

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD IN THE WORLD OF MAN

Let me tell you what I think. I think that if the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats—any kind of threats, whether of jail or of retribution after death [by some transcendent God]—then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer in the circus with his whip, not the prophet who sacrificed himself. But don't you see, this is just the point—what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music: the irresistible power of unarmed truth, the powerful attraction of its example. It has always been assumed that the most important things in the Gospels are the ethical maxims and commandments. But for me the most important thing is that Christ speaks in parables taken from life, that He explains the truth in terms of [man's] everyday reality. The idea that underlies this is that communion between mortals is immortal, and that the whole of life is symbolic because it is meaningful.¹

These words that Pasternak places in the mouth of Nikolai Nikolaievich in *Doctor Zhivago* bring into focus the problem at issue. They remind us that the God whose transcendence we discuss is, for Christians, God become man, the eternal Logos, who entered human history and dwelt in the world of men, who could reveal himself through symbols "in terms of [man's] everyday reality" because he accepted the pattern of human meaning in which symbols take their sense and man finds meaning for his life. The transcendence of such a God can have meaning as transcendence—and God meaning as God—only in terms of this pattern of meaning that is inseparable from the human history that God Incarnate made his own. If one ask the existential phenomenologists how they understand the "Transcendence of God in the World of Man," let it be out of the Christian conviction that they, too, have been charmed by the "inner music" and have surrendered, albeit in feeble, finite fashion, to the "irresistible power of unarmed truth." Their positive

¹ B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), pp. 41-42.

contribution is not so much in their doctrine of natural theology as in their meditation upon this pattern of meaning, of the World and of human history within which transcendence and God are to-be-thought.

If one may appeal to the authority of America's most prestigious theologian, Fr. John Courtney Murray, we know that somehow he was able to restrain his enthusiasm for existentialism. It is "... less a position taken by intelligence than a paralysis of intelligence, ..." he wrote, "... a lower form of atheism than idolatry. ..." ² But that was before Vatican II: shortly before he died he described the basic conflict in the Church today as taking place between "classicism" of thought (that opts for a world of eternal verities in some Platonic sky) and the so-called "historical consciousness," for which "truth is an affair of history and is affected by all the relatives of history. Truth is an affair of the human subject. Truth is, therefore, an affair of experience. ..." ³ If theology today is going to articulate revelation in terms of a new awareness of the historicity of man, it is principally to existential phenomenology it must turn to find, inchoatively at least, philosophical categories with which to deal.

Our aim, then, is a positive one. Let us begin by reviewing what is meant by existential phenomenology, indicating as we go its inhibitions concerning the affirmation of a transcendent God, and conclude by seeing what it says positively that might help the Christian theologian to meditate the problem of God in terms of "historical consciousness."

In the simplest terms, what is phenomenology? As a word, it is older than Edmund Husserl, older even than Hegel, though he was the first to use it to signify a specific philosophical method. In our own day, however, "phenomenology" is identified with the work of Husserl and we shall never understand it if we do not begin by considering what he tried to do.

When, under the influence of Brentano, Husserl turned from the natural sciences and mathematics, to devote himself to philosophy,

² J.C. Murray, S.J., *The Problem of God* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 95-96.

³ Cited in *The National Catholic Reporter* (May 17, 1967).

he was profoundly struck, first of all, by the difference between the progress made in science since Galileo and that made (or not made) by philosophy during the same period; and, secondly, by the lack of any constant theory of science which would serve as the paradigm for philosophy in its effort to become rigorously scientific. From the very beginning, then, Husserl proposed for himself the task of developing a philosophy that would be rigorously scientific. How did he conceive scientific rigor? Here his temperament and background as a mathematician seem to have played a decisive role. Not that he took mathematics as the paradigm for philosophy, but it was at least a model for science because it yielded absolute indubitability, i.e. certitude, and this because in the mathematical synthesis both the matter and the form were products of the human mind. To be rigorously scientific, philosophy must pursue the same purpose, i.e. attain absolute knowledge—but in a way proper to itself.

But what is absolute knowledge? And what is the way of philosophy that is proper to itself? By absolute here, let us understand simply that which can under no circumstances be placed in doubt. By knowledge, let us understand the relation of union between conscious, knowing subject and object known. When is this knowledge absolute? Only when that which is known cannot be placed in doubt, when the non-existence of the known, as known, is unthinkable. A man on the street believes that the world exists outside him, is "transcendent" to him. But it is not unthinkable that the world not exist outside of him as he thinks it to be. What is unthinkable is that it not be thought to exist, i.e. that it be not at least the thought-object—the object of thought, immanent to the knowing subject. Otherwise, there would be simply no act of knowing at all. For knowledge to be absolute, then, the object as known must be immanent to the knower. Philosophy as a rigorous science must investigate the conditions that make possible knowledge of this sort.

