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DIALOGUE BETWEEN RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

George F. McLean

Department of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
620 Michigan Ave., N.E. Washington, DC 20064

There can be little doubt that as we enter into newly global times we find the world sinking rapidly into mutual fear and conflict. Some would propose to solve this by a kind of spiritual lobotomy or negative mode of tolerance that leads via relativism to a flaccid indifference.

If however, religion is the key to having life and that more fully — as is the very essence of religion — then abandoning faith commitments or employing them against one another is not a reasonable proposal. Rather it becomes the most urgent task of our day to search deeply into how our universal faiths relate to the diversity of the cultures they inspire and hence to their mutual encounters in global times.

But were religion and culture to be two alien or even antithetic realities then we might be doomed to failure and hence to conflict. Our task would be simply one of conflict resolution or attenuation by external manipulation. The argument of this paper is the contrary, namely (a) that the history of thought indicates that originally religion and culture were one and not distinguished, but (b) that in the West the emphasis on objectivity from the time of Socrates and Plato directed the mind away from culture and in modern times has made it difficult to appreciate religion as well. In response (c) the important new appreciation of human intentionality and subjectivity opens new paths to understanding both culture and religion as it were from within and as mutually important.

Key words: tolerance, faith, religion, culture, reason, Socrates, Plato.

THE FOUNDATIONAL UNITY OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

The religious dimension of life, if taken as an absolute point of reference, has been foundational for all cultures, as far back as we can trace human life. This can be charted by following the evolution of the modes of understanding by the human intellect. In its earliest form human understanding proceeded in terms of the external senses. Hence social organization was structured in relation to some one reality available to the senses. Whether animate or inanimate this one was not itself subject to use as were all other things, but rather was treated with the greatest reverence as the key to the meaning of the whole and of each of its parts. This has come to be called a totem. To dishonor or

abuse it in any way — to break a taboo — was the ultimate crime and unless corrected considered to be destructive not only of the individual but of the social welfare of the whole[1].

With the progress of human consciousness to an ability to think also in terms of the internal senses or imagination, human thought became able to unfold the inherent sense of the one totem as key to all into a pattern of gods. These were identified either as, or with, the parts of nature and were understood in a hierarchy culminating in a highest god who simply or in a community of gods consciously directed and judged all of life. All of reality was understood in these terms and expressed in a florid pattern of myths, through the patterns of which can be traced the cultural interaction between peoples. Late in this stage of thought Hesiod wrote his *Theogony* or genesis of the gods to attempt to trace this pattern of the gods[2] and thereby the structure of reality.

In continuity with this background the history of philosophy in the West began once the ability was developed to think not only in terms of what can be sensed by the external senses (totem) or imaged by the internal sense (myth), but what could be directly known by the intellect properly in its own term. What that turned out to be is particularly indicative for our issue of religion and culture. First, totemic thought had centered the mind in a absolute one, while mythic thought structured its vision in terms of a family of gods whereby the structure of the universe was articulated in relation to that one. Now philosophy proper was opened by Thales and, as metaphysics, especially by Parmenides in his *Poem* he argued rigorously that reality would be unintelligible if there was no difference between being and nonbeing. This required that it be ultimately one, without beginning and unchanging, all of which would engage non-being in the very nature of being itself[3].

Thus far we have seen human thought founded in one absolute reality whether totem, highest god or being itself, in terms of which all of life is shaped, normed and inspired. This is so much the case that for example when any vision arose which could seem to threaten this key to social life (as Socrates in Greece or Christianity later in Rome) it was seen as needing to be eliminated for the welfare of the community as a whole.

FROM OBJECTIVITY TO SUBJECTIVITY

Indeed it is first here that Western thought took a decisive turn. Seeing its own need for norms and orientation it proceeded to make the virtues, which Socrates sought, into stable things – like stars in the firmament — according to which people could guide their lives. Thus Plato gave them the ontological status of things, ideas existing at another level of reality or in another world beyond that of humans. They were unable to be shaped by human history, but able to provide stable guidance as norms of the human good. People were then challenged to live in time but in accord with this principle of unity, truth and goodness.

[1] G.F. McLean, *Ways to God* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), chap. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

[3] *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

It was essential that human life be directed by and according to this principle seen precisely as higher than and not subject to humankind. Indeed, the transcendence of this absolute reality over and above humans was so essential that the Greeks could not understand how this principle could know anything less than itself. It was as it were turned away from humankind as a reality over against or it ob-ject.

