

Ascending Foundationalism: Carnell, Collins,

MacGregor, Rahner and Lonergan

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Introduction

In the debates on realism in hermeneutics and in theology, the issue of foundationalism is a major plank in the evangelical position (Carnell, 1957; Collins, 1967; MacGregor, 1973; Rahner, 1978; Fiorenza, 1987; Clinton, 1988). In biblical or conceptual hermeneutics such foundational realism is usually assumed. Similarly, in the theological debates on Christology, the issue of ascending or descending methodology based on a two-story (noumenal and phenomenal, real and appearance) view of the world, has often been critical for modern apologetical and theological debates. Both of these positions assume a realism which includes a foundationalist position, i.e. that there is an external reality which is accessible from the human perspective. The paper shall be concerned with realistic theism and the starting point for metaphysical reflection: ascending foundationalism.

Some theological authors, such as Rahner, argue for their position by offering rational or experiential warrants. However, in philosophy of religion, since the writings of Kant and Schliermacher, there usually have been steady attacks, and attempts at defenses, on realistic foundationalism. The goal of this paper is to suggest a modification of the usual presentation of theological starting point, metaphysics, epistemology, and hermeneutical or theological methodology which will enable us to advance the task of theology in a way more biblically orthodox and philosophically rigorous through careful definition of points related to spiritual realities and with better warrants.

This paper will show how some of the work of Rahner on transcendental phenomenological metaphysics and ascending methodology and Lonergan on foundationalist epistemology relates to the debate in hermeneutics and theology and present ideas on theological realism which will fill in a position of ascending foundationalism in a theistic realism.

1. The Starting Point

An examination of the starting point of explaining a system of thought is needed in order to uncover the historical and philosophical roots of a system. In explaining realistic theism we find a two fold beginning: philosophically with Carnell and Rahner on a priori structure beginning with human experience of reality, and cognitively with MacGregor and Lonergan on human structure of knowing from within experience.

The importance of Carnell and Rahner cannot be over-estimated. Both men worked on degrees in philosophy and theology, both were trained in the classical theological traditions of their heritage, both were revolutionaries in

theological method and the implications for theological systems.

One Protestant (Gundry, 1972) commented, "If one wants to understand current Roman Catholic theology he must begin with Rahner." Rahner is revolutionary in bringing the findings of philosophy in the 20th century to bear on issues of metaphysics and epistemology and building a new foundation for Christian thought.

Rahner included both traditional philosophy and phenomenal and existential elements in a new synthesis. "Rahner grounds transcendental epistemology in a new reading of human being influenced by Heidegger. He "retrieves" from St. Thomas a theory of being founded in the structure of human being which expresses itself in acts of predicative knowledge." (Sheehan, 1985, p. 22) By doing this Rahner's goal is to ground human understanding of truth in the common human experience of being-in-the-world. The metaphysics of human experience, that is, an explanation of just how humans are and know, is the foundation of all systemic metaphysics.

This view of metaphysics forms a transcendental reflection on man in the world, on human experience as it is for all humans. We are not hereby setting an "ought" about metaphysics or seeking to establish a theoretical position, but offering a description. Sheehan (1985, p. 34) comments, "The metaphysics of human sensibility is the foundation of general metaphysics, that is, transcendental reflection on man in the world founds ontology." David Tracy (1981) points to the a priori nature of this description. "The Christian religious experience is a concrete form of that abstract existential possibility--not (it should be noted) a specific case of a general form, but a concrete formation of an abstract universal."(p. 86)

In Rahner's middle period he pointed to the a priori form of knowledge and included the spiritual as a necessary element in such a transcendental metaphysic.

Firstly, there is among these forms of knowledge an a-priori, unobjectified knowledge about oneself, and this is a basic condition of the spiritual subject in which it is present to itself and in which it has at the same time its transcendental orientation to the totality of possible objects of knowledge and of free choice. (1966, pp. 200-201)

The basic Christian attitude would then be fashioned from knowledge that is purely within the world, "based on philosophy and the natural law, knowledge of a concrete, practical character. Such knowledge would at most have to be protected from error by revelation." (Rahner, 1968, p. 256) This position begins, not with a biblical or theological presupposition, but with a wide view of what constitutes human life. Keefe says, "The objectivity of the real is thereby at once experiential (given by the data of sense, plus consciousness), normative (constituted by the needs of rationality and intelligence), and absolute (as so resulting from the union of experiential and normative objectivity ...)." (1986, p. 30)

Traditional metaphysics, especially since Kant, has pursued knowledge from a human perspective, but has limited the search to trans-personal or public testimony. Even then, the veracity of any claim is suspect if the claim is made outside the bounds of skeptical reason. "Philosophy, instead of revealing truth, has tended to veil it; that is, by analyzing the truth instead of looking at it, it not only distorts the truth but hides it." (MacGregor, 1973, p. 439) Rahner believed that we have the limits of history "... concrete history in its corporeality is the place where the definitive stage of existence and the absolute future is actualized," (Rahner, 1968, p. 264), but these limits are what is appropriate for us and is the venue in which God is at work. "The Word of God has

himself both made and endured history. (Rahner, 1968, p. 266).