What are the consequences of such a conception of philosophy? First of all, philosophy as a rigorous science becomes an analysis of how the objects of our conscious acts are immanent to these acts, i.e. "appear" to consciousness through its acts, i.e. are "phenomena." Philosophy for Husserl, then, becomes a logos of such phenomena, i.e. phenomenology.

Secondly, since absolute knowledge is obtained only in conscious acts, philosophy becomes eminently an analysis of consciousness itself, and since the acts of consciousness always have a term—albeit an immanent one (otherwise they simply would not be acts at all)—consciousness of its very nature is said to be “intentional”—tending toward an immanent term (“all consciousness is consciousness of something”).

Thirdly, the transcendence of objects (i.e. their apparent existence outside of us) must be explained somehow in terms of immanence. This will be done by proposing a new criterion for what is to be called “objective.” Now it will be: identity of meaning. For example, when different ways of viewing an object all coincide, this coincidence of what is viewed, i.e. the common denominator of the different views, is called “objective.” The common denominator of several views remains immanent, to the extent that it is not independent of consciousness, which in several different glimpses views it, but it is, nonetheless, “transcendent” to the extent that it is independent of any particular glimpse by which it is viewed. This identity of meaning is the only valid objectivity that objects have for Husserl—in fact, it is the only Being that they have, because for him only that truly *is* whose essence has a meaning for consciousness.

Finally, the analysis of intentionality will involve first and foremost the study of the manner in which consciousness discerns, or “constitutes” for itself, these immanent objects. This does not mean that consciousness “creates” meanings of its own accord. When meanings appear to consciousness it is as if they were “given” to it. Nonetheless spontaneous operation on the part of consciousness is a necessary condition for the clarification or illumination of meanings. This process of constitution is an essential part of Husserl’s phenomenology, though the word itself becomes thematic relatively late in his career.

Let us pass now from this consideration of Husserl in his unity, i.e. in his singleminded purpose to develop a rigorously scientific philosophy, to Husserl in his diversity, for he himself speaks of different kinds of phenomenology. In the unfortunately garbled presentation of his own case (article in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

1929), he speaks of two different kinds, or, better, two levels of phenomenology: (1) phenomenology on the level of psychology, and (2) phenomenology on the level of transcendental philosophy.

Phenomenological psychology coincides almost completely with what we have just described. The psychologist finds his experience mixed even here with "external" experience (i.e. transcendent to consciousness) and non-psychic (i.e. physical) realities. If he is going to be rigorous he must practice an *epoche*, says Husserl. This means that he must put the world of natural experience "between brackets," in other words disregard its matter-of-fact character ("facticity"), in order to concentrate on phenomena as meaningful, i.e. to consciousness. This bracketing (*epoche*) he calls "reduction," a leading-back of the experience from the "natural attitude" of everyday life to the level of consciousness where its essential meaning can be discerned with absolute certainty. Reduction accomplished, the phenomenologist proceeds to the careful description of the unities of sense thus isolated. This can be done from the viewpoint of consciousness experiencing (such an analysis is called "noetic"), or from the point of view of the meaning itself as experienced (such analysis is called "noematic"). The noematic analysis will often involve a further reduction in order to discern the essence (*eidōs*) of the meaning in question. In the concrete, this will often be accomplished by a variation of examples of a given type of phenomenon—either carefully chosen, or imaginatively conceived, or both—in order to discern what is common to them all. This part of the phenomenological method is what is most familiar to the general public. But it is only a part of it, and has meaning only in terms of the whole. One might infer from this that one ought to be very cautious about claiming to make a "phenomenological analysis, if all one does is "describe" one's "experience."

Transcendental phenomenology differs from phenomenological psychology by a change of attitude, or, better, by a step further in the same direction. Perhaps we get a feeling for it best if we recall how Kant uses the term "transcendental," i.e. as describing the *a priori* conditions of possibility (where *a priori* means prior to experience) for our manner of knowing objects. Phenomenology becomes transcendental for Husserl by taking the reduction one step further

