

Ernst Cassirer och svensk filosofi

Jämte René Descartes, som besökte drottning Kristina, är förmodligen Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) den mest namnkunnige filosof som varit verksam i Sverige. Efter att nazisterna kom till makten i Tyskland 1933 fick Cassirer lämna sin filosofiska och akademiska karriär i hemlandet bakom sig. Efter en kort sejour i Oxford kom Cassirer till Sverige och fick, tack vare sin tidigare student Malte Jacobsson, landshövding i Göteborgs och Bohus län, 1935 en personlig professur vid Göteborgs högskola. Cassirer fann sig väl till rätta i den göteborgska miljön — bland annat kom han att utveckla vänskapliga relationer till sin granne Torgny Segerstedt. Snabbt lärde han sig svenska och kom att författa flera böcker som rör svensk idéhistoria och filosofi. En av dessa behandlade uppsalafilosofen Axel Hägerström och publicerades i Göteborgs högskolas årsskrift 1939 där Cassirer i hovsam ton kritiserade Hägerströms moralfilosofi — en av de få böcker om svensk filosofi av en internationellt erkänd filosof. Först 2005 översattes och publicerades *Axel Hägerström* på svenska av förlaget Thales.

1941 kände sig Cassirer tvungen att ge sig av till USA med båt, trots att han trivdes väl i Sverige. Nazisterna var för nära, och dessutom hade hans förordnande på Göteborgs högskola löpt ut. Efter avfärden har Cassirer förblivit en relativt sett okänd filosof i svenska akademiska kretsar, vilket åtminstone delvis har att göra med den alltmer angloamerikanska och analytiska betoningen inom svensk filosofi efter andra världskriget. Frånvaron av en livaktig diskussion om Cassirers filosofi i Sverige är beklaglig, inte bara av skälet att Cassirer bott här under en tid utan framför allt eftersom Cassirer i sin bok om Hägerström liksom i sitt huvudverk *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (tre band, 1923–1929) formulerar en filosofisk antropologi som är intressant för både filosofer och teologer. Enligt Cassirer är människan ett moraliskt, språkligt och religiöst väsen, och även i hennes mytiska uttryck finns en kunskapssträvan nedlagd. Cassirers filosofi skulle således ha kunnat bidra till ett vidgat — och i många fall tämligen annorlunda — filosofiskt och teologiskt samtal om vad en människa är.

För att motsvara den internationella Cassirer-renässans som nu är i full gång har Svenska Ernst Cassirer Sällskapet (SECS) i samarbete med Kollegiet för samhällsforskning (SCASSS) och Göteborgs universitet sedan 2004 anordnat en årlig Cassirer-föreläsning och ett Cassirer-symposium i Göteborg. Den Ernst Cassirer-professur som är finansierad av VolkswagenStiftung och placerad vid SCASSS i Uppsala innehades 2005 av Hans Joas, dekan vid Max Weber-kollegiet i Erfurt, som valde temat för årets symposium «Ernst Cassirer and the Philosophy and Sociology of Religion». STK har i detta nummer fått möjlighet att i artikelform publicera de föredrag som vid detta symposium omedelbart anknöt till Cassirer och religionsfilosofin, med förhoppningen att ytterligare kunna bidra till intresset för Cassirers filosofi även i Sverige. För denna möjlighet tackar redaktionen ovanstående institutioner och professor Joas. Ett varmt tack går även till SCASSS direktor Björn Wittrock, dess forskningssekreterare Peter Hallberg, SECS ordförande Mats Rosengren och Göteborgs universitets rektor Gunnar Svedberg vars praktiska och ekonomiska bistånd vid symposiet direkt och indirekt gjort detta temanummer möjligt.



Introduction to the Special Issue on Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Religion

HANS JOAS

Hans Joas är professor i sociologi och dekan vid Max-Weber-Kollegiet vid universitetet i Erfurt. Han är också permanent fellow vid Swedish Collegium of Advanced Studies, Uppsala, och var läsåret 2004-2005 innehavare av dess Ernst Cassirer-professur. Bland hans senare publikationer märks Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz (2004) och det av honom redigerade verket Die kulturellen Werte Europas (2005).

Ernst Cassirer has often been classified as a Neo-Kantian, and there can be no doubt that Kant's philosophy was indeed a crucial topic of his writings and an important point of orientation for him in all areas of his own philosophical work.¹ In focussing on Cassirer's philosophy of religion we might therefore not expect more from it than a mere reconstruction or slight revision of Immanuel Kant's own philosophy of religion — a contribution that has been aptly called by Richard Schäffler an attempt to save religion, but with a fatal result («Rettungsversuch mit tödlichem Ausgang»)² The main question that immediately arises then is whether Cassirer really went beyond Kant in his philosophy of religion, particularly with regard to the objections that have been raised against Kant in the more than two hundred years since the publication of his book *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. The textual basis for an answer to this question mainly has to be the second volume of Cassirer's *Philosophy of*

Symbolic Forms, particularly the last chapter.³ In this work Cassirer reconstructs what he calls the dialectics of mythical consciousness, i.e. the process in which religion itself develops out of a critique of mythical consciousness. The most important aspect of Cassirer's argument is that the author does not present a rationalist critique of myth in which myth appears as mere delusion or distortion,⁴ but describes an internal learning process that leads to an overcoming of myth, not to its destruction. What is absolutely crucial for this process is the growing insight into the difference between the sign and its meaning. For Cassirer mythical consciousness is defined by a confusion of sign and meaning, the sacralization of names, images, and numbers, whereas religion — a term he reserves for the «higher» form — is based on a clear distinction between them.⁵ After this epochal rupture, signs can be only articulations of meaning, whereas the sacred meaning itself is located in an altogether different dimension. Articulation will always remain

¹ The symposium took place in Jonsered (near Göteborg) May 20, 2005. It was organized by the Swedish Ernst Cassirer Society and made possible by the Volkswagen Foundation in Germany in the framework of the Ernst Cassirer professorship held by myself in the academic year 2004/05.

² Richard Schaeffler, «Immanuel Kant. Kritik und Neubegründung der Religion», in: Thomas Brose (ed.), *Religionsphilosophie. Europäische Denker zwischen philosophischer Theologie und Religionskritik*. Würzburg 1998, pp. 159–176, here p. 159.

³ Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 2 (1925), Darmstadt 1958, pp. 281–311.

⁴ Michael Moxter, «Formzerstörung und Formaufbau: Zur Unterscheidung von Mythos und Religion bei Ernst Cassirer», in: Matthias Jung/Michael Moxter/Thomas M. Schmidt (eds.), *Religionsphilosophie. Historische Positionen und systematische Reflexionen*. Würzburg 2000, pp. 165–182.