The earliest specific discussion of the means of such a transcendental analysis of the concrete historical given of spiritual humanity was from Carnell.

Since data comes in two different qualities of cloth--the first, sense perception, by which we learn the facts of the external world; the second, spiritual perception, by which we learn the facts of the internal world--it usually happens that self-sufficiency places a greater value on the scientific and rational aspects of life than on the moral and spiritual. (Carnell, 1957, p. 4)

We begin such an analysis with the facticity of our own existence. "An intuitive, presentational awareness of our own person is the surest piece of information we have. (Carnell, 1957, p. 6) But this broadly conceived personal starting point has far more than a rational aspect. Carnell thought that "Ultimate reality cannot be grasped unless rational knowledge is savored by spiritual conviction." (1957, p. 13)

It is at this point of analysis of transcendental human experience that the topic of foundationalism is introduced. In Carnell's terms, "Whatever is, is true. To the extent that something participates in being, it is true. This is called ontological truth." (1957, p. 14) More recently Dennehy comments, "It is impossible to deny being because being is all there is and what is outside being is nothing. No sane person seriously doubts the existence of things outside himself." (1986, p. 121) Cook put the two ideas (transcendental analysis and theistic realism) together and calls the position foundationalism: "Foundationalism ... is the doctrine that all of us have beliefs which are in some way related to other beliefs, and that our beliefs are rational in so far as they are based on a solid foundation of a particular sort." (1986, p. 275)

Some writers confuse these foundational beliefs with warranted beliefs or properly basic beliefs. For example, Goldman says, " The core of foundationalism is a commitment to some special class of beliefs--so called basic beliefs--from which all justification derives." (1986, p. 30) This approach argues for a class of beliefs which are protected from criticism and debate yet are foundational for a system of thought. I shall argue, on the contrary, that *the only beliefs which are foundational are those which are necessary for human thought and life as it is lived*. Carnell anticipated this when he said, "If ontological truth is to be of any service, therefore, a procedure must be devised that will put man's mind in touch with reality. This procedure is rational inference. (1957, p. 15) Carnell's point is that our beliefs must be in touch with reality, that is with life as it is commonly lived and as it can be lived in reality. Our choice of presuppositions ought to be governed by experience and learning. "Historical learning can never supplant personal experience; but it can develop an experience that would otherwise be minimal, not to say moribund." (MacGregor, 1973, p. 5)

Sheehan discusses this method of metaphysical transcendental analysis. He suggests that such analysis may be seen as a hermeneutic. "In a word, metaphysics as transcendental inquiry is a hermeneutics, no "new" information but only the discovery and spelling out of what is already the case, so that understanding can explicitly appropriate itself. (1985, p. 24)

In this approach any ability which is common to humanity, sense intuition, experience of the world, personal or spiritual intuition, the spatio-temporal realm of the imagination ... "are the necessary starting point, the abiding ground, and the goal of all human knowledge. (Sheehan, 1985, p. 25)

In the mode of ascending hermeneutics, from life to an interpretation of life, all procedures are grounded in the richness of life. We are only investigating what is already true, what already exists, and determining if each method or event is common to humanity. Any method which is common to humanity is established as part of transcendental reality.

It is one and the same thing to show both that human imagination already is the possibilizing condition of metaphysics as worldly interrogative knowledge of beingness and to prove that man can know a worldly being only because he already is interrogatively present to beingness as a whole. That is, transcendence (but not intellectual intuition) belongs to the constitutive grounds of knowledge of the work, in the same way that intuited sense reality remains the foundation of all human knowledge. Spirit "would be blind without the intuition of sensibility." (Sheehan, 1985, p. 26)

Such a method is hinted at by Carnell, developed by Rahner, MacGregor and Collins, and refined by Rahner. Keefe comments on the linguistic horizon generated by this method:

The transcendental method which applies this norm subsumes all special methods of human knowing, including the theological, and in so doing orders them to its own pattern and process, passing from the multiplicity of experience to its progressive unification on the levels of interpretation, narrative and dialectic, to the foundational unity of the intentional horizon, and thereafter descending to the diversities of doctrine, systematization and communications, these latter being the specifically, or mediated, theological disciplines. (Keefe, 1986, pp. 28-29)

Keefe calls this approach, critical realism, but in fact it had been named theistic realism by Collins in 1967. Carnell and Collins understood the wide range of human elements which would be included in such a methodological starting point. A few quotes will illustrate their position:

It is not that rational, empirical or social evidence are insufficient to point to God. But one aspect of life, fellowship with God, is much richer in the spirit than any of these human relations. Evidences may point to God, but God himself must be encountered in the dynamic of personal fellowship. (Carnell, 1957, p. 302)

. . . a philosophy which is realistic in its metaphysical and epistemological bases, and theistic in its ultimate interpretation of human experience. (Collins, 1967, p. 423)

The method of integrative analysis is intended to provoke an awareness of the wide scope of the investigation and to suggest a way of bringing the available resources into play. (Collins, 1967, p. 424)