in the pursuit of philosophy as a rigorous science. What ultimately renders it possible for the individual ego-subject to constitute the meanings that eidetic reduction discerns? It is that which makes it possible for the constituting subject to be a subject, i.e. subjectivity as such—pure spontaneity, conceived as a living stream of effervescence moving in a time-conditioned flow, out of which the ego of phenomenological psychology arises. In fact, this time-conditioned spontaneity even constitutes the ego of phenomenological psychology. As transcendental, it is "pure subjectivity," the universal *a priori* of all conscious experience. But even pure subjectivity, conceived as transcendental consciousness, is intentional, i.e. has a noematic correlate which it constitutes as its object. What is this objective correlate of pure subjectivity? Pure objectivity—objectivity as such. More precisely, pure objectivity as correlate of pure subjectivity is not any single object within the world of conscious experience, not even the sum total of all objects, but rather the condition of possibility of all objects within the world, namely the world itself conceived as horizon of conscious experience. The world, if it is thus constituted by transcendental subjectivity, is not the world of our natural experience, but this world precisely as meaningful for pure consciousness. In constituting the world itself as meaningful, pure consciousness must again perform a reduction, which involves the bracketing of the facticity of the world as such of natural experience. This is the "transcendental" reduction, and the process that constitutes the meaning of the world thus reduced is likewise a transcendental constitution. It is to analyze *this* constitution that must be the ultimate aim of a philosophy that will be rigorously scientific, and such a philosophy itself will be called "transcendental."

Three brief remarks are in order. The first concerns constitution. The analysis of the constituting process is the very heart of Husserl's phenomenological method. After he finally thematized the problem, his conception of the process developed significantly. In the *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology* (1913), he conceived it in rather static fashion according to a matter-form schema: consciousness projects a form of meaning which it then proceeds to fill with matter by means of some type of intuition through which the givenness of meaning appears. But as time goes on he conceives it more and more

dynamically as a *genesis* of meaning that is essentially time-conditioned, i.e. historical, at least in terms of the history of the constituting consciousness itself. Constitution in this sense is called "genetic." In either case, the problem of constitution is never separable from the problem of truth. For it is through clarifying constitution that evidence appears, and it is by evidence that essences are known to be true.

The second remark concerns the plurality of egos: intersubjectivity. Having conceived the transcendental ego as a type of monad, i.e. as consciousness in which experience proceeds as from its own spontaneity, without any cause or influence external to itself, Husserl nevertheless recognizes quite clearly in his later years that he must account for other subjects than the phenomenological ego. The world constituted by transcendental subjectivity is shared with other consciousnesses, for whom it is equally objective. But how explain the origin of these other egos? They, too, must be somehow constituted by the transcendental ego. But constitution is the process of constituting objects. How does the transcendental ego constitute other egos precisely as subjects. The problem is a major one. Husserl tries to come to grips with it by appealing to another type of experience that he analyses in *Cartesian Meditations*, V. We cannot take this matter further here. Let it suffice to say that Husserl does recognize the problem and honestly feels that he solves it.

Finally, once the problem of intersubjectivity has been faced, Husserl must re-examine the problem of the world itself that is shared with other subjects, the world of lived-experience (*Lebenswelt*), in the light of the genesis (i.e. historical) of consciousness. It is here, then, in his last works, that he comes to grips with the historicity of consciousness and with the meaning of human history itself.

What, then, of the transcendence of God in the world of man conceived in such a way? Obviously the pattern of meaning for man is radically different here than it had been during the Middle Ages. For the metaphysics of the schoolmen, the meaning of beings was grounded independently of man in their essence ("what makes them to be what they are"). As "de-termined" perfection, essences were in turn grounded in perfection without "term," i.e. ab-solved from all

term, therefore *perfectio ab-soluta*, absolute perfection, which, as *singulare tantum* was the supreme being called God. Such meaning (essence) was discernible in man by reason of a special light (*intellectus agens*) with which he was endowed, that illumined for him those universal necessary essences ultimately grounded in absolute perfection.

For modern metaphysics, however, meaning was not grounded in essences independent of man, rather essences were grounded in meaning—meaning for man. Here the towering figure is, of course, Immanuel Kant. Since, after Descartes, man's universe had become anthropocentric, Kant would try to explain metaphysical knowledge without recourse to a *lumen naturale*, i.e. in terms of the finitude of human reason as such. Beings have meaning only insofar as they are objects of "experience" and Kant would ground their meaning by explaining how this objectivity is made possible by the structures of "pure reason." The Being of objects, i.e. what makes them to *be* objects, is their "objectivity" grounded in consciousness; their meaning is their meaning for man; "essences" are constituted by the schematized categories of the human understanding; the world is a totalizing "Idea" of reason itself that gathers together all human experiences of meaning into a unifying whole.