To a degree this would change with Christianity and its sense of divine love and providence for humankind, and indeed for all creation. As Augustine would observe: we did not first love God; God first loved us. Nevertheless the transcendence of God reinforced the attention to the objective character of knowledge. God was understood as creator and saviour, with man created in His image, serving as His vice regent. The Aristotelian emphasis in Christian theology pointed to God beyond man; the Augustinian pointed to God within or the immanence of God. But whether to God or neighbor the direction of thought and concern was to the other or objective, rather than to the human subject.

There remained, however, something inconvenient for human pride, for man was ever subject to the objectively higher one, which could never be exhaustively understood or controlled. Hence, in the reformation and Rennaisance which initiated the modern period an effort was made to reduce the field of concern to objects which could be grasped clearly and distinctly; all else was removed from consideration. Not God and infinite truth, but human reason would be the measure of all. Our world became not what man could do with and in the infinite truth and love of the creator, i.e. the world of nature inhabited by man, but what he could construct in terms which to him would have the clarity and certainty of science. This was not the living world of nature and human beings, but the artificial world of robots and mechanics, the economic world of profit through competition or exploitation, and the political world of power mutually applied. Reality, rather than being opened toward infinity, was assiduously shrunk to objects which humans could control.

By mid 20th century, in the face of suppression by the great ideologies of fascism, Marxism and colonialism the existentialists rightly called out for a recognition of human freedom. I believe that Sartre missed the mark in saying that if God existed man could not be free. Man is free in infinite and transcending love; only when restricted to limited human mind is there no room for freedom.

SUBJECTIVITY AND A NEW AWARENESS OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

The Recovery of Subjectivity

But if there is more to human consciousness and hence to philosophy, in analogy to the replacement of a tooth in childhood the more important phenomenon is not the old tooth that is falling out, but the strength of the new tooth that is replacing it. A few philosophers did point to this other dimensions of human awareness. Shortly after Descartes Pascal's assertion "Que la raison a des raisons, que la raison ne comprend pas" would remain famous if unheeded, as would Vico's prediction that the new reason would give birth to a generation of brutes - intellectual brutes, but brutes nonetheless. Later Kiekegard would follow Hegel with a similar warning. None of these voices would

have strong impact while the race was on to "conquer" the world by a supposed omni-sufficient scientific reason.

But as human problems mounted and were multiplied into world wars by technological achievements the adequacy of reason to handle the deepest problems of human dignity and purpose came under sustained questioning. More attention began to be given to additional dimensions of human capabilities.

There has been a strikingly parallel development in philosophy. At the beginning of this century, it had appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct objective terms was close to completion. This was to be achieved in either the empirical terms of the positivist tradition of sense knowledge or in the formal and essentialist terms of the Kantian intellectual tradition. Whitehead wrote that at the turn of the century, when with Bertrand Russell he went to the First World Congress of Philosophy in Paris, it seemed that, except for some details of application, the work of physics had been essentially completed. To the contrary, however, it was the very attempt to finalize scientific knowledge with its most evolved concepts which made manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach and led to renewed appreciation of the importance of subjectivity.

Wittgenstein began by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[1] on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point to point to the external world as perceived by sense experience. In such a project the spiritual element of understanding, i.e., the grasp of the relations between the points on this mental map and the external world was relegated to the margin as simply "unutterable". Later experience in teaching children, however, led Wittgenstein to the conclusion that this empirical mapping was simply not what was going on in human knowledge. In his *Blue and Brown Books*[2] and his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*[3] Wittgenstein shifted human consciousness or intentionality, which previously had been relegated to the periphery, to the very the center of concern. The focus of his philosophy was no longer the positivist, supposedly objective, replication of the external world, but the human construction of language and of worlds of meaning[4].

A similar process was underway in the Kantian camp. There Husserl's attempt to bracket all elements, in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge, forced attention to the limitations of a pure essentialism and opened the way for his understudy, Martin Heidegger, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*[5]. The religious implications of this new sensitivity would be articulated by Karl Rahner in his work, *Spirit in the World*, and by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution, *The Church in the World*[6].

For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was unveiled and emerged — the two processes were identical — in conscious human life (*dasein*) lived through time

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 167—175.
[2] Tr. C.K. Ogden (London: Methuen, 1981).
[3] (New York: Harper and Row).
[4] Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).
[5] Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 68—88.
[6] (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

and therefore through history. Thus human consciousness became the new focus of attention. The uncovering, unveiling or bringing into the light (the etymology of the term "phe-nomen-ology") of the unfolding patterns and interrelations of subjectivity would open a new era of human awareness. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop — and merge — in the very work of tracking the nature and direction of this process.