To prevent an essentializing separation of religion from human life and intelligence, the realistic theory of religion adheres to the method of integrative analysis. It stresses the mundanity of religion, the need for investigating it through the common modes of inquiry, and the development of a philosophical theory of religion only within a broader context of principles and evidences. (Collins, 1967, p. 481)

The subject matter of the philosophy of religion is the active relationship-- conative as well as cognitive, social as well as individual--between man and the living spiritual reality wherein he seeks fulfillment. (Collins, 1967, p. 443)

The integrative method . . . does require that all philosophical judgments about the nature of religion be deeply qualified by the order and limits involved in man's bond with natural being. (Collins, 1967, p. 443)

There is an experiential base of reference for all propositions on religion which gain our philosophical assent. As far as their philosophical acceptance is concerned, it depends upon showing that their referents have a determinate presence in our experience of man, as related to the world through operations of feeling and acting, knowing and willing, personal and social effort. (Collins, 1967, p. 447)

Realistic theism carries with it an openness to "the free, personal God, present in the universe and distinct from it through His creative presence. ... It is precisely in the philosophy of religion that this relationship is examined in itself, thus calling attention to a religious context for philosophical anthropology as well as for natural theology." (Collins, 1967, p. 485)

This grounds all human speculation in the reality of historical and spiritual experience.

Historically, some of these authors overlapped and knew of each other. Collins comments about Rahner,

In the hands of the theologian Karl Rahner, the philosophy of religion becomes a study of human reality precisely insofar as man is a hearer of the divine word. This theologian treats man as a being who can open himself to the revealing and saving word, which comes in a free act from the personal God. Hence Rahner conceives of the philosophy of religion as a personalist metaphysics of man, the existent who can be lifted by God's power to the hearing of His word and the sharing in His supernatural life. (Collins, 1967, p. 487)

If men and women encounter God in life, and if it is true that all of life is lived under the grace and presence of God, then the givenness of God and of life before Him and with Him is part of the human situation. Keefe observes, "Concretely, our knowledge of God depends upon graced acts of decision and judgment, so that, in the factual and given situation, there is no simply ungraced knowledge of God by inference from the created order." (1986, p. 46)

This ascending hermeneutical analysis of life is not limited to the barest minimum which the skeptic will allow; rather the analysis is open to the full spectrum of human experience. The realistic approach does not seek out a set of a priori structural forms of religious apprehension, but "centers upon our experienced relationships with nature and human society, along with whatever inferences about God are warranted by such experience." (Collins, 1967, p. 488) This also means that 'grace' is the normal state in which human life, not just Christian belief, exists. "The consequence is that this method presupposes, and is submitted to, a notion of history prior to and independent of the Christian faith." (Keefe, 1986, p. 55)

Of course, we will still want to use rigor and every intellectual and practical test available to examine specific claims to truth or knowledge. MacGregor said, "That self-critical element, bringing truth-claims under intellectually honest scrutiny, is however, completely indispensable to any religion that is to be acceptable to a morally alert and intellectually honest human being." (1973, p. 15) Carnell had identified propositional truth as a second kind of truth (1957, p. 15), alongside common human experience.

If investigation is of full human experience then it must also include moral, social, and cultural aspects of life. If life is lived in fellowship with God, then the human experience of that fellowship is part of transcendental human experience. The key to analysis of the human side of fellowship is in the spiritual or moral growth which takes place. Carnell said, "I shall call the third method of knowing knowledge by moral self-acceptance." (1957, p. 22) He held that, "An inferential knowledge of God's existence is without value until fellowship is gained by an acquaintance with God's person." (1957, p. 118) If this represents how we can experience life, then this is available for us to analyze transcendently.

Before such an analysis takes place it is important to understand not only what we can possibly investigate and know but also how it is possible for us to know and how we come to know.

2. The Need for Epistemological Clarity:

Human consciousness and perceptual ability is complex. Rahner and Lonergan took the lead in this analysis. Rahner said that consciousness forms:

an infinite, multi-dimensional sphere: there is reflex consciousness and things to which we attend explicitly; there is conceptual consciousness of objects and a transcendental unreflective knowledge attached to the subjective pole of consciousness; there is attunement and propositional knowledge, permitted and suppressed knowledge; there are spiritual events in consciousness and their reflex interpretation; there is non-objectified knowledge of a formal horizon within which a determined comprehended object comes to be present, and this sort of knowledge is an objectified, conscious a-priori condition of the object comprehended a-posteriori; and finally there is the knowledge about this object itself. (Rahner, 1968, p. 200)

All of these constitute, not the transcendental analysis of human experience, but the ground of any actual historical knowledge for any particular knower. As we come to actually know these things and reflect on our knowledge, we see that we are interacting with all being, with our future and our past, with our hope and our deepest values. "The believer, in responding affirmatively to that which is presented to him, is conscious of grasping a supremely important truth that radically affects his whole life and outlook." (MacGregor, 1973, p. 39)

In the midst of this awareness of radical openness to life and hope, we also find that we encounter God and the gift of His presence and the graced life He offers to give us. This:

grace is no longer 'accidental,' but 'substantial;' its contingency is not that of a modification of a pre-existing natural potentiality or capacity for change, but is one with the contingency of creation in Christ, the gift of the Spiritus Creator, out of no prior possibility, but from the Love which acts ex nihilo. (Keefe, 1986, p. 44)

As we come to know ourselves and nature, we find that we know God. He is revealed to us in what has been made, because He is its creator, and we cannot know reality well without coming to know the creator. Nature is a mirror which shows us not only ourselves, but God who is the creator of us and of nature. This is part of the context within which our analysis takes place.

