is. (“Truth” simply means the reality that is here as it makes its appeal to or engages my awareness. I am not identifying the meaning or “reality” and “truth,” though I want to connect them very interchangeably. “Truth” adds above and beyond “the real” a relationship to awareness or to knowledge or to perception and judgment. By “truth” I mean the actuality or state of being the case, precisely as it illumines recognition.)

The second dimension is *recognition*. As this movement toward truth develops, there will often be an antecedent recognition (*erkennen*) where the movement of my thought is leading me. The evidence, the argument, the lines of the discussion and evidence, all begin to converge toward one

<sup>28</sup> I have transposed to my own usage these superb phrases of Merleau-Ponty; cf. Grene (n. 21 above).

focus or one conclusion. Whether by intuition or by guess, one can recognize what the truth of a particular situation is, long before one may have faced it or acknowledged (*anerkennen*) it. Or one can recognize where these lines of thought may eventually lead with mounting probability as a more probable hypothesis.<sup>29</sup>

The third dimension is *freedom*. Within this general experience of movement and dawning recognition, there is a further dimension of my awareness: I can block the developing recognition; I can prevent its acknowledgment. This possibility and its acceptance are all very hidden and unarticulated, but I know that I can inhibit the progression of the thought, that I can distract myself in a thousand ways or distract the person with whom I am arguing, that I can refuse subtly to continue, that I can turn to humor or anger. In so many ways I can lie to myself, either because I recognize the truth and do not want to acknowledge it or because I recognize what the truth might be and do not want to face it.

Freedom is experienced in three different and distinct moments of this choice: either antecedently, as the choice to allow the inquiry to move forward honestly to its conclusions; or concomitantly, in the recognition that one is doing this to the best of one's abilities or not; or subsequently, in the recognition that one could have done otherwise as the lines of the argument now begin to converge. In all three of these moments freedom is experienced both as the liberty to continue or not to continue the inquiry and the freedom (far more profound) to face up to the truth once recognized with acknowledgment or to block it in some way.

The freedom we are speaking of lodges between recognition and acknowledgment.

The fourth dimension is *absolute claim*. There is the concomitant recognition that it is wrong to block this acknowledgment of the truth of a situation, either by lying to oneself or by refusing to allow the evidence to emerge into consciousness. The truth of the situation makes a claim upon me to be acknowledged; and it makes this claim simply because it is what it is.

This is what I would call an "absolute claim," and I find it every time I begin to recognize the truth in a situation. I find that the recognized-but-unacknowledged truth of a situation (in some way, however mysterious) demands to be acknowledged or faced with frank awareness. And it makes this demand not in virtue of some external command, whether divine or human, but simply in virtue of itself, simply because it is the truth. So accurate is the term "absolute" for this claim that there is no claim which could deserve it more.

<sup>29</sup> I should like to acknowledge here my indebtedness to Dr. Rainer Carls, S.J., of the University of Uppsala, for many conversations and suggestions on this matter over the spring of 1977.



If, for example, I were to find a conflict between the commands of the Church and the claim of a dawning recognition of the truth in a situation, I would be obliged to follow the truth which I have begun to recognize, and I would immediately experience any attempt to distract me from this acknowledgment of truth as radically wrong. What is said here of the Church could be said of any confessional commitment. We have here a claim which takes an experienced priority over any other claim upon our consciousness.

If, *per impossible*, I were to find a conflict between the movement of grace or the commands of Christ or a precept of God and the claim of truth to be acknowledged, I would be obliged to follow the awakening truth. So we have an experienced claim which either identifies with the claim of God upon us or is greater than God's claim upon us, which is impossible.

The fifth dimension is *variation and difference*. My experience is that there are things which exercise a greater claim to recognition and acknowledgment than others, that when I lie to myself about them I have done something far more significantly wrong than when I do the same thing about trivial matters. This is to experience that some things seem obviously more important to me, and that, according to their importance, to refuse them their claim upon me for recognition and acknowledgment leaves me with a more profound sense of dishonesty than to refuse others which are of minor importance. I find, in short, that the claim of truth upon me, though always absolute, varies in importance in proportion to the importance of the truth to be acknowledged.

The sixth dimension of the experience I am describing is that it is *absolute and omnipresent*. In a general orientation to the truth, there is an experience that is steady and without variation. Each situation in some way instantiates or embodies this general claim of truth upon me, but none can simply be identified with it. In the general claim of truth upon me, I find a claim that is so absolute and so determinant of what I do, both for its structure and for its worth, that I discover it in every aspect of my life and mirrored in every situation without limit. For the claim that is laid upon me is not confined to this or that situation. It is the universal claim of reality, of what there is, for my recognition and acknowledgment. This claim of truth for acknowledgment can be experienced and decided about in this or that situation, but it identifies with no single situation nor with the finite sum of them.