Thus, for Heidegger's successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer[1], the task becomes uncovering how human persons, emerging as family, neighborhood and people, by exercising their creative freedom weave their cultural tradition. This is not history as a mere compilation of whatever humankind does or makes, but culture as the fabric of the human consciousness and symbols by which a human group discovers and weaves a pattern of relations which is life giving, a way of cultivating the soul, and thereby unveals being in its time and place.

With this new interior insight into the working of human consciousness it is as if a whole new world opens before us as we become self aware of the free inclinations and decisions by which we open new horizons, and of the preferences and commitments by which we give shape to the realm or ambit of our life in its relations and engagements. In these terms the reality of cultures and their diversity can be seen, and also the significance of their basic relatedness in terms of their religious foundations. What had been lived intuitively if intensely in totem and myth now becomes the delicate and deliberate center of human responsibility.

CULTURE

This search to realize the good had been manifest objectively as the object of desire, namely, as that which is sought when absent and which completes life or renders it "perfect", understood in its etymological sense as completed or realized through and through. Hence, once achieved, it is no longer desired or sought, but enjoyed.

In this manner, things as good, that is, as actually realizing some degree of perfection and able to contribute to the well-being of others, are the bases of an interlocking set of relations. As these relations are based upon both the actual perfection things possess and the potential perfection to which they are thereby directed, the good both attracts when it has not yet been attained and constitutes one's fulfillment upon its achievement. Hence, goods are not arbitrary or simply a matter of wishful thinking; they are rather the full objective development of things and all that contributes thereto.

However, if this be taken not exteriorly or objectively about what fulfills, but interiorly in terms of the realization of being itself it is reflected in the manner in which each thing, even a stone, retains the being or reality it has and resists reduction to non-being or nothing. (The most we can do is to change or transform it into something else; we cannot annihilate it.) For a plant or tree, given the right conditions, this growing to full stature and fruition. For an animal it means protecting its life — fiercely, if necessary — and seeking out the substinence needed for its strength.

But in the light of this new awareness of human subjectivity being as affirmation, or as the definitive stance against non-being central to the work of Parmenides, the first

[1] *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: New Century, 1974).

Greek metaphysician, can now be understood also as the drama of free self-determination, and hence of the development of persons and of cultures.

As human this is the work not only of the chemical or biological lows, but of the human intellect working with the active imagination to conceive, evaluate and decide. In this work values and virtues come to the fore and with them the shaping of a culture and a tradition.

Values. The moral good is a more narrow field, for it concerns only one's free and responsible actions. This has the objective reality of the ontological good noted above, for it concerns real actions which stand in distinctive relation to one's own perfection and to that of others — and, indeed, to the physical universe and to God as well. Hence, many possible patterns of actions could be objectively right because they promote the good of those involved, while others, precisely as inconsistent with the real good of persons or things, are objectively disordered or misordered. This constitutes the objective basis for what is ethically good or bad.

Nevertheless, because the realm of objective relations is almost numberless, whereas our actions are single, it is necessary not only to choose in general between the good and the bad, but in each case to choose which of the often innumerable possibilities one will render concrete.

However broad or limited the options, as responsible and moral an act is essentially dependent upon its being willed by a subject. Therefore, in order to follow the emergence of the field of concrete moral action, it is not sufficient to examine only the objective aspect, namely, the nature of the things involved. In addition, one must consider the action in relation to the subject, namely, to the person who, in the context of his/her society and culture, appreciates and values the good of this action, chooses it over its alternatives, and eventually wills its actualization.

The term 'value' here is of special note. It was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity sufficient to attain a certain worth. This is reflected also in the term 'axiology' whose root means "weighing as much" or "worth as much". It requires an objective content — the good must truly "weigh in" and make a real difference; but the term 'value' expresses this good especially as related to wills which actually acknowledge it as a good and as desirable[1]. Thus, different individuals or groups of persons and at different periods have distinct sets of values. A people or community is sensitive to, and prizes, a distinct set of goods or, more likely, it establishes a distinctive ranking in the degree to which it prizes various goods. By so doing, it delineates among limitless objective goods a certain pattern of values which in a more stable fashion mirrors the corporate free choices of that people. For some peoples the highest good may be harmony while other considerations are ordered to this; for other peoples competition may be primary and other considerations such as courage are interpreted and ordered quite differently.

This constitutes the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, it builds a tradition or heritage about which we shall speak below. It constitutes, as well, the prime pattern and gradation of goods or values which persons experience

[1] *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975).

from their earliest years and in terms of which they interpret their developing relations. Young persons peer out at the world through lenses formed, as it were, by their family and culture and configured according to the pattern of choices made by that community throughout its history — often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses values do not create the object; but focus attention upon certain goods rather than upon others.