⁵ John E. Smith, «Some Comments on Cassirer's Interpretation of Religion», in: *Revue internationale de philosophie* 28 (1978), no. 110, pp. 475–491.

an insufficient and all-too-human attempt at expressing the meaning of this different, i.e. «transcendent» dimension.

This is, in my view, the crucial point in Cassirer's work about religion. But the elaboration of this point in his work is not without ambiguities. These ambiguities, on the one hand, and the relationship between Cassirer's thinking and other pertinent intellectual developments led to the structuration of the symposium that is (partly) documented here.

The first question has to be what exactly the place of religion in Cassirer's slightly evolutionist schematization was. For him it is not only religion that transcends myth, but also art and science. But it is not clear what the relationship between these products of differentiation is. Did he assume that religion overcomes mythical consciousness, but then will be overcome itself by art, science, and philosophy? If so, he would have remained a proponent of the secularization thesis like so many other intellectuals of his time. If not, why did he not write a volume on religion in his multi-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*? Would it have been possible for him to treat «religion» as a unitary «symbolic form» in the same sense as he treated the others? What would an analysis of religion along the lines of Cassirer's other analyses look like? It is the German Catholic theologian Michael Bongardt who has studied these questions most intensely,⁶ and it is very helpful therefore that he has been willing to contribute to this special issue on Ernst Cassirer and the philosophy of religion.

The second question refers to the relationship between Cassirer's thinking and a historical sociology of religious evolution; this question has to be posed both with regard to classical and to contemporary work in the social sciences. As one can see in his footnotes, Cassirer clearly had studied the most important relevant writings by classical sociologists like Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, but also by scholars like Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto, and, of course, by the classics of religious studies. All his empirical

statements are taken from these works, including the emphasis on the distinction between sacred and profane, the primacy of cult (over myth), or the role of the «mana». In the introduction to the second volume of his work, Cassirer writes that in the field of religion he could not find in any of these authors a guiding thread similar to the one he had found in Wilhelm von Humboldt in the field of language.⁷ It might be worthwhile to do some research on the question as to whether this statement can be defended or whether Cassirer exaggerates the originality of his own contribution here. It seems to me that Cassirer's work depends much more on Émile Durkheim's work than he is willing to admit.

Whereas this question is mostly of historical interest, Cassirer's ideas on the dialectics of mythical consciousness show an intriguing similarity with one of the most promising areas of research in contemporary historical sociology, namely the studies on an axial age, axial civilizations etc. It is obvious that Cassirer's emphasis on the emergence of a distinction between sign and meaning is not only a contribution to a semiotic typology, but directly related to what at least some authors see as the most important aspect of the axial breakthrough, namely the discovery (or, if one prefers, the invention) of transcendence. In Cassirer's thinking, this breakthrough is presented as an almost logical result of the inherent dialectics of mythical consciousness. Although he sees the important role of ancient Judaism in this regard — which he learned to stress even more in his writings after emigration,⁸ in view of the murderous antisemitism of the Nazis — he is certainly not sociological enough to pay attention to the social, economic, and political preconditions of this breakthrough. In the symposium one of the main contributors to this social-scientific debate, Björn Wittrock, discussed the questions to which extent these preconditions determine such a religious development, what we know today about

⁷ Cassirer, p. XII.

⁸ Ernst Cassirer, «Judaism and the Modern Political Myths», in: *Contemporary Jewish Record* 7 (1944), pp. 115–126.

⁶ Michael Bongardt, *Die Fraglichkeit der Offenbarung. Ernst Cassirers Philosophie als Orientierung im Dialog der Religionen*. Regensburg 2000.

the dynamics of the «axial age» and whether we can speak about one such axial age at all.⁹

The third question refers to the precise relationship between Cassirer's philosophy of religion and the contributions of other related philosophical traditions like pragmatism and hermeneutics. American pragmatism has produced extremely important work on religion — the best known, of course, being William James's classical work on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The pragmatists are responsible for a semiotic turn in philosophy in general, although James's book on religion was not deeply influenced by this semiotic turn. An important area of study, therefore, is whether Cassirer's own version of a semiotic turn that is so crucial for his «dialectics of mythical consciousness» can stand the challenge of pragmatist semiotics in the wake of Charles Sanders Peirce's work. Some of the most important critical studies about these questions have been published by the German philosopher Matthias Jung,¹⁰ and his contribution to the symposium is also published here.

With regard to the hermeneutical tradition, we have a highly appreciative, but also critical review of Cassirer's work on the symbolic form of mythical thought by none other than Martin Heidegger.¹¹ He blamed Cassirer for concentrating on mythical *thought* instead of a mythical form of life; for Heidegger this was a deplorable remnant of Neo-Kantianism in Cassirer's work. Although it is true that Cassirer did not devote

enough attention to the connection between «life» and «thought» here and treated «life» more as the expression of «thought» than the other way round, it would be a similar mistake to ignore the fact that in the times of mythical consciousness not everything was mythical. Pragmatism has always emphasized the role of action here, the coexistence of «know how» and «know that», of sensorimotor practical knowledge and mythical discursive knowledge.¹² It was John Krois, one of the leading experts on Cassirer in the world, who raised the question during the symposium as to whether this point — as valid as it may be — is still true for Cassirer's writings after 1933 or whether we should not consider Cassirer as being on the way to a fully developed pragmatist philosophy in general, but also in particular with regard to religion.



⁹ This contribution is not published here, but see on Wittrock's thinking and the whole debate: Johann Arnason/ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt/Björn Wittrock (eds.), *Axial Civilizations and World History*. Leiden 2005.

¹⁰ With regard to Cassirer, see, for example: Matthias Jung, «Der Ausdruckscharakter des Religiösen. Zur Pragmatik der symbolischen Formen bei Ernst Cassirer», in: Hermann Deuser/Michael Moxter (eds.), *Rationalität der Religion und Kritik der Kultur: Hermann Cohen und Ernst Cassirer*. Würzburg 2002, pp. 119–124.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger's review of Cassirer's book was originally published in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* in 1928. It is now available in: M.H., *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Frankfurt am Main 1998, pp. 255–270.

¹² See Hans Joas, «Durkheim and Pragmatism: The Psychology of Consciousness and the Social Constitution of Categories», in: H.J., *Pragmatism and Social Theory*. Chicago 1993, pp. 55–78.

Must Religion be Overthrown?