Let me summarize Lonergan's approach to analysis of the conscious knower. In the simple and original act of knowledge, the person whose attention is focused upon some object (intentional) which encounters it, the knowing that is co-known and the knowing subject that is co-known are not the objects of the knowledge. Rather the consciousness of the act of knowing something and the subject's consciousness of itself, that is, the subject's presence to itself, are situated so to speak at the other pole of the single relationship between the knowing subject and the known object. Rahner says that this:

latter pole refers to the luminous realm, as it were, within which the individual object upon which attention is focused in a particular primary act of knowledge can become manifest. This subjective consciousness of the knower always remains unthematic in the primary knowledge of an object presenting itself from without. (Rahner, 1978, p. 18)

As 'unthematic' Rahner means that the fullness of knowledge is never comprehended and that often the fact of knowledge of God is never brought to the level of personal consciousness, although it may be known by any person who chooses to make the analysis.

Lonergan begins with the acts of human consciousness and discovers intentionality. Rahner begins with a phenomenological analysis of knowing and discovers the transcendent element of knowing and the horizon of God as ultimate being. Neither is able to find God nor the Christian message through their analysis. This is because the content of revelation, the given element in previous grace, the content of the horizon of ultimate being, is a grace gift from God. Revelation is a necessary element in a full description of human consciousness, knowing, and being. But the fact of revelation of the presence of God is not filled in with content until we encounter God in actuality, not through a transcendental analysis.

However, if one begins with the ultimate revelatory event of history, ie. the resurrection, such a historical, analytic, critique of what is known and how it is known will reveal both sides of the equation of being: the presence of historical reality and the presence of the transcendent and immanent God.

Without here going into the details of Lonergan's analysis of cognition, which is the best I have seen, it is possible to indicate some of the problems in his overall structure. Keefe thinks that Lonergan's interpretation, "like that of Rahner's Thomism, leaves unsolved and perhaps insoluble the problem of the relation of the grace of Christ to the process of human intentionality; the metaphysics which is grounded in cognitional analysis." (Keefe, 1986, p. 33)

Keefe adds two other criticisms. His second point concerns the limits of transcendental method in light of what needs to be known to have concrete knowledge. "Transcendental methodology is only part of theological method: the anthropological part, the part dealing with the invariant process of intentionality. The specifically religious component of theological method is supplied by grace, a grace corresponding to the universal salvific will of God." (Keefe, 1986, p. 36) Finally, he adds, "Theology cannot construct its own beginning point; that is given in the revelation, the Christ, and there is no other base upon which theological method can stand." (Keefe, 1986, p. 45) He concludes, "concretely, our knowledge of God depends upon graced acts of decision and judgment, so that in the factual and given situation, there is no simply ungraced knowledge of God by inference from the created order." (Keefe, 1986, p. 46)

There is some weight to Keefe's criticisms. All three of his comments focus on the issue of grace. It is true that in reality our experience and our knowledge are a small part of all that is true, that is reality. But our experience is all we have. Grace surrounds us and envelops all we are or can know. But this grace, like our knowledge of it, remains unthematic until we experience it ourselves through the grace of God.

However, Keefe confuses what we know experientially, that is the content of our experience, with what we know through transcendental analysis. Transcendental analysis only tells us what aspects of reality are likely or possible to come into our field of comprehension, or what aspects of reality form the backdrop for our experience. In this latter case, we may never know the elements which are there or ever experience them as part of our perceptual field. This does not stop them from being real or even being necessarily real. We know these things, not from presuppositional approaches or from experience but from an analysis of the structure of being which is known to us. Polanyi (1958) taught us that all real knowledge is influenced by us, the knowers. Absolutely independent knowledge is not possible for us who are contingent beings. But knowledge of what we have experienced and reflection on that knowledge are the beginning of knowledge of truth.

Collins based his theoretical construction on a solid analysis of the philosophy of religion of Hume, Kant and Hegel. He concluded that

realism can define itself historically by its critical refusal to accept the Hegelian epistemological distinction between representational thinking and thought conducted at the pure level of the rational concept. The two poles of this distinction are undercut by the realistic account of the human modes of knowing, which permits an inference to be made about spiritual reality, but always on the basis of our composite experience and hence always by means of an analogical reference from the existing things in that experience. (Collins, 1967, p. 452)

It is still our own experience which forms the basis for our metaphysical speculation.

It is now appropriate to examine the content of our knowledge to find out the practical limits of our metaphysical thought from within human experience.