Virtues. Martin Heidegger describes a process by which the self emerges as a person in the field of moral action. It consists in transcending oneself or breaking beyond mere self-concern and projecting outward as a being whose very nature is to share with others for whom one cares and about whom one is concerned. In this process, one identifies new purposes or goals for the sake of which action is to be undertaken. In relation to these goals, certain combinations of possibilities, with their natures and norms, take on particular importance and begin thereby to enter into the makeup of one's world of meaning[1]. Freedom then becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice, and more even than self-determination in the sense of determining oneself to act. It shapes — the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes — one's world as the ambit of human decisions and dynamic action.

This process of deliberate choice and decision transcends the somatic and psychic dynamisms. Whereas the somatic dimension is extensively reactive, the psychic dynamisms of affectivity or appetite are fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values. These, in turn, evoke an active response from the emotions in the context of responsible freedom. But it is in terms of responsibility that one encounters the properly moral and social dimension of life. For, in order to live with others, one must be able to know, to choose and finally to realize what is truly conducive to one's good and to that of others. Thus, persons and groups must be able to judge the true value of what is to be chosen, that is, its objective worth, both in itself and in relation to others. This is moral truth: the judgment regarding whether the act makes the person and society good in the sense of bringing authentic individual and social fulfillment, or the contrary.

When this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual in the sense of being repeated. These are the modes of activity with which we are familiar; in their exercise, along with the coordinated natural dynamisms they require, we are practiced; and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. Such patterns constitute the basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence of our life. For this reason, they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to, or, as is often said, "amount to". Since Socrates, the technical term for these especially developed capabilities has been 'virtues' or special strengths.

Cultural Tradition. In their concrete circumstances and histories peoples working together with both intellect and imagination set a pattern of values and virtues through which they exercise their freedom and develop their pattern of social life. This is called a "culture". On the one hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or

[1] Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good", *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3—5.

mind (*cultura animi*), for just as good land, when left without cultivation, will produce only disordered vegetation of little value, so the human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless trained or educated[1]. This sense of culture corresponds most closely to the Greek term for education (*paideia*) as the development of character, taste and judgment, and to the German term "formation" (*Bildung*).

Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the spirit of a people and their ability to work as artists, not only in the restricted sense of producing purely aesthetic objects, but in the more involved sense of shaping all dimensions of life, material and spiritual, economic and political into a fulfilling pattern. The result is a whole life, characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty, and, thereby, sharing deeply in meaning and value. The capacity for this cannot be taught, although it may be enhanced by education; more recent phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries suggest that, at its base, culture is a renewal, a reliving of origins in an attitude of profound appreciation[2]. This points one beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in order to comprehend both.

On the other hand, "culture" can be traced to the term *civis* (citizen, civil society and civilization)[3]. This reflects the need for a person to belong to a social group or community in order for the human spirit to produce its proper results. By bringing to the person the resources of the tradition, the *tradita* or past wisdom produced by the human spirit, the community facilitates comprehension. By enriching the mind with examples of values which have been identified in the past, it teaches and inspires one to produce something analogous. For G.F. Klemm, this more objective sense of culture is composite in character[4]. E.B. Tyler defined this classically for the social sciences as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society"[5].

In contrast, Clifford Geertz focused on the meaning of all this for a people and on how a people's intentional action went about shaping its world. Thus to an experimental science in search of laws he contrasts the analysis of culture as an interpretative science in search of meaning[6]. What is sought is the import of artifacts and actions, that is, whether "it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said"[7]. This requires attention to "the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs"[8]. In this light, Geertz defines culture rather as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols,

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[1] V. Mathieu. "Cultura" in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), II, 207—210; and Raymond Williams, "Culture and Civilization", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), II, 273—276, and *Culture and Society* (London, 1958).

[2] V. Mathieu, *ibid.*

[3] V. Mathieu, "Civilta", *ibid*., I, 1437—1439.

[4] G.F. Klemm, *Allgemein Culturgeschicht der Menschheit* (Leipzig, 1843—1852), x.

[5] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871), VII, p. 7.

[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 5.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

a system of intended conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life"[1].

The development of values and virtues and their integration as a culture of any depth or richness takes time, and hence depends upon the experience and creativity of many generations. The culture which is handed on, or *tradita,* comes to be called a cultural tradition; as such it reflects the cumulative achievement of a people in discovering, mirroring and transmitting the deepest meanings of life. This is tradition in its synchronic sense as a body of wisdom.