For Husserl, the *locus* of meaning and of essences is, like Kant, consciousness, which, as we have seen, he calls "transcendental." But, unlike Kant, these meanings are not constituted *by* the subject through its own *a priori* structures. Rather they emerge as illumined *for* the subject through the act of spontaneous collaboration he calls constitution. The Being of these objects is their illumined essences; the Being of all beings is transcendental consciousness itself as the domain within which meanings (for consciousness) emerge.⁴

If transcendental subjectivity supplies the pattern of meaning for Husserl, how are we to speak of transcendence in such a context? Obviously the word itself is ambiguous. From the Latin, meaning "to pass, or stop, beyond," it takes on a different meaning according to what (or who) makes the passage, where it (or he) starts, what (or

⁴ Cf. M. Müller, "Klassische und moderne Metaphysik, oder Sein als Sinn," in *Sinn and Sein*, hrsg. R. Wisser (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960), pp. 311-327.

who) is passed over and what (or who) it is whereunto the passage is made. In mediaeval metaphysics, one can call "absolute" perfection "transcendent" because it passes beyond all "term" that defines perfection. For Kant, God, as Idea of pure reason, is transcendent because, as the ultimate Unconditioned Condition of the always-conditioned experience of objects, He passes beyond experience (of objects) and therefore cannot be known but only thought. For Kant, therefore, God is transcendent because He is unknowable and unknowable because He is transcendent. For Husserl, something is "transcendent" if as constituted essence it "passes beyond" any single act that constitutes it and thereby appears as "given" to intuition. Again, it is "transcendent" if it passes beyond any reduction and is experienced as part of the world of the natural attitude. Finally, something is transcendent if it passes beyond the sphere of consciousness completely. This is the case with God.

Husserl does not begrudge us the plausibility of talking about God as the ultimate ground of the *de facto* world of natural experience, or, for that matter, of the sheer fact that there is such a thing as consciousness itself. But such a God would transcend consciousness just as much as he would transcend the world. He would be, then, ". . . an 'absolute' in a totally different sense from the absolute of consciousness, just as he would be in turn transcendent in a totally different sense from that in which the world is transcendent. Naturally we extend the phenomenological reduction to [include] the 'absolute' and 'transcendent' of such a type. It ought to remain excluded from this field of investigation we are about to establish insofar as this ought to be the field of pure consciousness itself."⁵ There is no irreverence in this—as a matter of fact, we are told that Husserl himself was converted from Judaism to Christianity and died a believer in God. His exclusion of the God-problem from the problematic

⁵ ". . . Es wäre also ein 'Absolutes' in einem total anderen Sinne als das Absolute des Bewusstseins, wie es andererseits ein Transzendentes in total anderem Sinne wäre gegenüber dem Transzendenten im Sinne der Welt. Auf dieses 'Absolute' und 'Transzendente' erstrecken wir natürlich die phänomenologische Reduktion. Es soll aus dem neu zu schaffenden Forschungsfelde ausgeschaltet bleiben, sofern dieses ein Feld des reinen Bewusstseins selbst sein soll." (E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie*, hrsg. W. Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), p. 140.

of transcendental phenomenology was based purely on the demands of methodological rigor.

So much, then, for transcendental phenomenology. By what strange chemistry does it become "existential"? There is no easy formula. The term suggests rather individual persons than a common doctrine, and the most familiar names, at least to the uninitiated, are Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

In the most general terms, perhaps one may say that existential phenomenology is characterized by a concern for human existence *qua* human, i.e. as man's effort to find or give meaning to his life in his world. If it be taken in this sense, Heidegger denies vigorously that his thought is an existentialism. Where Sartre says: *précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a seulement des hommes*, Heidegger contradicts him by saying: *précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l'Être*.⁶ For Heidegger's only concern is with the meaning of Being. True enough, he begins his search by a phenomenological analysis of the nature of man that he calls *Dasein*, but only because man alone comprehends Being and offers a way of access to its meaning. True enough, *Dasein's* privileged access to Being is an openness by which *Dasein* stands outside itself and toward Being, so that *Dasein* is described as "ek-sistence," and the analysis "existential." True enough, the existential analysis begins with *Dasein* in its everyday condition as a being whose nature it is to-be-in-the-World and deals at great length with the problem of *Dasein's* authenticity. But the entire analysis is only a propaedeutic to the interrogation of Being itself; it is never concerned with man for his own sake, it is *not* an "existential phenomenology."

Be that as it may, there is no denying that Heidegger's influence on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty has been enormous, and nothing has been more decisive than his insistence that it is impossible to make an *epoche* of facticity. Facticity is ingredient to meaning. In a private letter to Husserl commenting on the latter's article on "Phenomenology" for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Heidegger puts

⁶ M. Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, n.d.), p. 22.

his criticism in Husserl's own language: ". . . the Being-structure of the human *Dasein* [which includes facticity] . . . conceals within itself the potentiality for transcendental constitution. Transcendental constitution is a central potentiality of the existence of the *matter-of-fact* self. . . ." Let this remark introduce us to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. By a strange paradox, Merleau-Ponty, who is admittedly an "existentialist," will soon bring us back to Heidegger, who is not.