Myth, Religion and Liberation in the Thought of Ernst Cassirer¹

MICHAEL BONGARDT

Michael Bongardt är professor i katolsk systematisk teologi vid seminariet för katolsk teologi, Freie Universität, Berlin. Hans habilitationsskrift från 1998 bär titeln Die Fraglichkeit der Offenbarung. Ernst Cassirers Philosophie als Orientierung im Dialog der Religionen och visar på Bongardts intresse för fundamentalteologiska frågor.

Is religion coming to an end? Throughout the ages man has questioned how life came about, where it is heading and what its purpose is. Will the foreseeable future provide no further answers to take us beyond empirical reality? Will the rich tradition of belief in a transcendental reality, to which man bore witness, one day perish? And will this happen although debate about god and the gods seems to be as old as human culture?²

In the second half of the 20th century sociologists argued that secularisation would lead to the end of religion. Yet present-day developments seem to be pointing in a different direction. There is talk of a revival of religion.³ But

could this not also be seen as a last stand in the face of the death of God and of belief? The following reflections should be read against a background of argument in the field of the sociology of religion. They form part of a completely different discipline, philosophy, more particularly, the philosophy of culture.

Ernst Cassirer, who may be considered as one of the founders of the modern philosophy of culture, comes back again and again to the phenomenon of religion. He does not present a philosophy of religion, nor, as Enno Rudolph has repeatedly emphasised, is it possible to read one into Cassirer's works.⁴ Cassirer teaches us to regard religion as an expression of culture.⁵ As such it is of interest to him. In this respect Cassirer's work reveals a noticeable asymmetry. He deals at length with myth, with its followers and their philosophy and particularly with the transition from myth to religion. For him the further development of religion is of fleeting interest. His comments on the future of religion are brief and ambiguous. This, however, is the core issue of this essay. In Cassirer's view is religion only one aspect, albeit an important one, of cultural development? Must it therefore one day pass or does it remain a permanent feature of culture?

I propose to examine these questions in four stages. Firstly I shall briefly recall what role Cassirer ascribes to religion in the development

¹ The essay goes back to a lecture I was invited to give by the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Social Sciences and the Swedish Ernst Cassirer Society in spring 2005 in Gothenburg. I am very grateful to Hans Joas who organized and led the symposium on «Ernst Cassirer and the Philosophy and Sociology of Religion» for inviting me and for very stimulating discussions.

² The controversial discussion about the meaning of «religion» cannot be resumed here. The introductory questions are intended only as an indication of the definition which is attempted in the following reflections. For the debate on the concept in religious studies see *Theo Sundermeier, Was ist Religion? Religionswissenschaft im theologischen Kontext*, Gütersloh 1999.

³ Cf. Hans Joas, *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz*, Freiburg 2004, especially 11–49.

⁴ Cf. Enno Rudolph, *Ernst Cassirer im Kontext*, Tübingen 2003, 71.

of human culture. Then I shall examine those sections of his work which appear to point to a necessary end to religion. The third stage will be concerned with those of Cassirer's findings which suggest that, rather than come to an end, religion may undergo a metamorphosis. Finally I should like to add a theological comment, for I write from the standpoint of a committed theologian.

Let us be clear. I cannot give a conclusive answer to the question posed in the title. I can only point to some lines in Cassirer's work and try to draw them a little further. This essay aims not to end but to stimulate discussion — discussion which should once more include the sociology of religion.

Religion as a Liberating Process

«Human culture taken as a whole may be described as the process of man's progressive self-liberation.»⁶ This is the opening sentence of the final section of the last of Cassirer's books to be published in his lifetime. It can serve to sum up the content and the aim of his total output. But it is important to interpret it correctly. Based on his study of the philosophy of history, Cassirer does not hold an optimistic view of progress nor forecast a straight run towards a liberated future

⁵ Quotations from Cassirer's works follow the English edition as far as available. Where quotations have been translated, the German original is noted. I owe a debt of gratitude to my assistant, Anja Middelbeck-Varwick, and to Alison McConell, Belfast, for rendering my text into English. The following works are of note for Cassirer's conception of religion: *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2, 6th edn, New Haven 1968 (cited as PSF II); *An Essay on Man*, 7th ed., New Haven 1956 (EM); «Cohen's Philosophy of Religion», in: *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 1/1996, 89–104 (CPR); *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Hamburg 1998.

Nicholas of Cusa's concept of religion, which was of special importance for Cassirer is specifically treated in: *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, edn, Darmstadt 1995 (EP 1); *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, 7th edn, Darmstadt 1994 (IK).

⁶ EM 228.

which will be both peaceful and humane. He was always very much aware of the changing course of history and human culture. The horror which lies at the root of human activity was brought home to him even more forcibly during the period of Nazi rule. In the «Myth of State»,⁷ Cassirer's penetrating analysis of fascism, his revulsion is apparent in every line. Even so, he wrote this sentence. And he wrote it after his flight from Germany and eleven years of exile, some spent in Gothenburg. What did it mean for Cassirer when he wrote «man's progressive self-liberation» and what meaning could it have had in 1944? To what kind of process does he refer?

One particular view of human kind excludes the possibility of «process». Since man first existed he has been an «animal symbolicum».⁸ He does not have to become one. Only by virtue of being an «animal symbolicum» does a living creature become a human being. Cassirer's basic anthropological thesis rests on the realisation of this proposition. Since the beginning of human existence man has shaped his world; or to put it more precisely, human activity is always cultural activity, whether man is aware of it or not.

According to this interpretation all development takes place within a cultural framework. When he writes of liberation Cassirer accords this development a particular meaning: driven by an inner necessity — which will be discussed later — man's awareness of his active role in shaping his culture grows. This consciousness is the awareness of freedom. Man becomes free in recognising that his world has been shaped by him. Here Cassirer means considerably more than the technical alteration of his natural environment.⁹ Culture as a whole is «symbolic form» (*symbolische Form*); the connection between sensory signs, the sensuous perception, and a spiritual dimension, the meaning (*sinnliche Zeichen/geistige Bedeutung*). Man is not free to choose if he will shape the world in this fashion;

⁷ *The Myth of State*, 2.print, New Haven 1946.

⁸ EM 26.