The cumulative process of transmitting, adjusting and applying the values of a culture through time is not only heritage or what is received, but new creation as this is passed on in new ways. Attending to tradition, taken in this active sense, allows us not only to uncover the permanent and universal truths which Socrates sought, but to perceive the importance of values we receive from the tradition and to mobilize our own life project actively toward the future.

The Genesis of Tradition in Community. Because tradition has sometimes been interpreted as a threat to personal and social freedom, it is important to note that a cultural tradition is generated by the free and responsible life of the members of a concerned community and enables succeeding generations to realize their life with freedom and creativity.

Through the various steps of one's development, as one's circle of community expands through neighborhood, school, work and recreation, one comes to learn and to share personally and passionately an interpretation of reality and a pattern of value responses. The phenomenologist sees this life as the new source for wisdom. Hence, rather than turning away from daily life in order to contemplate abstract and disembodied ideas, the place to discover meaning is in life as lived in the family and in the progressively wider social circles into which one enters.

If it were merely a matter of community, however, all might be limited to the present, with no place for tradition as that which is "passed on" from one generation to the next. In fact, the process of trial and error, of continual correction and addition in relation to a people's evolving sense of human dignity and purpose, constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory for successive generations. In this laboratory of history, the strengths of various insights and behavior patterns can be identified and reinforced, while deficiencies are progressively corrected or eliminated. Horizontally, we learn from experience what promotes and what destroys life and, accordingly, make pragmatic adjustments.

But even this language remains too abstract, too limited to method or technique, too unidimensional. While tradition can be described in general and at a distance in terms of feed-back mechanisms and might seem merely to concern how to cope in daily life, what is being spoken about are free acts that are expressive of passionate human commitment and personal sacrifice in responding to concrete danger, building and rebuilding family alliances and constructing and defending one's nation. Moreover, this wisdom is not a matter of mere tactical adjustments to temporary concerns; it concerns rather

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

the meaning we are able to envision for life and which we desire to achieve through all such adjustments over a period of generations, i.e., what is truly worth striving for and the pattern of social interaction in which this can richly be lived. The result of this extended process of learning and commitment constitutes our awareness of the bases for the decisions of which history is constituted.

This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history and directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the bases of the values which humankind in its varied circumstances seeks to realize[1]. It is here that one searches for the absolute ground of meaning and value of which Iqbal wrote and which we will examine with Paul Tillich as a way of appreciating religion. Without that all is ultimately relative to only an interlocking network of consumption, then of dissatisfaction and finally of anomie and ennui.

The impact of the convergence of cumulative experience and reflection is heightened by its gradual elaboration in ritual and music, and its imaginative configuration in such great epics as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. All conspire to constitute a culture which, like a giant telecommunications dish, shapes, intensifies and extends the range and penetration of our personal sensitivity, free decision and mutual concern.

Tradition, then, is not, as is history, simply everything that ever happened, whether good or bad. It is rather what appears significant for human life: it is what has been seen through time and human experience to be deeply true and necessary for human life. It contains the values to which our forebears first freely gave their passionate commitment in specific historical circumstances and then constantly reviewed, rectified and progressively passed on generation after generation. The content of a tradition, expressed in works of literature and all the many facets of a culture, emerges progressively as something upon which personal character and civil society can be built. It constitutes a rich source from which multiple themes can be drawn, provided it be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated.

Hence, it is not because of personal inertia on our part or arbitrary will on the part of our forbears that our culture provides a model and exemplar. On the contrary, the importance of tradition derives from both the cooperative character of the learning by which wisdom is drawn from experience and the cumulative free acts of commitment and sacrifice which have defined, defended and passed on through time the corporate life of the community[2].

Ultimately, tradition bridges from the totemic age, through philosophy to civil society today. It bears the divine gifts of life, meaning and love, uncovered in facing the challenges of civil life through the ages. It provides both the way back to their origin

[1] Gadamer, pp. 245—53.

[2] *Ibid*. Gadamer emphasizes knowledge as the basis of tradition in contrast to those who would see it pejoratively as the result of arbitrary will. It is important to add to knowledge the free acts which, e.g., give birth to a nation and shape the attitudes and values of successive generations. As an example one might cite the continuing impact had by the Magna Carta through the Declaration of Independence upon life in North America, or of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in the national life of so many countries.

in the *arché* as the personal, free and responsible exercise of existence and even of its divine source, and the way forward to their divine goal, the way, that is, to their *Alpha* and their *Omega.*

RELIGION

In one sense we have been speaking in horizons that are increasingly restricted to the human: from objective dimensions which in modern terms come to be restricted to sciences totally constructed by, and at the disposition of, man to human subjectivity which could become reduplicatively self referential in terms of human whims and desires.