In every situation, therefore, one can find within one's experience two interpenetrating but distinct factors: (1) the truth which is simply identified with this situation: the answer or this thing or this conclusion, to be acknowledged simply because it is the truth here; (2) the truth toward which one is totally and endlessly ordered, which permeates this situation

and every situation but is in no sense identified with it. It does not vary as each situation varies and it is not limited as each situation is limited. Its claim is absolute, steady, pervasive, and endless, infinite both in time and space, infinite in that there is nothing more perfect. This orientation (*Woraufhin*) gives direction to my life in proportion as I experience my life as morally right, and each situation takes on its importance as it points to this endless truth to which I am oriented and with which it does not identify.

To clarify this distinction, I shall refer to the truth that is coincident with any particular situation as "truth" and the truth to which I am absolutely and pervasively ordered as "Truth." By this distinction, however, I do not want to prejudice the issue, but it is the case that in each situation I face I encounter (1) the situation itself, as it really is, what is the truth about it, what is the correlative with its unique reality; (2) a general orientation toward the Truth, toward whatever and all that is real, no matter in what situation this may be mirrored and embodied. This general orientation toward the Truth is always present, at least nonthematically, when I face up to the truth in any particular situation. In fact, the truth in any particular situation catches up ("participates in") a general orientation to Truth itself, i.e., any particular item of reality points to and particularizes reality itself. The choice I make in freedom contains both of these: a decision about the individual, a decision about the general orientation to the Truth.

How does truth differ from Truth? In both, the absolute claim upon me is engaged, but Truth is omnipresent in its claim, both in extension to all that I encounter and in the fulness or completeness with which it makes this claim. Each truth participates in Truth and shares in its absolute claim upon me. The Truth encompasses all the truths I know, without being either exhausted by them or identified with them. The truth of any particular situation shares in the absolute claim of Truth itself. In Kant's definition of Absolute, "It is valid in all respects, without limitation."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. This doctrine of the single Truth according to which each truth of a situation or of a thing takes its power is co-ordinate with Aquinas' doctrine: "Veritas per prius est in intellectu, et per posterius in rebus, secundum quod ordinatur ad intellectum divinum. . . . Si vero loquamur de veritate secundum quod est in rebus: sic omnes sunt verae una prima veritate, cui unumquodque assimilatur secundum suam entitatem. Et sic, licet plures sint essentiae vel formae rerum, tamen una est veritas divini intellectus, secundum quam omnes res denominantur verae" (*Summa theologiae* 1, 16, 6). This understanding of truth may well lie behind Aquinas' emphatic assertion: "Omnia cognoscentia cognoscunt implicate Deum in quolibet cognito. Sic enim nihil habet rationem appetibilis nisi per similitudinem primae bonitatis, ita nihil est cognoscibile nisi per similitudinem primae veritatis" (*De veritate* 22, 2, ad 1).

*Reflection*

So I ask myself: What is this Truth which catches up in some way each thing in my life without identifying simply with any or all of them, which dominates (or should dominate) my life so totally that nothing else should be admitted but what is governed by it, whose claim upon me is so absolute and so endless and so complete that my attitudes toward Truth could well be described as obedience and fidelity—an obedience and fidelity pervasive and absolute, i.e., made simply because of what it is, and everywhere valid? Here I ask three crucial questions.

1) Is Truth a conceptual or imaginative projection, an *ens rationis*, a “misplaced concretion”? That simply is not my experience. I find myself ordered to the real, toward whatever is real and not toward a concept of the real. On the contrary, the demand of Truth is that conceptual structures, judgments, and apprehensions be conformed to reality. Further, the claim that I experience is made upon me by another and is real enough to govern my entire life. It seems to come not from myself but to myself, from what stands over and against myself and my thinking and makes demands upon them. There is an imperiousness about the claim and it comes like an absolute command into my life.

The actuality of this Truth, of what makes an absolute claim over the mind, is as real as is the being toward which the mind moves instinctively and to which a person must always return in abstract considerations. The sense of reality is the sign of a healthy human being, of a sound mind. The native drive of the mind is toward actual being. That toward which the mind moves is real. This native link between the drive of the mind and beings/being is given in everyday experience and in our insistence on the distinction between the mental and the extramental, between the fantastic, the projectional, and the real.

Certainly I experience an orientation toward reality in general, and this “reality in general” is finally not simply a concept, but what there is as it makes an appeal to my understanding or awareness. And this I have meant by “truth”: either what is real about/in a particular situation, or what absolute reality itself is, which I have called “Truth.”