Sartre may be disposed of quickly, in part because his thought is somewhat familiar to most, in part because he is less significant (in one man's view) than Merleau-Ponty and probably will have a less lasting influence.

The shortest road to Sartre, perhaps, is in terms of his critique of Husserl. In a celebrated essay entitled *The Transcendence of the Ego*,⁸ Sartre maintains that the theory of reduction leads ultimately to a conception of transcendental consciousness as pure spontaneity (sheer transparency), to be sure, but why, he asks, call this an ego? ". . . When I run after a street-car, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*. There is consciousness of the streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken, etc. and non-positional consciousness of consciousness. In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects; it is they which constitute the unity of my consciousness. . . ." In other words, the ego is not an ego of consciousness but for consciousness. That is to say, the ego is itself discovered as the unity of the acts of consciousness when these acts are posed, but is discovered along with the acts themselves—in fact subsequent to the acts. That is why existence (of the acts of consciousness) precedes essence (of the ego). That is the most precise sense in which this is called "existentialism."

⁷ ". . . Es gilt zu zeigen, dass die Seinsart des menschlichen Daseins . . . in sich die Möglichkeit der transzendentalen Konstitution birgt. Die transzendente Konstitution ist eine zentrale Möglichkeit der Existenz des faktischen Selbst. . . . Die Frage nach der Seinsart der Konstituierenden ist nicht zu umgehen." Cited in W. Biemel, "Husserls *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Artikel und Heideggers Anmerkungen dazu," in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, XI (1950), pp. 246-280, n.b., p. 274.

⁸ J.-P. Sartre, "La Transcendence de L'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique," in *Recherches Philosophiques*, VI (1936-1937); English trans. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York: Noonday Press, 1965).

⁹ Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, pp. 48-49.

Now consciousness, thus understood, is what Sartre calls the *pour-soi* because, as self-transparency, it is always "for" or "to" itself. To the extent that the *pour-soi* of itself is completely undetermined, it is a *néant* (of determination). Undetermined, it is, therefore, free—absolutely undetermined, absolutely free. On the other hand, that which is not consciousness, which transcends and determines it, is called, as opposed to *pour-soi*, the *en-soi*, being "in itself," and is everything that the *pour-soi* is not. It is completely opaque, determined, non-free. These two categories of beings are absolutely irreducible for Sartre. Whatever is, is either *pour-soi* or *en-soi*. Absolutely irreducible, they are obviously contradictory. Now God, for Sartre, which he understands as the *causa sui* of the rationalist tradition, is the ideal coincidence of the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*, i.e. an idea that is contradictory in itself, absurd, impossible. To ask about his transcendence is folly.

All of this will appear hasty and somewhat arbitrary, I know, but to try to make it acceptable, or at least plausible, would take more time than Sartre is entitled to in an exposé of this kind. At least one can see where Sartre is situated in the phenomenological movement. Let us be content with that. Merleau-Ponty will be more helpful to the theologian. His starting point is not the Husserl of transcendental subjectivity so much as the Husserl of the *Lebenswelt*, the Husserl who realized more and more clearly that even in the world of natural experience there operates a *funktionierende Intentionalität*. Merleau-Ponty will explore this operative intentionality.

What strikes Merleau-Ponty is the fact that the world is there for consciousness before any analysis of it is made.¹⁰ It would simply be artificial, then, to make an *epoché* of its matter-of-fact presence to us. What, then, does the *epoché* mean for Merleau-Ponty? It means to pass from the naive acceptance of the matter-of-fact world to a philosophical, i.e. phenomenologically illumined, awareness of our presence to the lived world that precedes all analysis. ". . . The best formula for the reduction is without doubt that of a 'wonderment'

¹⁰ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. iv.

before the world. . . ."¹¹ For him, philosophy will be rigorously scientific when ". . . it goes to the very limit of the effort to know what Nature, History and the World *are*, . . . when living in the world [one] tries to see fully his life . . . and, dwelling in the world, tries to think [of] himself [as] in the world, to think the world in itself. . . ."¹² You can see, then, why he says that ". . . far from being as has been believed the formula for an idealistic philosophy, the phenomenological reduction is that of a philosophy that is existential. . . ."¹³ Here is existential phenomenology in its purest form.

When in 1953 Merleau-Ponty was nominated to the chair of philosophy in the College de France, he was asked to outline the course of his development. He described his first two books as an effort to "restore the world of perception,"¹⁴ which meant to "learn again to see the world."¹⁵ Here consciousness was described as "incarnate," i.e., immersed in the world. Hence he begins the *Phenomenology of Perception* with an analysis of its incarnation as such, i.e. of the human body—not a thing like other things, but ". . . our point of view upon the world, the place where the spirit is clothed in a certain physical and historical situation. . . ."¹⁶

To be sure, consciousness though incarnate is always intentional. Meanings arise now out of the encounter between an intention of

¹¹ ". . . La meilleure formule de la reduction est sans doute . . . un 'étonnement' devant le monde. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. viii).