Yet another path is also opened by human subjectivity and it is precisely one which leads to the other term of our theme, namely, religion. Mohamed Iqbal points to this in his *Reconstruction of the Sciences of Religion* when he distinguishes between religion and the philosophy of his day when awareness of subjectivity was only beginning to emerge. He saw philosophy as more objective, abstract and coldly rational, whereas he located religion in the realm of human subjectivity as alive and relational.

> The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experience, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and find its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer — one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam[1].

Metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religioin becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness[2].

This does not remove religion from rationality but enables rationality to expand to the unique and ultimately personal savoring of being and truth of which al-Ghazali speaks in his *Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*[3].

For Parmenides it had been a highly rational exercise of abstract reasoning which identified the basis of being as one, eternal and unchanging. For Aristotle at the culmination of his metaphysics this was life divine, contemplation on contemplation itself (*noesis noeseos*), but unable from so exhalted a position to know our world of multiple beings with their tragedies and triumph.

All this is reversed when we review these issues with the new sensibility to subjectivity and in ways that bring us directly to culture. For if, as we have seen, cultures are

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[1] Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religions*, ed. M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1984), p. 143.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 48—49.

[3] *Deliverence from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty*, English trans. Muhammad Abulaylah; introduction and notes G.F. McLean (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001).

most radically the values and virtues of a people then we must ask what is the basis of valuing by a people. Using an early form of phenomenology Paul Tillich sees this not only as their external or objective interests but their inner concerns, indeed their ultimate concern in terms of which all has meaning.

This appears in the thought of Paul Tillich in both the thesis and the antithesis of his dialectic. In the former he speaks of God not only as absolute being but phenomenologically as man's "ultimate concern". This approach notes that we are never indifferent to things, simply recording the situation as does a light or sound meter. Rather, we judge the situation and react according as it reflects or falls away from what it should be. This fact makes manifest essence or logos in its normative sense. It is the way things should be, the norm of their perfection. Our response to essence is the heart of our efforts to protect and promote life; it is in this that we are basically and passionately engaged. Hence, by looking into our heart and identifying basic interests and concerns — our ultimate concern — we discover the most basic reality at this stage of the dialectic.

In these terms, Tillich expresses the positive side of the dialectical relationship of the essences of finite beings to the divine. He shows how these essences can contain, without exhausting, the power of being, for God remains this power. As exclusively positive, these might be said to express only the first elements of creation, that they remain, as it were, in a state of dreaming innocence within the divine life from which they must awaken to actualize and realize themselves[1]. Creation is fulfilled in the self-realization by which limited beings leave the ground of being to "stand upon" it. Whatever be said of the negative or antithetic step about this moment of separation, the element of essence is never completely lost, for "if it were lost, mind as well as reality would have been destroyed in the very moment of their coming into existence"[2]. It is the retention of this positive element of essence that provides the radical foundation for participation by limited beings in the divine and their capacity for pointing to the infinite power of being and depth of reason. Such participation in the divine being and some awareness thereof is an absolute prerequisite for any religion.

After the tragic stage of the antithesis or the contradiction of the human exercise of freedom, Tillich returns to the ultimate concern as experienced in true ecstasy. There one receives ultimate power by the presence of the ultimate which breaks through the contradictions of existence where and when it will. It is God who determines the circumstances and the degree in which he will be participated. The effect of this work and its sign is love, for, when the contradictions of the state of existence are overcome so that they are no longer the ultimate horizon, reunion and social healing, cooperation and creativity become possible.

Tillich calls the cognitive aspect of ecstasy inspiration. In what concerns the divine, he replaces the word knowledge by awareness. This is not concerned with new objects, which would invade reason with a strange body of knowledge that could not be assimilated, and, hence, would destroy its rational structure. Rather, that which is opened to man is a new dimension of being participated in by all while still retaining its transcendence.

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[1] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 238, 255.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 83; Cf. "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Incarnation", *Church Quarterly Review*, CXLVII (1949), 141.

It matters little that the contemporary situation of skepticism and meaninglessness has removed all possibility of content for this act. What is important is that we have been grasped by that which answers the ultimate question of our very being, our unconditional and ultimate concern. This indeed, is Tillich's phenomenological description of God. "Only certain is the ultimacy as ultimacy"[1]. The ultimate concern provides the place at which the faith by which there is belief (*fides qua creditur*) and the faith that is believed (*fides quae creditur*) are identified.