2) Can I not explain this “orientation” through a previous and early training? The early training can alter this orientation, modify it, but it is subsequent to it. Any “training” would depend upon this orientation toward truth as its prior foundation, and the most it could do would be to particularize the truth of a situation in various and perhaps erroneous ways.

More importantly, I am not dealing here with a compulsion or a blind drive. On the contrary, there is the real experience of freedom before, during, and subsequent to the choice to acknowledge or to refuse the

truth of a situation, as indicated above. Herein lies the profound possibility for human evil: either to refuse to deal with questions, evidence, or argumentation honestly, i.e., to deny the truth which one has begun to recognize on an unarticulated level; or to identify this Truth with the finite, with a political party, a social class, a national consciousness, an economic advantage. The ultimate human failure is either to deny the claim to fidelity which Truth makes absolutely upon one's life—to live a life in fundamental bad faith—or to absolutize the finite, irrespective of its truth, and to attach this "fidelity" to what is limited and derivative.

3) Does this identify the truth of each situation with God? No, but it does involve them deeply. Each situation has its own truth, correlative with its importance (*bonum*) and identified with its being (*esse*). No situation can be identified with Truth itself.

a) It would be possible for me to lie to myself about one of these situations without destroying my total orientation toward the Truth, without being dishonest about other situations, although in proportion to my intensity of concentration upon the general orientation toward Truth it becomes increasingly difficult to deny any of its realizations.

b) The relationship between Truth and the truth of this particular situation can best be grasped when I have violated it. When I have lied to myself about a particular datum or twisted a particular line of inquiry to come up with the answer with which I am comfortable, my experience is that my feeling is not simply that I have not done justice to a particular situation. It is rather that I feel disoriented from something far more pervasive which permeates this situation and is instantiated by the situation, but something toward which I am moving (or should be moving) and by which I am absolutely governed (or should be governed) and which is greater than this particular situation. Note also: when I violate the truth of this particular argument or twist the lines of this inquiry, I feel that I have violated Truth in my life, but not that I have done injury to other particular situations. Here lies the distinction between (1) the truth of this situation, (2) the sum total of truths of other situations, (3) Truth toward which I am ordered and by which I am governed and which I never fully reach, but which claims me in every situation and in every inquiry.

c) Looking at the answer to a problem or the conclusion of an experiment or the truth of a particular situation, I would probably consider myself of more importance and my own interests of more spontaneous vitality. Yet I subordinate these interests and these self-serving instincts to particular things whose obvious value is less than mine. Why, unless their truth embodied a Truth whose claim and importance was greater than anything else in my life? That toward which I am moving and by which I am directed and ordered is more than each of these things and quite different from their sum—ininitely more both in its extension in

and through all of them, and in its own completeness, which it invests in each thing, giving each a worth that is infinitely more than itself.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus Truth is experienced as the direction (*Woraufhin*) toward which any engagement in inquiry points, as the critical, final, and pervasive source (*Wovonher*) of the absolute claim that each thing makes, as that by which a human person may be governed and guided with a priority above every other consideration. It gives definition and final value to human life. It is this truth and the deep determination to be governed by the Truth which is the foundation of everything that is noble in a human being, and the denial of whose claim for acknowledgment and fidelity is universally and inexorably evil.

This is the reality we call God, but experienced so differently: first, as the constantly receding and incomprehensible horizon toward which the transcendence of knowledge moves but never grasps; then, almost in contrast, as the One which approaches and makes an absolute claim upon my life and its direction, and makes this claim simply by being what it is; finally, as that which, if accepted, gives to human life a meaning or a value that is as comprehensive as its acceptance. The claim of Truth upon a human being's life is experienced as sacred, a claim which makes holy the lines of painstakingly honest investigation in which the goodness that is Truth takes increasing possession of the lives of those human beings for whom Truth is a continental care and habitual love.

For, finally, and critically, it is this submission to the Truth that must ground and continually support any faith-commitment or any confessional stance. In this ascending involvement with Truth, much more than human intellection has been pledged. The search that is any serious inquiry, the profound experience of claim, and the surrender of acknowledgment, all involve the total moral life of a human being in so far as it is caught up in this movement. What is operative is what persons will freely give their lives over to, what they will trust as of fundamental value, what will be the ground of human life and give it solidity and final worth. No matter how abstract or how intellectual one's notion of "truth" is, in the concrete it evokes and demands what one loves and what one does. It is this radical commitment of human spirit which finally allows, demands, or obviates any other commitment.