3. Spiritual Issues of Theological Realism

It is very difficult to find any material in the past fifty years dealing with the metaphysical foundations of spiritual life. There is much more about the nature of the metaphysical foundations of Christian thought. There is even more literature concerned with constructing a Christian metaphysic. But only a few authors, almost in passing, discuss the metaphysical foundations for spiritual life. Fewer still have related this to any form of philosophical realistic theism.

Some Roman Catholic authors have done this, most notably Collins in *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (1967; cf. Clinton, 1969), Rahner in the early part of *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978) and in *Spirit in the World* (1968; cf. Sheehan, 1985), and Fiorenza in *Foundational Theology* (1984). Of these, only Fiorenza deals with contemporary philosophical discussions or philosophy of religion, but he only touches on spiritual reality.

The only Protestants who have dealt with this at length are Carnell in *Christian Commitment* (1957; cf. Sims, 1979) and MacGregor in *Philosophical Issues in Religious Thought* (1973); but again, both deal with the metaphysical or philosophical basis of thought, not with spiritual reality. Pannenberg (1985) touches on this but does not develop the philosophical side of spiritual life (cf. Farrelly, 1986).

This section will introduce a background in realistic theism, then show how realistic theism relates to the spiritual foundations question and how this might effect a discussion of the origin and foundation of spiritual life.

A. Roots of Realistic Theism

The roots of the contemporary movement known as realistic theism are found in responses to the writings of Hume, Kant and Hegel. As they deal with the nature and source of human knowledge pertaining to religious issues, their methodology is more important than their conclusions. Collins summarizes:

The realistic philosophy of religion is part of the broad revision of the positions of Hume and Kant on the nature and limits of human knowledge. Realism agrees with these thinkers in being dissatisfied with rationalistic metaphysics and the jumble of principles invoked in popular natural theology. However, it suggests that metaphysics can be developed through an analysis of the general factors present in human experience, and through an inferential study of the implications which these factors bear concerning the reality of God. (1967, pp. 448-449)

Collins thinks that Hume and Kant properly critiqued the foundations of scholastic and reformation rationalism. But their responses are not satisfying, either rationally or in experience.

Collins discussed the need for a systematic approach to dealing with philosophical, cultural and theological issues from the viewpoint of theistic realism. He drew out six problems faced by Hume, Kant and Hegel (1967, p. 350).

Chart I - Collins' Problems in Philosophy of Religion

1. The manner in which religion falls within the scope of philosophy;
2. the impact of philosophy of religion upon natural theology;
3. the relationship between morality and religion;
4. the philosophical approach to religious faith;
5. the persistent mystery of the revealing God;
6. the inter-relationship between religious belief, worship and service to mankind.

Collins integrated these six problems into the philosophical and social climate of the 1960's and concluded that there were three main tasks for theistic realists.

First, there is the cultural task of clarifying the role of religion in contemporary thought and society. These roles continue to shift since they depend on other features in the society such as the strength of the church, the public acceptability of religious faith, the openness of the philosophical climate, etc. Collins felt that a prerequisite to proper definition was an understanding of the secularization process as it `demythologized' law, philosophy and society at large.

Second is the methodological task of integrative analysis in which we should identify the broad implications of religious studies for other disciplines and for life. Collins believed that a four-fold procedure would generate a useful methodology. We need to examine the findings of the social and psychological sciences regarding the meaning of human life and the contribution of religion to this meaning. Then, we can analyze the personal and social contributions of formal theologies drawing upon the analytic procedures of contemporary philosophies. Third, we can use historical studies, such as Collins' own study of Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, Hegel and others, to elicit the contributions of great thinkers and activists of the past. Finally, there must be a personal interaction in religious faith and life on the part of the theologian. Any contributor to the dialog must examine "the active relationship between man and the living spiritual reality wherein he seeks fulfillment" (1967, p. 443). Only when all four aspects are present can meaningful integration take place.

The third task Collins identified is doctrinal. We need to reformulate doctrinal theories in light of cultural and methodological studies. This should come as a result of the integrative studies. This does not mean that we change our doctrines but that we reformulate how they are expressed and especially how we ask for application in academic disciplines and in life.

Metaphysics, Collins thought, can be developed from an analysis of the phenomenal field of composite human experience. Collins derived his method from non-reductionistic phenomenology, more or less from Heidegger and from existentialism. Collins saw that man is driven beyond this world in search of the absolute. This does not deprive man of knowledge of the absolute, but it does imply that this knowledge will be limited to what is observable through human senses. If Collins stopped here this would be nothing more than an empirical theology. But Collins, like Carnell before him, adds the category of revelation--God speaking to us within our perceptual field, i.e., human history.

Collins sees a principle distinction between God and any kind of absolute. What must be sought is not proof that God exists, for to gain this man would have to have comprehensive knowledge of God's being (not just some indicator of an absolute). Rather, Collins would search for proof supporting his statement that God exists (1962, p. 42). This discovery of truth about God must be grounded in the reality of man's experience and reflection. "The philosophy of religion . . . is only achieved through a fresh interrogation of our experience and a judgment which responds to the religious acts involved in that experience." (1967, p. 424) Any further development is limited, by the nature of philosophy, to movement from man toward God (1962, p. 43; 1967, p. 423). This is almost identical to Rahner's ascending Christology. Of course, a different procedure is found in philosophical theology, which begins with God.