⁹ For the relationship between technique, philosophy and culture see E. Cassirer, «Form und Technik», in: *Symbol, Technik, Sprache. Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1927–1933*, ed. by E.W. Orth and John M. Krois, Hamburg 1985, 39–90.

the link between the mind and the senses is the ‹prime mover› (*Urtatsache*) of his consciousness. Yet he is free to choose *how* he will shape the world. The more clearly man realises this, the more decisively can he shape it. A good twenty years before his programmatic thesis on «Man's Liberation of the Self» in the introduction to the first volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer wrote: «Thus, with all their inner diversity, the various products of culture — language, scientific knowledge, myth, art, religion — become parts of a single great problem-complex: they become multiple efforts, all directed toward the one goal of transforming the passive world of mere impressions, in which the spirit seems at first imprisoned, into a world that is pure expression of the human spirit». ¹⁰

If we take the generally accepted view that the power of reason is expressed in various fields, we must conclude that it is in the realm of theoretical reason that Cassirer speaks of freedom. In it he recognises an active element. Yet even here he refuses to accept any clear distinction: man's understanding of the world and its expression in symbolic form is always an eminently practical activity. There is a reciprocal correlation between how man understands the world and how he deals with it. Perhaps this correlation was so self-evident to Cassirer that he did not take the trouble to expatiate on the fundamental principles of ethics. ¹¹ Awareness of man's freedom to understand and shape the

world implies the application of this insight to social activity. A society founded on such freedom will have to regulate its corporate life so as to ensure that it is safeguarded. Cassirer clearly believes if man is free to shape his culture, this freedom must also shape the products of that culture. Modern science, able to stamp its own character on the construction of the world, looks very different from early attempts to shape the course of the world. A painting which seeks to reproduce the world around it looks different from the sculpture in which the artist expresses his creativity. A man who is aware of his freedom will speak differently about himself and his position in the world from one who believes himself governed solely by his sensuous impressions.

Having arrived at this analysis of man's self-liberation Cassirer accords religion a decisive share in it. This share is apparent in the changes which lead from myth to religion. This is not the place to present Cassirer's extensive theory of myth. It is enough to state that Cassirer does not intend his thesis on the transition from myth to religion to be seen as a representation of a historical process or even as a breach of that process. For him myth and religion are closely linked, indeed intertwined. At the same time Cassirer's comments shed a powerful light on the development of culture in both the general field and that of the history of religion. Three steps separate a religious understanding of the world from the mythical. These are equally the three steps involved in the process of increasing self-liberation which constitute our theme.

(1) «Religion takes the decisive step that is essentially alien to myth: in its use of sensuous images and signs it recognizes them as such — a means of expression which, though they reveal a determinate meaning, must necessarily remain inadequate to it, which ‹point› to this meaning but never wholly exhaust it». ¹² I repeat: when and where this cut is performed is not significant, the important thing is that it is performed. That man is aware of his freedom is evidenced by the step he takes into actively shaping his awareness. Arguing from myth and the forms in which it is expressed Cassirer elucidates the

¹⁰ PSF I (7th edn, New Haven 1968), 80 et seq.

¹¹ Cassirer's understanding of ethics is significant for the question of religion for several reasons: firstly with regard to ethically orientated religion (cf. EM 108); then for the question whether and how religion differs from ethics, which led Hermann Cohen to revise his concept of religion in «Ethik des reinen Willens» (3rd edn, Berlin 1921) and to redefine it. (*Die Religion der Vernunft: Aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 2nd edn, pub. posthumously Darmstadt 1966). Some important publications dealing with Cassirer's ethics are: John Michael Krois, *Cassirer, Symbolic Forms and History*, New Haven 1987, 142–171; Birgit Recki, «Kultur ohne Moral? Warum Ernst Cassirer trotz der Einsicht in den Primat der praktischen Vernunft keine Ethik schreiben konnte», in: D. Frede / R. Schmücker (ed.), *Ernst Cassirer. Werk und Wirkung*, Darmstadt 1997, 58–78.

¹² PSF II, 239.

necessity of this step (see above). Understanding of the world through myth is communicated in fleeting images and their very diversity increasingly undermines their ability to portray immediately the presence of the divine. The images turn into «something outside».¹³ This «outsideness» leads us to question what is the basis of these images and to discover the power of the human spirit which shapes them.

(2) «All the higher ethical religions... relieve the intolerable burden of the taboo system; but they detect, on the other hand, a more profound sense of religious obligation that instead of being a restriction or compulsion is the expression of a new positive ideal of human freedom».¹⁴ The close connection, referred to above, between theoretical and practical reason is confirmed in the description of this step. If human freedom is defined as the power by which religious images are shaped, man's relationship with divine reality must also rest upon the degree of freedom he has attained. Responsible ethical behaviour becomes the measure against which the quality of this relationship is assessed.

(3) «For all the diversity, all the differentiation and fragmentation, of divine action ceases as soon as the mystical consciousness considers this action no longer from the standpoint of the objects to which it extends but from the standpoint of its origin. The diversity of mere action now becomes more and more clearly discernible. And to this transformation of the concept of the god corresponds a new view of man and his spiritual-ethical personality».¹⁵ Here we have reached the third step which takes us from myth to religion: the individual's realisation of his own subjectivity is perfected in what is again a reciprocal process. Recognising the gods as subject to their deeds man begins to experience himself as subject to his actions — and vice versa. This development is most clearly perfected in monotheistic religions, where it is easiest to comprehend the wholeness of the active man.¹⁶

In brief: Religion — or more precisely: prophetic religion — allows man to see himself as a subject. This subject is responsible for the images through which attention is drawn to divine reality. Further, in his freedom he is responsible for his actions. As a consequence of his actions he finds not only his place in a society based upon ethical principles but these actions also authenticate the relationship between God and man, who in his freedom stands face to face with God. A religion which opens the way to this aim contributes without doubt to humanising culture.

Liberation from Religion?

Viewed against the background of the conclusions which we have now reached, it would be possible to ascribe a particularly symbolic form to religion. In their concrete manifestations religions would have to be measured by their ability to promote thought and an awareness of freedom and, by no means least, their contribution to a humane world. In any case it is interesting to pose the question of how religions get on with one another and with other ways of interpreting the world.¹⁷ Moreover at first sight it is not easy to grasp why such a standpoint should be made a matter of dispute. Yet in Cassirer's work there are some noticeable indications. They seem to suggest that religion as a symbolic form must once more be overcome; that it must dissolve into a higher — i.e. a freer — form of awareness of man's world and his consciousness of self.

¹⁶ Cf. in detail Ernst Cassirer, *Wesen und Wirkung des Symbolbegriffs*, 8th edn, Darmstadt 1994, 71–158, especially 134–141.

¹⁷ That was the focus of my investigation: *Die Fraglichkeit der Offenbarung. Ernst Cassirers Philosophie als Orientierung im Dialog der Religionen*, Regensburg 2000. To me it seems justifiable to define not only religions in general as a cultural phenomenon and thus as «symbolic form» but also to call specific religions in the respective forms they assume «symbolic forms». Starting from this assumption I am searching in Cassirer's philosophy for criteria applicable to dialogue among religions (cf. 258–262). See in addition Cornelia Richter, *Die Religion in der Sprache der Kultur*, Tübingen 2004, 293 et seq.