¹² ". . . elle seule va jusqu' au bout de l'effort pour savoir ce que c'est la Nature et l'Histoire et le Monde et l'Être, quand . . . celui qui, vivant dans le monde et dans l'Être, entend voir pleinement sa vie, . . . et qui, habitant du monde, essaie de se penser dans le monde, de penser le monde en lui-même. . . ." (M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* [Paris: Gallimard, 1964], p. 146.)

¹³ ". . . Loin d'être, comme on l'a cru, la formule d'une philosophie idéaliste, la réduction phénoménologique est celle d'une philosophie existentielle. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. ix.)

¹⁴ ". . . restituer le monde de la perception. . . ." (M. Merleau-Ponty, "Un inédit de Maurice Merleau-Ponty," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* [1962], pp. 401-409, n.b., p. 402.)

¹⁵ ". . . apprendre à voir le monde. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. xvi.)

¹⁶ ". . . il est notre point de vue sur le monde, le lieu où l'esprit s'investit dans une certaine situation physique et historique. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Un inédit*. . . , p. 403.)

consciousness and what is given to it through its contact in the world. ". . . It is impossible to describe the color of a rug without saying that it is a rug, a woolen rug, and without implying in this color a certain tactile value, weight, resistance to sound, etc. . . ."17 What is more, the rug is inserted within a horizon within which it is related to other meaningful things. The horizon of all horizons is the world itself, guaranteeing unity to my experience.¹⁸ Our insertion in the world involves succession and, therefore, implies temporality. Correlatively, the disclosure of the world is indefinitely continued and comes to pass as a history. The continuity of that history is assured by the unity of the world. Moreover I am not alone in this world—I share it with other incarnate consciousness. The world to which I am present is humanized by others, it bears the traces of ages past; the meanings that I perceive are as conditioned by historicity as my consciousness and the world itself.¹⁹ ". . . If we must say that there is a total history,—a single tissue that reunites all the simultaneous and successive enterprises of civilization,—[this] is because the different cultures are so many coherent systems of symbols which can be compared and placed under a common denominator and because in each one the modes of work, of human relationship, of language and of thought, even if they are not at every moment parallel, are never kept separate for a long time. And that which gives the relation of meaning between each aspect of a culture and all the others as between the episodes of history is the permanent and concordant thought of that plurality of beings who recognize themselves as 'equal.' . . ."20

17 ". . . impossible de décrire complètement la couleur du tapis sans dire que c'est un tapis, un tapis de laine, et sans impliquer dans cette couleur une certaine valeur tactile, un certain poids, une certaine résistance ou son. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. 373.)

18 Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. 381.

19 Cf. A. Dondeyne, "L'historicité dans la philosophie contemporaine," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, LIX (1956), 11-14.

20 ". . . S'il faut dire qu'il y a une histoire totale,—un seul tissu qui réunit toutes les entreprises de civilisation simultanées et successives, . . . —. . . c'est parce que les cultures sont autant de systèmes cohérents de symboles, qui peuvent être comparés et placés sur un dénominateur commun, et au'en chacun les modes de travail, ceux des relations humaines, ceux du langage et ceux de la pensée, même s'ils ne sont pas à chaque moment parallèles ne restent jamais

In such a conception of human experience, is there any room to speak of transcendence? There is, to be sure, a genuine transcendence of things which intentional consciousness encounters; hence this is no idealism of signification merely imposed by the subject. Call it their "givenness," if you will.²¹ Call it the inexhaustibility of their presence, if you will: "... there is no thing that is completely observable. . . ." ²² By the same token there is a transcendence of the world. "... Doubtlessly I communicate with [the world], but I do not possess it, it is inexhaustible. . . ." ²³ Again: "... Our point of departure will be there is being, there is world, there is *some thing*: in the strong sense in which Greek speaks of *to legein*, there is cohesion, there is meaning. . . ." ²⁴

There are given to incarnate conscious things, world and meaning. This is certainly a transcendence. But may we speak of the transcendence of God? Certainly there is no way of affirming the existence of God as a result of phenomenological analysis of this kind. Indeed, to speak of God at all as the theologians do is to try to escape the radical contingency of the human situation. "... Theology observes the contingency of human being only in order to derive from it a necessary being, that is in order to dissolve it." ²⁵ For Merleau-Ponty, there simply is no respectable escape from the radical contingency and ambiguity of the lived world.