Collins believes the way to begin the search for God within human experience is to demonstrate the context within which religious talk can have meaning. Linguistic analysis gives both the context and the meaning to talk about religion, but offers no proof (1967, p. 458). The beneficial point Collins gained from language analysis is

support for the intentionality of all human discourse. Based in man's bond with natural being (Collins, 1962, pp. 539f), this intentionality drives man past the bounds of this empirical world. However, this does not allow us to import theology. "The essential maxim for the philosopher of religion to respect is that religion is to be investigated by means of the same general methods and guiding principles which govern his philosophy as a whole." (1967, p. 430) Intentionality in itself (described as in Lonergan) is a definite pointer to the transcendence of God. But because man seeks philosophical knowledge, he is limited to an immanent approach to the problem.

Intentionality is only explained as man accepts the pointers to God as proof of the belief that He exists. Collins says,

There is an experiential base of reference for all propositions on religion which gain our philosophical assent. As far as their philosophical acceptance is concerned, it depends upon showing that their referents have a determinate presence in our experience of man, as related to the world through operations of feeling and acting, knowing and willing, personal and social effort. (1967, p. 447)

Thus, personal belief in God is an issue of volitional commitment based on the available evidence, which is non-conclusive but real.

However, for Collins a realistic theism attains its metaphysical character directly from its methodic analysis of human experience and from the inferences it makes concerning the implications found in the existent beings of our experience (1967, p. 457).

Realistic theism carries with it an openness to the free, personal God, present in the universe and distinct from it through His creative presence. ... It is precisely in the philosophy of religion that this relationship is examined in itself, thus calling attention to a religious context for philosophical anthropology as well as for natural theology. (Collins, 1967, p. 485)

There are powerful grounds in human nature, in the general purposiveness of being, and in the ethical search for human good, which orient men toward God.

Viewed in terms of a realistic theism, what these grounds dispose men toward is a life of searching after God through the acts of believing, loving, and serving Him. Such acts draw men into an interpersonal religious community in which God's initiative is disclosed and man's response is freely given (Collins, 1967, p. 473; cf. Martin, 1986 and Tracy, 1981). Thus, Collins's starting point is historical human experience.

The need for defining a starting point in a philosophical system is indicative, and probably axiomatic, for defining a starting point for any systematic conceptual development. This means that metaphysical, epistemological and axiological work must precede any formative systematic development.

Rahner begins at a different place. For him, the starting point is not in any particular human experience or even in the totality of human experience. He begins with what he calls transcendental experience, which is the necessary structure for the possibility of any human experience, and thus for all human experience. This is a phenomenological analysis of transcendental religious experience.

We shall call transcendental experience the subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality. (Rahner, 1978, p. 20)

For Rahner, this transcendental experience is not merely an experience of pure knowledge, but also of the will and of freedom. (p. 20) It is the very fact that man can ask questions about himself and about his place in the world which reveal his link with transcendental foundations.

In the fact that man raises analytical questions about himself and opens himself to the unlimited horizons of such questioning, he has already transcended himself and every conceivable element of such an analysis or of an empirical reconstruction of himself. In doing this he is affirming himself as more than the sum of such analyzable components of his reality. (1978, p.29)

Thus, Rahner thinks the transcendental movement is a pre-condition of any self-reflective consciousness.

But even this transcendental movement, as actualized, is a part of human experience and thus is a part of history. "Even the most basic, self-grounded and most transcendental philosophy of human existence is always achieved only within historical experience." (1978, p. 25) This links the transcendental aspect of human experience to the actuality of human history.

Rahner applies this to the individual:

In the fact that he experiences his finiteness radically, he reaches beyond this finiteness and experiences himself as a transcendent being, as spirit. He is the spirit who experiences himself as spirit in that he does not experience himself as pure spirit. Man is not the unquestioning and unquestioned infinity of reality. He is the question which rises up before him, empty, but really and inescapably, and which can never be settled and never adequately answered by him. (1978, p. 32)

Thus, for Rahner, the starting point is in one sense transcendental and in the other historical. However, in neither sense is man in direct contact, either experientially or rationally, with a trans-historical or non-historical deity. Therefore, Rahner thinks humans are bound within mankind's historical experience and the logical transcendental movement within that history. This is very helpful for a historical metaphysics, but only supplements Collins toward a starting point for realistic theism (Cf. Dennehy, 1986).

To understand this better we must put the whole discussion in the context of a system of realistic theism. Contrary to Holmes (1977) and Wolters (1985), I shall use the term "world view" to refer to the set of philosophical conclusions which underlie any theoretical representation of content regarding human life or the state of affairs usually called "the world" or "all that is." A set of metaphysical, epistemological and axiological conclusions constitutes a world view. The point at issue is to define the nature of a starting point for elaborating a world view.