It is here that the difference between subject and object disappears. The source of our faith is present as both subject and object in a way that is beyond both of them. The absence of this dichotomy is the reason why, as noted, Tillich refuses to speak of knowledge here and uses instead the term 'awareness'. He compares it to the mystic's notion of the knowledge God has of Himself, the truth itself of St. Augustine[2]. It is absolutely certain, but the identity of subject and object means that it is also absolutely personal. Consequently, this experience of the ultimate cannot be directly received from others[3]: Revelation is something which we ourselves must live.

What does this mean for our issue of a dialogue between religion and culture; for recognizing the vast and rich diversity of cultures and the uniqueness of the divine? Tillich distinguishes the point of immediate awareness from its breadth of content. The point of awareness is expressed in what Tillich refers to as the ontological principle: "Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the *prius* of the interaction and separation of both subject and object, both theoretically and practically"[4]. He has no doubt about the certainty of this point, although nonsymbolically he can say only that this is being itself. However, in revelation he has experienced not only its reality but its relation to him[5]. He expresses the combination of these in the metaphorical terms of ground and abyss of being, of the power of being, and of ultimate and unconditional concern.

Generally, this point is experienced in a special situation and in a special form; the ultimate concern is made concrete in some one thing. It may, for instance, be the nation, a god or the God of the Bible. This concrete content of our act of belief differs from ultimacy as ultimacy which is not immediately evident. Since it remains within the subject-object dichotomy, its acceptance as ultimate requires an act of courage and venturing faith. The certainty we have about the breadth of concrete content is then only conditional[6]. Should time reveal this content to be finite, our faith will still have been an authentic contact with the unconditional itself, only the concrete expression will have been deficient[7]. (Here it is important to keep in mind Buber's caution with regard to

[1] *Dynamics of Faith*, Vol. X of *World Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 17.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 8—11.
[3] "The Problem of Theological Method", *Journal of Religion*, XXVII (1947), 22—23.
[4] "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, I (1946), 10.
[5] Systematic Theology, I, p. 109.
[6] "The Problem of the Theological Method", *loc. cit.*, pp. 22—23.
[7] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 18.

the thought of Max Scheler. Is it enough to change the object; is indeed the act of concern the same if the object is different? Or is a concern that is essentially relational in an I-thou rather than an I-it manner not differentiated in quality by its object?)

Tillich sees two correlated elements in one's act of faith. One is that of certainty concerning one's own being as related to something ultimate and unconditional. The other is that of risk, of surrendering to a concern which is not really ultimate and may be destructive if taken as if it were. The risk arises necessarily in the state of existence where both reason and objects are not only finite, but separated from their ground. This places an element of doubt in faith which is neither of the methodological variety found in the scientist, nor of the transitory type often had by the skeptic. Rather, the doubt of faith is existential, an awareness of the lasting element of insecurity. Nevertheless, this doubt can be accepted and overcome in spite of itself by an act of courage which affirms the reality of God. Faith remains the one state of ultimate concern, but, as such, it subsumes both certainty concerning the unconditional and existential doubt[1].

Can a system with such uncertainty concerning concrete realities still be called a realism? Tillich believes that it can, but only if it is specified as a belief-full or self-transcending realism. In this, the really real — the ground and power of everything real — is grasped in and through a concrete historical situation or culture. Hence, the value of the present moment which has become transparent for its ground is, paradoxically, both all and nothing. In itself it is not infinite and "the more it is seen in the light of the ultimate power, the more it appears as questionable and void of lasting significance"[2]. The appearance of self- subsistence gradually melts away. But, by this very fact, the ground and power of the present reality become evident. The concrete situation becomes *theonomous* and the infinite depth and eternal significance of the present is revealed in an *ecstatic* experience.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of this as something other-worldly, strange or uncomfortable. It is *ec-static* in the sense of going beyond the usual surface observations and calculations of our initial impressions and scientific calculations, but what it reveals is the profundity of our unity with colleagues, neighbors and, indeed, with all humankind. Rather, then, than generating a sense of estrangement, its sign is the way in which it enables one to see others as friends and to live comfortably with them. As ethnic and cultural differences emerge, along with the freedom of each people to be themselves, this work of the Spirit which is characteristic of Tillich's dialectic comes to be seen in its radical importance for social life.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN RELIGION AND CULTURE

We have now come to the point of relationship between religion and culture and precisely in ecstasy or the point of Ghazali and Iqbal which was omitted by James[3].

[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *The Protestant Era*, p. 18.

[3] Prof. G. Aavani, Director of the the Iranian Institute of Philosophy has noted that while William James begins his *Characters of Religious Experience* with a quote from al-Ghazali. The translation he had before him omitted the crucial passage in which Ghazali speaks of this in terms of the ultimately personaly experience of lasting or pavoring the divine.