¹³ PSF II, 282.

¹⁴ EM 108.

¹⁵ PSF II, 217f.

Firstly we must deal with a somewhat formal argument. Cassirer believes that he can detect a pattern in man's cultural development and in the process of his growing self-liberation.¹⁸ According to his interpretation the increasing awareness of the active role which man enjoys while learning to understand and shape the world goes through three stages: in the beginning the world is experienced as a reality which man attempts to imitate (*Nachahmung*). At this point man sees his thoughts and activities determined by the circumstances of his daily life. From this entire passiveness already representative acting (*Darstellung*) differs. Man is aware of the fact that he is the creator — that he forms an image of the world by trying to locate the events of his day-to-day living each within its own perspective. The third level is reached when man recognises that symbolic expression equates to the functional. Cassirer refers here to 'pure meaning' (*reine Bedeutung*) which has its origin in a human interpretation. In distinguishing these three levels Cassirer expressly refers to Goethe's theory of art¹⁹ which holds that the artist achieves complete freedom — 'style' (*Stil*) — when art is accepted as an expression of human activity. But a problem arises when we seek to apply this schema to Cassirer's analysis of myth and religion. The step from myth to religion can be regarded as the transition from imitation to creation. The third step would then have to be omitted. Must it — in accordance with the dynamic

¹⁸ The dynamics presented here, which according to Cassirer pass through three stages, figure consistently in his extensive work and have never been substantially modified. My description follows mainly two works of Cassirer: The essay «Das Symbolproblem und seine Darstellung im System der Philosophie», in *Symbol, Technik, Sprache* (see note 9), 1–21 and the passage about art in EM 137–170. For the problem of formalisation of cultural development see Oswald Schwemmer, *Ernst Cassirer. Ein Philosoph der europäischen Moderne*, Berlin 1977, 65 et seq.

¹⁹ Cf. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, «Einfache Nachahmung der Natur, Manier, Stil», in: J. W. v. Goethe, *Schriften zur Kunst I.* = dtv Gesamtausgabe, vol. 33, München 1962, 32–38. Cassirer directly refers to this: E. Cassirer, *Wesen und Wirkung* (note 16), 182 et seq. The later works also make reference to Goethe.

of human culture — still have to be taken? And what would it lead to? To a new form of religion? Or to the overthrow, the end, of religion?²⁰

One of Cassirer's statements seems to point unambiguously towards an end to religion: «from the first magical view religion strives toward a progressively purer spiritualization. And yet, again and again, it is carried back to a point at which the question of its truth and meaning content shifts into the question of the reality of its objects, at which it faces the problem of «existence» in all its harshness. It is only the aesthetic consciousness that leaves this problem truly behind it.»²¹

The last sentence in particular seems to shed doubt on whether religion, being of equal status with other symbolic forms of expression, could accomplish the step from the second to the third level of symbolic representation. In Cassirer's view religion is clearly tied in with a problem which, if eliminated, demands also the elimination of religion. Such an elimination would be a minimum requirement if the problem were to prevent further progress on man's route to self-liberation. What exactly does this problem consist of? To what extent can the «problem of existence» prevent man's freedom? Here and there throughout Cassirer's work there are various indications which reveal different aspects of the «problem of existence».

a) *The problem of the conflict between form and content*

This problem arises in the field of conflict between art and religion which has been detailed here. According to Cassirer art has a share in developing the shaping of symbolic form into an

²⁰ Markus Tomberg, *Der Begriff von Mythos und Wissenschaft bei Ernst Cassirer und Kurt Hübner*, Münster 1996, 179–186, and Cornelia Richter, «Symbol, Mythos, Religion. Zum Status der Religion in der Philosophie Ernst Cassirers», in D. Korsch, E. Rudolph (ed.), *Die Prägnanz der Religion in der Kultur, Ernst Cassirer und die Theologie*, Tübingen 2000, 5–32, especially 7–17, all discuss how difficult it is, to apply the three-step-schema to Cassirer's understanding of myth and religion.

²¹ PSF II, 261.

ever clearer awareness of how that form is shaped. Art has perfected this process of development when the artist gives up copying or even simply shaping a received sense impression. His aim must rather be «a pure expression of its own creative power».²² In this artistic expression there is no longer any «outside» against which he must be measured or from which he could be isolated.²³ This doesn't apply in the mythical and also in the religious world view, Cassirer believes. The religious world of image and symbol has its essential limits. It must submit to playing a secondary role to the divine reality which gives it purpose and which it is there to serve.

b) *The Impossibility of Abolishing Images*

Religion cannot escape this problem by entirely renouncing images and symbols. Nor is a complete abandonment of symbols possible in any understanding of the world — for creation and understanding are perfected in the symbolic process. Yet more is demanded of the signs and symbols of religion than of the laws of nature. They must not only serve to interpret divine reality; in the eye of the believer they are man-made images through which and in which divine reality is revealed. In this necessity Cassirer sees the reason why religion remains tied to myth while in other aspects it has cast it off.²⁴

c) *The Problem of Heteronomy*

Cassirer gives another slant to the problem in an essay where he takes issue with Hermann Cohen's philosophy of religion. Like Cohen he asks if accepting the existence of God does not

basically contradict accepting man's freedom and his autonomy.²⁵ The heteronomy can assume quite different forms: it can require man to believe in, or at least to be persuaded to believe in, the content of a received revelation running counter to his own rational thinking; it can see human freedom so restrained that only through an act of divine forgiveness can that freedom be restored, (such views are current not only in the collective Christian tradition²⁶ but also in Kant and Cohen²⁷); and finally monotheist traditions at least recognise that God himself has played an active role in history. Yet through God's action man's freedom of action seems limited if not entirely eliminated.²⁸ If we consider these facets of the problem of existence it seems worth posing the question, already all but answered: must man be set free of religion given that religion has contributed so much to self-liberation? Yes. It removes man's freedom of action and of shaping his world.

²⁵ Cf. Rudolph, *Cassirer* (note 4), 89–91.

²⁶ The soteriological statements of the New Testament are fundamental here, especially the statements in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans set the standard for further discussion. See Thomas Pröpper, *Evangelium und freie Vernunft. Konturen einer theologischen Hermeneutik*, Freiburg 2001, 103–128.