All of this is said in terms of the early works as an attempt to "restore the world of perception." But Merleau-Ponty's statement of

séparés à la longue. Et ce rapport de sens entre chaque aspect d'une culture et tous les autres, comme entre tous les épisodes de l'histoire, c'est la pensée permanente et concordante de cette pluralité d'êtres qui se reconnaissent comme des 'semblables'. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Un inédit*. . . , p. 408.)

²¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible*. . . ; p. 244.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²³ "... je communique indubitablement avec [le monde], mais je ne le possède pas, il est inépuisable. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*. . . , p. xiii.)

²⁴ "... Notre point de départ [sera]: . . . il y a être, il y a monde, il y a quelque chose; au sens fort ou le grec parle de *to legein*, il y a cohésion, il y a sens. . . ." Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible*. . . , p. 121.)

²⁵ "... la théologie ne constate la contingence de l'être humain que pour la dériver d'un Être nécessaire, c'est à dire pour s'en défaire." (Merleau-Ponty, *Éloge de la philosophie* [Paris: Gallimard, 1955], p. 61, cited in Dondeyne, *L'historicité*. . . , p. 20.)

declared purpose tells also where he was heading when he died. ". . . We believe that we have found in the experience of the lived world a relationship of a new type between the spirit and truth. . . . We have the experience of a truth that shows through or englobes us rather than of one that our spirit possesses or circumscribes. . . ." ²⁶ His next work, therefore, was to have been called *The Origin of Truth*. He, too, it seems, was charmed by the "inward music." Furthermore, this truth is experienced by the community of mankind dwelling in history, which he described as "transcendental man." The second projected work was, therefore, to be called *Transcendental Man*. "Our researches ought, then, to lead us finally to reflect on this *transcendental man*, or this 'natural light' common to all men who appear across the movement of history,—on this *Logos* which assigns to us as a task to bring into language a world that has been mute up until this point. . . ." ²⁷ In the year before he died, this *Logos*, the *lumen naturale* common to all men, began to preoccupy him more and more.

"Our point of departure," he had said will be "there is being, there is world, there is *to legein*, there is cohesion, there is meaning." The *Logos* of this *to legein* is more and more clearly *l'Être*, Being. ". . . The non-relative [the 'transcendent?'] henceforth is not nature itself in itself, nor a system of the [concepts] of absolute consciousness, and still less man; but rather than 'teleology' of which Husserl spoke—which is written and thought in quotation marks—the articulation and framework of Being which is accomplished through man." ²⁸ Being, therefore, and *Logos* come to pass through him. They

²⁶ ". . . Nous avons cru trouver dans l'expérience du monde perçu un rapport d'un type nouveau entre l'esprit et la vérité. . . . Nous faisons . . . l'expérience d'une vérité qui transparait ou nous englobe plutôt que notre esprit ne la détient et ne la circonscrit. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Un inédit*. . . , pp. 404-405.)

²⁷ "Nos recherches doivent donc nous conduire finalement à réfléchir sur cet homme transcendantal, ou cette 'lumière naturelle' commune à tous, qui transparait à travers le mouvement de l'histoire,—sur ce *Logos* qui nous assigne pour tâche d'amener à la parole un monde muet jusque-là, . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Un inédit* . . . , p. 408.)

²⁸ ". . . L'irrélatif, désormais, ce n'est pas la nature en soi, ni le système des saisies de la conscience absolue, et pas davantage l'homme, mais cette 'téléologie' dont parle Husserl,—qui s'écrit et se pense entre guillemets,—jointure et

have a primacy over him and possess him. Merleau-Ponty begins to experience in intentionality a certain "reversibility." ". . . Things have us and it is not we who have things. It is Being that speaks in us and not we who speak of Being."²⁹ Finally, Being as *Logos* is also a type of original language. As a result, *Logos* as language possesses man, language reveals itself in man and through man, welling up out of the depths of silence. ". . . It is the error of semantic philosophies to close language off as if it spoke only of itself. It lives only out of silence; everything that we throw off to others has germinated in this great voiceless country which never leaves us. . . ."³⁰ It is this language, the language of Being, the language of *Logos*, which is the theme of philosophy. ". . . Open toward things, [philosophy] is called by the voices of silence and continues an effort at articulation that is the Being of every being."³¹

Here it almost seems that the hands are the hands of Merleau-Ponty but the voice is the voice of Heidegger. In fact, there is ample evidence from Merleau-Ponty's notebooks that Heidegger's influence on him became more and more profound. If we conclude, then, with some remarks on Heidegger, this is not because we are making him an existential phenomenologist, but because the existential phenomenologist, par excellence, Merleau-Ponty, has apparently, through the "power of unarmed truth," become a thinker of Being.