This issue of finding a starting point within the philosophic arena is difficult. Because all philosophical processes are a posteriori to experience, it will be helpful to see that a world view can be observed as a set of actual philosophic conclusions, which, taken together, form a coherent pattern. In an actual consistent set of conclusions, the individual conclusions are often so interdependent that where one begins the discussion of a

position is more sociological than logical.

John Smith (1970) examined systems which use the self or the world as starting points, concluding that both must be wrong because they systematically bifurcate the whole of human experience.

For example, if I am a semi-naive metaphysical realist, in Dummett's terms (1982), then I have commitments not only to certain ontological realities such as the status of externals or a definite theory of meaning, but also to epistemological elements such as a theory of linguistic reference and a position in regard to valuing semantics (cf. Lonergan, 1977; Keefe, 1986; and background in Kohlberg, 1981 and Krathwold, 1964).

In addition to an ontology and an epistemology, we must also develop an axiology. Moving against usual thinking, Putnam has argued that commitments to values underlie ontological convictions and hence take precedence in determining one's world view (1981, p. 215). Whether we agree with Putnam's prioritization, or his internal realist arguments, or even if we think his prioritization is system-bound, he makes a good case for the inter-relatedness of the concepts and the need to include values in the philosophical discussion as part of the preliminaries.

This emphasis on the priority of values fits closely with Polanyi's (1958) analysis of person-bound systems of thought. Moving further, a hierarchy of value development has been developed by Kohlberg (1981), value contents analyzed by Rokeach (1978), and an elaboration of actual value levels has been developed by Krathwold (1964).

My suggestion is that *the theistic realist should begin on philosophic grounds, present his world view (basic conceptual grid) as a whole, then discuss and defend the parts. Thus, the inter-related conceptual system is itself the logical starting point.* This approach is reminiscent of, but a significant development beyond, Carnell's starting point with hypotheses (1948) and relates to Montgomery's presentation of systems thinking related to doing theology (1965). This approach forces each thinker to a realization that one's person, via his values, is revealed in his writing, if any constructive work is to be done (cf. Cooke, 1986).

Carnell (1957) and others (Goldman, 1986) have pointed to the legitimacy of such subjective experience within a philosophic theory. But MacGregor (1973), Rahner (1978) and Pannenberg (1985) illustrate that such a subjectivity is a necessity (in non-Christian terms see Polanyi, 1958).

B. Conceptual Foundation

In light of the above discussion regarding a starting point and a world view, the following agenda for conceptual development of realistic theism remains.

Chart II - Agenda for Conceptual Development of Realistic Theism

- 1). Develop a form of theistic realism which is compatible with both scripture and historical experience (a set of preliminary value choices regarding metaphysical issues).
- 2). Develop an epistemology which defines the nature of truth and reflects the knowing process to which

our metaphysic has committed us.

- 3). Based on the metaphysical and epistemological grounding, develop a structure, perhaps even a hierarchy, of values, which will serve as a base for axiological decisions in politics, law, ethics, etc. These could come from ethics, biblical theology and doctrine of the Christian Life (cf. Clinton, 1987). Note that a hierarchy must be developed in order for effective decision making to take place (cf. Scholes, 1986; Clinton, 1988).
- 4). Reassess our theological position using theistic realism as the philosophic part of the world view grid.
- 5). Develop a systematic process for integrating the theology and values into other disciplines. Models of this are often based on Niebuhr's five approaches (1951). But his approach is system dependent and ultimately fails to provide a philosophically fruitful way to develop a model for integration and a new approach is needed (Clinton, in press).
- 6). Develop a strategy for influencing our culture in each area of importance. This should lead to effective penetration and eventual transformation of culture and society.

For this enterprise, the foundation lies in explicating a theistic realism as an adequate foundation for a world view. As Christians, we are committed to the existence of God and the truthfulness of His Word as revealed in the Bible. Thus, efforts by evangelicals like Corduan (1981) to critique and learn from positions of Rahner and Aquinas, or of Grunler (1983) to reinterpret the best of process thought, are to be applauded.

We need to expand these critiques to include Putnam (1981) and Dummett (1982) on realism, Rahner (1978) and Lonergan (1972) on the value of a modified phenomenology (cf. Clinton, 1984 A), and many others. Along the way, there will be much pure creative work as we fill in such a system.

As evangelicals we can see fundamental directions being set from two sources: human experience and propositional revelation. Of course, with two sources of information, we are open to the possibility of conflict between the two. However, as believers in the consistency of God's work, we do not anticipate any real conflict of truth between the two fields. One related sub-field which has received little work is on the origin of spiritual life and the implications of spiritual life on conceptual thinking.

C. Origin of Spiritual Life

All people have an orientation toward relating to God which is worked out in their lives in their value commitments and religious practices (Rahner, 1978). The fact of this subjective reflective experience and personal and social objective experience is common to all men, although the specific content is different for each person.

The analysis of this spiritual experience usually focuses on the biblical data or on objective religious experience. I would like to shift to *a philosophical analysis of the spiritual area*. There are three interrelated aspects to the spiritual area of a person's life: Each person has a spirit; each person can receive spiritual impressions from other spirits; each person can be indwelt (guided or controlled) by another spirit.