²⁷ The thought that human freedom having fallen into sin needs a divine redemption can be found in Kant's work *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (B 54, A 50). Cf. Helmut Hoping, *Freiheit im Widerspruch. Eine Untersuchung zur Erbsündenlehre im Ausgang von Immanuel Kant*, Innsbruck 1990. For Cohen the problem of sin is a substantial reason for his already above (note 11) mentioned change of his philosophy of religion. See Cohen, *Religion*, 218–220; besides Richard Schaeffler, «Die Vernunft und das Wort. Zum Religionsverständnis bei Hermann Cohen und Franz Rosenzweig», in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 78 (1981), 57–89. It would be worth investigating to what extent Cohen's concept of redemption can be harmonised with Cassirer's view that Cohen had proposed an «immanent religion».

²⁸ Cf. Kurt Flasch's stricture of Augustine: Kurt Flasch, *Logik des Schreckens*, Mainz 1990, 19–138. His criticism is neither incidental nor marginal. For centuries Augustine's theology informed the idea that an irreconcilable contradiction existed between God's actions and man's freedom.

²² *Ibd.*

²³ Cf. *Wesen und Wirkung* (note 16), 157; EM 168–170.

²⁴ «If we attempt to isolate and remove the basic mythical components from religious belief, we no longer have religion in its real, objectively historical manifestation; all that remains is a shadow of it, an empty abstraction.» (PSF II, 239). Enno Rudolph, *Cassirer* (note 4), 80.87, therefore speaks of a «Verlust» (loss), that religion sustains by separating from myth.

Immanence as Freedom

Close as the need for liberation from religion may now lie, one further query must be addressed. It has not been made sufficiently clear how, from the viewpoint of religion, it is possible to speak of the «reality» and the «existence» of its object. Let us turn to Cassirer's interpretation of reality and truth.

a) *Reality and Existence*

The great merit of Cassirer's theory of symbols is that it is based on the union of meaning and sensibility (*Sinn und Sinnlichkeit*) which comes to us through our consciousness. Cassirer understands the distinction between «perception» and «interpretation» not in the sense of a basic dualism which — as a rule in vain — seeks a synthesis of both these aspects. For him the distinction is a secondary one arising from an analysis of the above-mentioned union in our consciousness. This distinction however never loses sight of the original union.²⁹

Accordingly, for Cassirer symbolic forms are not workings of an exterior world perceived through the senses but the route whereby reality can be attained. For man symbols constitute reality. There is no other. «True, we still remain in a world of images but these are not images which reproduce a self-subsistent world of «things»; they are image-worlds whose principle and origin are to be sought in an autonomous creation of the spirit. Through them alone we see what we call «reality» and in them alone we possess it: for the highest objective truth that is accessible to the spirit is ultimately the form of its own activity.»³⁰

This reality comes about in diverse ways. Cassirer cites two fundamentally different forms.³¹ Some seek to establish laws to allow

them to place the objects which they have perceived empirically into a connection and to influence them. To this group belong science and technology. The concepts used to describe and regulate these objects are purely functional and bear no substantial relationship to what they describe.

Yet the teaching of science is not enough to satisfy man's construction of reality; over and above all this, he seeks to make sense of everything which he encounters or creates and in the process makes use of a great variety of symbols. They serve a double function: on the one hand they allow man to ascribe a sensual awareness into a horizon of sense; on the other, this horizon is represented in the sensuous signs. The process of allocating a meaning in this way — whether it is ethical, artistic, legal or historical — turns it into an object of cultural sciences. From its form and outcome man seeks enlightenment. «The constancy that we require for this is not that of properties or laws but rather that of significations».³²

Obviously this differentiation of Cassirer's can be applied to a higher unity. For science itself is a product of human culture. It is one form, admittedly a very specific form, in which a meaning is attached to the objects of study and as such they would also be of interest to cultural science. Yet the distinction struck between cultural and scientific objects is, on closer reflection, helpful with clarifying «the problem of existence». It can be shown that even the concept of reality is open to different interpretations. The notion of existence is meaningful only in relation to objects capable of sensuous perception. Here we are speaking of what can be experienced, scientifically measured and technically manipulated. Yet human reality far exceeds this view of existence: there is little point in depriving the wide range of meanings of their reality — starting from the conventional view of morality expressed in works of art and extending to the great thinking evident throughout the history of spiritual and religious teaching. Cassirer therefore proposes a distinction between the two

²⁹ Cf. Cassirer, *Zur Metaphysik der symbolischen Formen*, Hamburg 1995, 14. Cf. Bongardt, *Fraglichkeit* (note 17), 128–135.; Enno Rudolph, «Die sprachliche Kohärenz des symbolischen Universums. Der Weg zur ungeschriebenen Religionsphilosophie Ernst Cassirers», in Korsch, *Prägnanz* (note 20), 76–90, here: 78–81.

³⁰ PSFI, 111.

³¹ Cf. Cassirer, *The Logic of Cultural Sciences*, New Haven 2000.

³² Cassirer, *Logic* (note 31), 75.

concepts «existence» and «reality» which takes into account the much greater extent of the latter. «This philosophy does not raise the question and does not try to answer the question of the existence of God, it inquires exclusively into the meaning of the idea of God. [...] There is therefore no real difference between what we call the reality of God and what we call the reality of a moral order of the universe, the validity of our ethical ideals.»³³

This has far-reaching consequences. Whilst reality is understood as symbolically shaped by man, no limits may be set to the question of what is truth. It is its inner consistency and its power to enlighten, and not any similarity to that part of it which can be perceived empirically, which determine the validity of a particular form of reality. Cassirer therefore believes that «we must conceive of the problem of recognition and the problem of truth as particular instances of the general problem of meaning».³⁴

What does this mean for religion? Religions open to their adherents an individual view of the world. They pose and answer questions about the whence and whither of reality. They lay down horizons within which man can understand his life and his world. Thereby the questions, which man expects religion to answer, change. In the past it may well have been that these were primarily questions about eternal salvation, about morality and even about the existence of God. In today's western world these questions have taken on a new focus. Religion is being explored as a possible source of meaning in a reality which appears for far too many to be meaningless.³⁵ This confirms what is in any case obvious: religion is not in competition with science but is to be explored for the form and content of its interpretation of meaning.³⁶

³³ CPR 99 et seq.

³⁴ Wir müssen «das Erkenntnisproblem und das Wahrheitsproblem als Sonderfälle des allgemeinen Bedeutungsproblems begreifen» (Cassirer, «Erkenntnistheorie nebst den Grenzfragen der Logik und Denkpsychologie», in: ders., *Erkenntnis, Begriff, Kultur*, hg. v. R. Bast, Hamburg 1993, 77–144, hier 81).