This is phrased one way in the religious evolution described in the Johannine Gospel: "He who does the truth comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been done in God."<sup>31</sup> This line of development runs into explicit faith, but the presence of grace and of the

<sup>31</sup> John 3:21. A similar basic option lies at the heart of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians: "... and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2:9-10).

transforming possession of God begins much earlier. Those who have given their lives over to the truth and embodied this commitment in the goodness of their lives have already done these deeds in God. They live and act in God before "coming to the light," and this character of their lives is the condition for the possibility of belief. The awareness of Jesus is not the first moment of possessing and transforming grace: "Rather, the idea is that Jesus brings out what a man really is and the real nature of his life. Jesus is a penetrating light that provokes judgment by making it apparent what a man is."<sup>32</sup> They have lived and acted in God, perhaps even without knowing it, at such depth that their deeds are enveloped with His presence.

This is why the experience of the claim and acknowledgment of Truth is an experience of the offer and the acceptance of grace, of God's self-communication. What is begun here, even within doubt and darkness, is an evolution whose terminus is a believing commitment to Jesus Christ—and any other source of external confession would make it false. What is critical in the Johannine doctrine is that Truth is finally personal and incarnate in this Mediator of salvation whose claim is "I am the way and the truth and the life."<sup>33</sup> Truth, in the self-communication of God, reaches human contact not simply in the participation of all things, but incarnate in a historical person, who provides the ultimate context of Christian meaning, explanation, and value. The gospel does not describe this acceptance of Christ as a single moment of decision, but as a lengthy process of freedom, complicated in its history and taxing in its moral demands, wherein one moves gradually into the light through a prior, lived commitment to the Truth that is available in life and in its choice. The fundamental point is that the history of grace originates and completes this dynamic self-donation of the human person to the Truth found in life. Grace is a constant presence. In the human choice to live a life governed by fidelity to Truth, the self-surrender of the human person intersects with the self-communication of God. For this possibility is constant, caught up in God's mysterious will to draw every human person into His life. It allows the human person an immediacy of Truth and enables the consequent transformation of nature and history whenever

<sup>32</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966) 148–49. For the discussion of the origin and nature of John's use of "truth," cf. 499–501. The differences here may well lie with the variation of a profoundly human theme, conceived metaphysically in its Greek embodiment and more experientially and interpersonally in its Hebrew embodiment. What is formulated as essential reality by the Greeks would find its Hebrew articulation as essential solidity and trustworthiness. In one, God is true because He is essentially real; in the other, this same absolute character would be characterized as "being worthy of confidence and of being faithful to his promises" (499).

<sup>33</sup> John 14:6.

so fundamental a choice of Truth is made that it gives definition and purity of direction to life.

There are so many ways in which "truth" has been conceptualized and its presence within human life realized, but these offer not so much the contradiction of conflicting systems as the complementarity of the diverse cultural understandings and of analogical realizations in vastly different philosophies, theologies, and civilizations. These divergencies of formulation never simply repeat an original insight, but bring out its virtualities in its application to new perspectives and new situations.<sup>34</sup> So Justin Martyr would initiate Christian apologetics with the incorporation of Socrates and Heraclitus into Christianity by the contention: "Those who lived in accordance with Reason are Christians, even though they were called godless."<sup>35</sup> Aquinas insists that the emergence of reflection and freedom offers to every person the opportunity of grace, that there is no adult who has not experienced in his determination of his own life the offer of the transforming, indwelling God.<sup>36</sup> Finally, this theme reaches into Karl Rahner's theses of the supernatural existential and anonymous Christian.

However this abiding tradition be embodied in vastly different cultural understandings or in the thematic variations of religious perspectives, the absolute and prior claim that Truth has over human decision and motivation is asserted, and asserted as that which underlies and justifies belief. Without this initial and pervasive surrender, no Christian commitment is possible, confessional faith becomes bad faith, and credence issues from the dominance of social structures or from the anxious attempts to avoid confrontation with terror, solitude, or adult reflection. The only reason, finally, that one move toward the person of Jesus must lie with the appeal contained within His own self-understanding.

"For this was I born,  
For this I have come into the world:  
To bear witness to the truth.  
Everyone who is of the truth  
Hears my voice."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For an examination of thematic variations and unity in the history of thought, cf. Michael J. Buckley, *Motion and Motion's God* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1971) 3-12, 267-75.

<sup>35</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 46, as in *Early Christian Fathers*, tr. Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953) 272.

<sup>36</sup> *Summa Theologiae* 1-2, 89, 6; *In 2 Sent.* 42, 1, 5, ad 7; *De veritate* 24, 12, ad 2; 28, 3, ad 4; *De malo* 7, 10, ad 8 and ad 9.

<sup>37</sup> John 18:37.