What can be said in brief conclusion about Heidegger's experience of Being and *Logos*, and about his conception of a transcendent God? In *Being and Time*, Being is disclosed through the experience of the World, i.e. the matrix of relationships interior to which the

membre de l'Être qui s'accomplit à travers l'homme." (M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* [Paris: Gallimard, 1960], p. 228.)

²⁹ ". . . A savoir que les choses nous ont, et que ce n'est pas nous qui avons les choses. . . . Que c'est l'être qui parle en nous et non nous qui parlons de l'être." (Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible*. . . , p. 247.)

³⁰ ". . . C'est l'erreur des philosophies sémantiques de fermer le langage comme s'il ne parlait que de soi: il ne vit que du silence; tout ce que nous jetons aux autres a germé dans ce grand pays muet que ne nous quitte pas. . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible*. . . , p. 167.)

³¹ ". . . elle est langage opérant, ce langage-là qui ne puet se savoir que du dedans, par la pratique, est ouvert sur les choses, appelé par les voix du silence, et continue un essai d'articulation que est l'Être de tout être." (Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible*. . . , p. 168.)

beings *Dasein* encounters have meaning. Being appearing as World is the pattern of Total Meaningfulness. For Heidegger, then, the pattern of human meaning is not grounded in an absolutely transcendent God as for the mediaeval scholastics, nor in human consciousness (transcendental apperception) as in Kant, nor in absolute subjectivity as in Husserl, but In Being itself, which is correlative with man but nonetheless gives itself to him as gift. Furthermore, in giving beings meaning, Being lets them be. It lets each be unconcealed (*a-lēthes*). Therefore, Being is *A-lētheia*, Truth. It lets them be present. Therefore, Being is Presence, *Anwesenheit*. Thus, Being passes beyond all beings, and in this sense it is "transcendent."
 "... Being is the transcendent pure and simple. . . ." ³²

Being is historical, for it reveals itself to *Dasein* in an "e-event" (*Ereignis*) of disclosure that constitutes the epochs of history. Being is the Wholesome (*das Heile*), the Holy (*das Heilige*). "... Only in terms of this essence of the Holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. . . ." ³³ And, finally, Being is Logos, gathering together and giving coherence (*to legein*) to everything that is. As Logos, Being is Language in its origins, giving itself to *Dasein* to be uttered. "... If we go to a spring or stroll through the woods, we are passing already through the word 'spring,' through the word 'woods,' even when we do not express the words or think of anything linguistic. . . ." ³⁴ If Being-as-Logos reveals itself as an e-event that founds an epoch of history, then we have indeed a "language-event" that lies far deeper than sheer linguisticity and founds the very cohesion of everything that is.

Meaning, Presence, Truth, the Holy, Logos, the "Transcendent" pure and simple—is, Being, then God? Not if by God is meant, as Heidegger claims is the case, a supreme being in the hierarchy of

³² "... *Sein ist das transcendens schlechthin. . . .*" (M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*⁹ [Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1960], p. 38.) Heidegger's italics.

³³ "... Erst aus dem Wesen des Heiligen ist das Wesen von Gottheit zu denken. . . ." (M. Heidegger, *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit, Mit einem Brief über dem Humanismus* [Bern: Francke, 1947], p. 102.)

³⁴ "... Wenn wir zum Brunnen, wenn wir durch den Wald gehen, gehen wir schon immer durch das Word 'Brunnen,' durch das Word 'Wald' hindurch, auch wenn wir diese Worte nicht aussprechen und nicht an Sprachliches denken. . . ." (M. Heidegger, *Holzwege* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950], p. 256.)

beings, a *Causa sui* and nothing more. Such a God is not divine enough in other words, not *transcendent* enough for Heidegger,—it is not the God before whom David danced.³⁵ For the time being all Heidegger can do is refrain from naming God at all, and be content to listen and wait upon further revelation of unarmed, disarming truth.

But what if God were not merely *Causa sui*, a *höchste Seiendes*, what then? What if He, in whom and through whom all things were made, were somehow the ultimate Presence of all things to man, a hidden Logos silent in the midst of man's world? What then? Surely *phenomenology* would never be able to affirm His existence, still less His transcendence. But as long as *Dasein* remained open to Being, then such a God could, if He would, reveal Himself as divine. But then it would be the task not of phenomenology but of theology to decide, as it has before, what would be the criteria for accepting this revelation as divine. For its own part, phenomenology pretends to do nothing more than attend to the music inside.

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
 If the unheard, unspoken
 Word is unspoken, unheard;
 Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
 The Word without a word, the Word within
 The world and for the world;
 And the light shone in darkness and
 Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
 About the center of the silent Word.³⁶

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³⁵ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), pp. 70-71.

³⁶ T.S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday, V," in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 65.

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