³⁵ Cf. Joas, *Mensch* (note 3), 20–31.

There is one further point: all questions and answers contained within religion stem from man's deliberations, his ability to express himself and to persuade others. In all their «signs and images», in all their forms of expression, religions are a cultural phenomenon. They are part of the form in which man shapes his reality.³⁷ And for believers reality is dictated by the world as their religion sees it. They build on the assumption that this reality is dependable, that it can offer guidance and truth. And in the sense of this definition of reality there is no reason, from a philosophical perspective, to deny the reality claimed in this particular sense by religion.

This brings us to the point where the question of the continuing existence of religion arose. How does religion tackle «the problem of existence»? Where does the religious meaning get its authority? From something formed by man or from the work of a transcendental reality? Does the meaning on which religion hinges stand and fall with a transcendental existence?

Certainly most believers — at least in the monotheistic traditions — will insist that their faith is meaningful only if God «exists», that the «existence» of God is a necessary prerequisite for their faith's claim to truth. Yet at this point it is worth asking — along with Cassirer and Cohen — does religion not also fulfil its human function without posing the question of existence? And above all, what does the «existence» of God mean? Believers will refuse that God can be identified as one empirical object among others whose existence can be proved sensuously and experimentally. The reality of God must be of a different nature. But which one?

This is not the place to present the abundance of attempted responses which have been offered within the philosophical and theological traditions. I am limiting myself to that one line which Cassirer himself mentions from time to time —

³⁶ Christian Danz, «Der Begriff des Symbols bei Paul Tillich und Ernst Cassirer», in Korsch, *Prägnanz* (note 20), 201–228, here: 226–228.

³⁷ Dietrich Korsch, «Religion und Kultur bei Hermann Cohen und Ernst Cassirer», in Korsch, *Prägnanz* (note 20), 162–178, here: 173–178. Michael Moxter, *Kultur als Lebenswelt*, Tübingen 2000.

whether because it is a particular favourite with him I cannot judge.

He speaks in the essay about Cohen which I have already mentioned of an «immanent religion». He sees the models for it explicitly in Schleiermacher,³⁸ implicitly in Cusanus. An «immanent religion» would be one which does not owe its concrete form solely to being shaped by man — that is true for every religion seen from a cultural or philosophical perspective. An «immanent religion» is conscious of its «immanent» character. In a certain sense it would be based upon reality taken as a whole. «According to Schleiermacher religion consists in taking all particulars as part of the whole, everything limited as a representation of the infinite.»³⁹ Cassirer believes that Schleiermacher does not do justice to the notion of a strictly «immanent religion». In his dogma he introduces the «the feeling of a profound dependence (*Gefühl der schlechthinnigen Abhängigkeit*)» as lying at the heart of religious devotion and an indication that man is a religious animal. On the other hand according to both Cassirer and Cohen a strictly «immanent religion» would have to be persuaded that «the spontaneity, the self-activity, the autonomy of reason, may be regarded as a source and foundation of religious truth.»⁴⁰

However, to be fair to the religious traditions of monotheism, this approach to religion must be read alongside a significant new definition of metaphysics. The contrast — in the Cusanus tradition — between transcendence and immanence would have to be excluded.⁴¹ Otherwise the afore-mentioned problem of an independent point of reference to an image and of a divine heteronomy limiting human autonomy would persist. Using image as a metaphor, a notion

which Cusanus borrowed from Plato, seems to Cassirer to have been very plausible.⁴² Its underlying principle is that God, as transcendent, ever-lasting reality, creates the world as his definitive image. Yet the honorary title of the «*imago dei*» is applicable to man alone for he alone is endowed with a spirit. His spirit is itself creative. And in his creative power he initiates the notion of the eternal God. This notion it is that gives God reality in the world of man. Being fully autonomous he yet comprehends the world as God's world — and his freedom as the gift of God through which God is realised.⁴³ «In order to attain the eternal we need only look around us in our temporal world; the creature is nothing but the self-portrayal and the self-revelation of the creator. [...] Eternity is now no longer a barrier, but the self-affirmation of reason.»⁴⁴ Cassirer sums up Cusanus' «immanent religion» in these lines. Thus in his essay on Cohen he can write: «the idea of God possesses reality: that means nothing else than that this demand is not a mere wish or illusion by which the human mind deceives itself, but that it is effective in the world of man, in the world of human history». This belief as «immanent metaphysics» is to be found in Cusanus. Cohen expounds on Cusanus' statement in an ethical perspective: «To believe in humanity, in its highest and most perfect ethical sense, and to believe in God means one and the same. [...] The idea of God coincides with the idea of humanity.»⁴⁵

⁴² The most direct reference point for this understanding of an immanent religion linked to the revelation of the image of God should be Cusanus' writing on the mind (*Idiota de mente*). It is no accident that Cassirer includes it with his translation of the text to his work on Cusanus (IK 204–297). A precise summary of Cassirer's interpretation of Cusanus' view of the relationship between transcendence and immanence can be found in EP 22–31.

⁴³ Cf. Cusanus, *Idiota de mente*, cap. 3, nr.72.

⁴⁴ «Um ins Unendliche zu schreiten, brauchen wir nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten zu gehen: das Geschöpf ist nichts anderes als die Selbstdarstellung und Selbstoffenbarung des Schöpfers. [...] Jetzt ist die Unendlichkeit nicht mehr die Schranke, sondern die Selbstbejahung der Vernunft» (EP I, 24.27).

⁴⁵ CPR 100 et seq.

³⁸ For the relationship between Cassirer and Schleiermacher see Cornelia Richter's in-depth analysis (note 17).

³⁹ PSF II, 259.

⁴⁰ CPR 94; Rudolph, *Cassirer* (note 4), 88.

⁴¹ Cf. Rudolph, *Cassirer* (note 4), 82–88. The idea of abolishing this contradiction is contained in Cusanus' conception of God. If God is thought of as the «*coincidentia oppositorum*», then immanence and transcendence in him also find to their unity. See Kurt Flasch, *Nikolaus von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung*, Frankfurt 1998, 46–70.