Religion then is not another realm of human experience alongside others, but rather the source from which we come, the foundation on which we live, and the goal which we seek through all our values and virtues — and hence cultures.

Some would want to distinguish between beliefs which they would see, on the one hand, as many, related to earlier levels of experience and expressed in the various theologies and, on the other hand, faith which is the deeper level of experience, the ultimate concern which is literally inexpressible or unutterable. It is the former which specifies and distinguishes the multiple cultures and the latter as that in which all human life — indeed all reality whatsoever — is grounded.

Such a distinction is not without merit in that it takes account of the diversity and multiplicity of cultures and religions. Unfortunately, what we distinguish we too often separate and then proceed to conceive separately from the other. As a result the concrete or specific beliefs of a people lose their depth of meaning and become only cultural artifacts similar to their dances or songs. As seen by the sociologist or anthropologist these religious acts lose their properly religious significance.

Hence, if we can distinguish beliefs from faith we must not separate the two, but understand rather that beliefs are the ways in which faith is lived in time and place. In this relationship it is faith which holds the primacy and gives to beliefs (or culture) their sacred and salvific character.

In this light then the term dogma should be rethought. In the modern rationalist context anything based on a faith that went beyond reason was rejected as beyond the realm of assured truth, and hence as blind, arbitrary and willful. In post modern terms, however, with its implicit critique of rationalism, it is rather the restriction of the intellect to that which is clear and distinct (or universal and necessary) which has come to be seen as willful, blind and arbitrary.

What then is the proper relation between the one faith and the multiple sets of beliefs and the cultures and civilizations they inspire. Properly controlled insight can be garnered from the extensive work done on the system of analogy, which Cornelio Fabro rightly termed the language of participation. This was developed by Plato to express the way in which the many reflected (he used the term "mimesis" or "imaged") the one, and the many good realities which shared in and expressed the absolute idea of the good. Each in itself and each of its beliefs is sacred and salvific.

There is similarity in difference between multiple religions as each properly realizes its religious life in its own way. This is termed an analogy of proper proportionality. That is the existence of A is realized according to the essence of A in a manner not identical or equal, but proportionate to the way the existence of B is realized in a manner proportionate to the essence of B (existence of A: essence of A : : existence of B : essence of B). In this manner the religion of Islam as lived according to (:) the nature of Islam is not identical, but proportionate (::) to the way the Christian religion is lived according to (:) its own nature as Christian. Neither is in any part the same as the other; neither can be replaced by the other. The similarity lies rather in each realizing itself as fully as possible.

Here, however, we are talking not about mere human cultures, but about religions which are first of all the creative and salvific work of God. This requires as well what

is technically termed analogy of attribution according as each of the many is denominated precisely in terms of its relation to the One (the way food and scalpel are termed healthy as supporting the health that is found only in the living body). Each is properly religious by an analogy of attribution according as which each explicitly expresses that man is from and toward the one God.

For our purposes I would like to suggest that this means not only that the many cultures religions and beliefs receive a truly sacred character from the faith that inspires them, but that each expresses that faith in the absolute or the absolute itself in a unique and wonderful manner. If this be so then the insight of Nicolas of Cusa takes on new importance for our global times. For in meeting other cultures founded in their religions one encounters not only something holy like my own, but a manifestation of the divine that my own culture, shaped as it has been by its own distinctive beliefs (or experience), has not been able to express. If, however, my goal is to express God as fully as possible then the other religion is not alien and contradictory, but a sister which complements may commitment to God. Hence in their very difference religions need each other, as all tend toward the one absolute and absolutely loving source and goal. This is the deeper significance of the dialogue of religion and culture.

ДИАЛОГ МЕЖДУ РЕЛИГИЯМИ И КУЛЬТУРАМИ

Джордж Ф. Маклин

Кафедра философии
Католический университет Америки
620, ул. Мичиган, Вашингтон, округ Колумбия, 20064

В статье рассматривается проблема соотношения религии и культуры как двух или даже более антитетических реалий. Сам автор придерживается противоположной позиции. Основными тезисами данной статьи являются следующие положения: а) основываясь на истории философии и науки, показать, что изначально религия и культура были одним и тем же элементом и не отличаются, но б) что на Западе акцент ставился на объективность, данная тенденция наблюдается со времен Сократа и Платона. На основе данной позиции в современном мире появляется новая важная оценка человеческой интенциональности и субъектности, которая открывает новые пути для понимания как культуры, так и религии.

Ключевые слова: толерантность, вера, религия, культура, разум, Сократ, Платон.