The reality of one's own spirit includes, functionally, the ability to receive and comprehend (recognize intuitively) spiritual reality. This comprehension has the possibility of being brought to the level of conscious reflection. But such reflection is not necessary since spiritual reality is comprehensible through the innate categories of the mind (there is a 'fit' with our spiritual and rational apparatus) and can be responded to at the levels of values apart from philosophical reflective experience. Of course the integration of spiritual values and realities into a person's life will be much quicker and more efficient if there is help with the process via preaching, teaching and discipleship.

We also have the ability to make decisions regarding all of life in dynamic harmony between the spiritual, innate and reflective areas. However, there must be more to the spiritual area than a functional ability and an internal interactive capability. Ontologically, the spiritual area consists of an immaterial element of a person's being which is the source of his or her ability to make spiritual decisions and to interact with spiritual realities such as God, other people's spirits, etc.

A second aspect of the spiritual area includes the possibility of receiving spiritual input from other spirits and people. This is not the same as being internally responsive or reflective concerning my own spirit, as described above. We can be in touch with motivations and values held by other spirits with whom we are interacting. I have called this area spiritual impressions. When functioning in this area, we often say that a person is distinguishing another person's spirit or is responding to another's spirit. While this includes a rational element, it is not essentially a reflective function. The third area of spiritual reality is the capacity to have my personal spirit directed (i.e., led or strongly influenced initially, only later can there be absolute control) by another spirit. In common literature this is known as being possessed by another spirit. In a philosophical sense it is the reality that another spirit can so influence my spirit that I can be led to obey the other spirit as though it were my own. In this case, I am not the source of the spiritual direction. Nor am I merely responding to an external influence over which I have significant control. This is a middle ground where great influence is exerted on my spirit to lead me to act a certain way or to believe a certain way, which, if I do not resist it, will eventuate in my acting in keeping with the direction of the indwelling spirit. The negative application of this happens when we are led into sin. The positive application is when the Holy Spirit leads us to faith in Christ or to follow Christ in our decisions, or in leading the apostles to pen the scriptures.

If the indwelling (or, prior to a spiritual or reflective commitment on my part to allow the indwelling, influencing) spirit is God's, then we have arrived at the biblical case of being led by the Spirit of God. If the indwelling spirit is an evil spirit, then we have a case of demonic influence or possession. Once a situation of full surrender of voluntary control has occurred, the source of spiritual direction and decision will be the secondary spirit, until this direction is actively resisted. Thus, the person who is filled with the Spirit is one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and continues to be influenced by the Spirit at the valuational level, the reflective level and at an emotional level. Since God does not choose to overwhelm us, His leading is gentle and can be resisted; exactly what Paul tells us to be careful not to do, that is, to quench or resist the Spirit.

In a case of demonic possession, the person is indwelt by and receives direction in the areas of value and reflection from an evil spirit.

In the case of God's Spirit, we are told that while the filling --that is the active influence-- can be resisted, the indwelling itself is permanent. In the case of an evil spirit, the influence can be resisted but the indwelling/possession is not reversible by the person. It is reversible only by the Holy Spirit.

These considerations lead us to the questions of how the human spirit originates, how it is influenced and how it can be indwelt by another spirit.

The origin of the human spirit is described two ways in scripture. First, the spirit of a person is said to return at death to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). In Zechariah 12:1 we are told that God creates the spirit of man within him (cf. Job 34:14; Luke 23:46; Num. 16:22 and 27:16; Isa 57:16).

But there is also indication in scripture that the spirit is part of the man which is given in a Traducian way, that is, by generation from the parents (cf. Romans 5 and others). Numbers 16:22 says that the Lord is "the God of the spirits of all flesh." This universal statement is in keeping with other scripture, although no other passage asserts it this clearly.

Theologically, the human spirit is described as fallen since the historic fall of Adam and Eve. Ontologically, I understand this to mean that a person's spirit is rebellious toward God and will lead him to choose to reject God or to pervert the knowledge of God, unless the Spirit precedes the revelation with a sovereign drawing of his spirit. The fallen spirit will result in a perversion of the innate values as well as of the consequent behavior, at least in the religious behavior and probably in moral and general behavior as well.

With this foundational philosophical discussion and relevant biblical study I would like to draw a synthesis in the form of a chart.

Foundation of Spiritual Life - Categories of Experience

Subjective Experience _ _ _ _ Objective Experience

Source:

Spiritual Innate Reflective Personal Social

Experience Experience Experience Experience Experience

Medium:

Impressions Voices Dreams Visions God Scripture Miracles

Area of effect:

My Spirit My Mind My Life

Using the terms presented here, we can see that most of the past conceptual work has been done in the area of reflective experience, sometimes in combination with social objective experience. I have not found any philosophical material focusing on metaphysics of the spiritual or innate areas from a Christian perspective.

Further development of the transcendental foundation and actual metaphysics of the spiritual realm and the relation of this to the metaphysics of the objective (experiential/ historical) realm and to the formal structure of knowledge and to value structures, and discussion of the implications of this for theology and life will have to come in other papers.

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