You will long since have noticed if we follow this train of thought we find ourselves again between Hegel and Feuerbach. True I consider it mistaken to juxtapose Cassirer's concept of <spirit> (*Geist*) too closely to Hegel's idealistic concept. Cassirer's concept is a purely functional notion, which is meant, without making any metaphysical or ontological claim, to give a name to the power which shapes it and which is a prerequisite for all such creation.⁴⁶ To this extent the concept of spirit is here — and presumably also in Cohen's work — slanted towards the philosophy of culture. But that in no way alters the fact that these considerations lead between Hegel's Scylla and Feuerbach's Charybdis. If God achieves reality by having man speak of him the question arises: Is it God who thinks in the mind of man?⁴⁷ Or is it man, who confronts to himself his own being in the form of the thought God expresses through religion?⁴⁸ An answer to this question lies outside the scope of philosophy. Kant's assertion that neither the existence nor the non-existence of God can be proved holds true. Christian tradition would always insist on distinguishing clearly between God and man in spite of our knowing that God becomes real to man only through man's speech and learning. Man believes in the reality of God as creator to whom he owes everything in the first place — and that includes his ability to bear witness to God.

However the question of the ontological status of the reality of God over and above the witness borne by man does not have to be answered here.⁴⁹ From the start we have been interested in a different question: for the sake of his freedom does man have to be liberated from religion? If the hypothesis of an «immanent religion», as Cassirer seems to accept, is followed through, this question can comfortably be answered in the

negative. For such a religion would not have to sacrifice man's autonomy to an omnipotent, spiritual God. It would be capable of forming its own images through which the reality of God is made manifest to man. Thereby, simply to fulfil its duty to man, it would be required — like the artist — again and again to test the validity of its images and their power to communicate. Given this interpretation of religion the question of the existence of God becomes the question of the meaningfulness of God for reality.

Thoughts on God and Human Freedom

In conclusion may I be permitted a brief look at these reflections from the perspective of Christian tradition and theology. Indeed they were always in Cassirer's mind when he spoke of «religion». Can Christianity regard itself as «immanent religion»?

At first sight Christians are tempted to dismiss the idea. The continuing distinction between God and the world; the covenant God established with man although he is «the great other»; the belief in a God who intervenes in history bringing salvation and who in the end brings history to a conclusion; the conviction that without God's grace man can accomplish nothing; all these are indisputable and lie at the core of Christian belief. Are they not diametrically opposed to an «immanent religion»?

There are theories proposed within Christian theology which disprove this doubt. This is not the place to present them at length. Just this much: a theology which sees divine grace and human freedom in competition with one another will always have to limit man's freedom so as to do justice to God. Yet to think in terms of competition is not a logical necessity.⁵⁰ Quite the contrary; the view that God's grace is made

⁴⁶ In this regard, Cassirer's early work *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, 7th edn, Darmstadt 1994, is definitive for his entire thought. For a closer consideration of the term «Geist» see Bongardt, *Fraglichkeit* (note 16), 143–151.

⁴⁷ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Religionen* II (=Werke 17), Frankfurt 1986, 187.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (= Werke 7), Leipzig 1883, 49.

⁴⁹ Cassirer insists that philosophy can't and doesn't have to achieve this. Cf. CPR 99 et seq. In a rare moment of agreement Wilhelm Gräß stresses that theology too may disregard this question: Wilhelm Gräß, «Religion in vielen Sinnbildern. Aspekte einer Kulturhermeneutik im Anschluß an Ernst Cassirer», in: Korsch: *Prägnanz* (note 20), 229–248, here: 248.

manifest in that he leaves man free, fits much more closely to belief in a God who loves the world and mankind unconditionally. This freedom given to man is so unconditional that man can choose what place God may occupy in the world of man; so unconditional that it decides how God become real in the world of man.⁵¹

To this extent God is dependent on man. But man owes his existence to God. In mutual recog-

inition of their freedom God and man find their fulfilment.⁵² Such dependence however is not the limit but the greatness of their freedom. Without any regard to religion this also holds true between men. To be willing to overthrow this dependence in the name of freedom is to confuse freedom with a solipsism that has nothing to do with mankind. And to it religious traditions, which also bring with them many and varied aspects of culture, should not fall victim.

⁵⁰ Cf. Gisbert Greshake, *Geschenkte Freiheit. Einführung in die Gnadenlehre*, Freiburg 1992, 106–122; Karl-Heinz Menke, *Das Kriterium des Christseins. Grundriss der Gnadenlehre*, Regensburg 2003, 170–197; Thomas Pröpper, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte. Eine Skizze zur Soteriologie*, 2. Aufl., München 1988, 277–282.

⁵¹ Cf. Thomas Pröpper, *Evangelium* (note 26), 245–265; Michael Bongardt, *Fraglichkeit* (note 16), 159–164.

⁵² The fundamental thesis of Thomas Pröpper's theology which is linked with philosophy of freedom. Cf. Pröpper, *Erlösungsglaube* (note 50), 182–194.



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Making Life Explicit

The Symbolic Pregnancy of Religious Experience

MATTHIAS JUNG

Matthias Jung är professor och fellow vid Max-Weber-Kollegiet vid universitetet i Erfurt. I sin avhandling från 1989 diskuterade han förhållandet mellan teologi och filosofi i Martin Heideggers tänkande. Han har också redigerat Heideggers religionsfenomenologiska föreläsningar från 1920-1921 i den kritiska utgåvan av Heideggers skrifter och föreläsningar.

The title of this article uses a phrase brought to philosophic significance by Robert Brandom, when 10 years ago he published his opus magnum *Making it Explicit*.¹ This impressive book is widely regarded as an important achievement in analytic philosophy for the masterly manner in which it spells out in detail a comprehensive framework for understanding language and thereby our relationship to the world. But Brandom stretches the realm of analytic philosophy by explicitly claiming the relevance of all this for our conception of man. «In making it explicit», he points out in the very last paragraph of his great book, «we make ourselves explicit».² And indeed: a certainly plausible way of reading *Making it Explicit* focuses on the manner, in which Brandom unveils the logical powers of language as so many constituents of our specifically human way to live our lives. For Brandom, human beings are beings that can be characterized by their ability to make explicit linguistically what is implicit in our interactions with the natural world and the other members of our species.

And here is where finally the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer enters the picture, together with my first thesis: Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, so I will argue, can aptly be seen as both a convincing anticipation and a critique of Brandom's idea to structure the anthropological field by the use of two parallelized pairs of

terms: implicit/explicit and action/language. Brandom's ladder of ascent from just doing something to explicitly spelling out its meaning consists of well-described rungs, and a closer consideration of those rungs will be highly instructive not only for the understanding of Cassirer's philosophical anthropology, but also for the assessment of his impact on theories of religious experience. In order to accomplish the latter, I will suggest a concept of religious experience and its structural components along the lines of Brandom's scheme of explication, and use it to point towards some shortcomings in Cassirer's theory — and also, though this is not the main topic of this article, in Brandom's.

Brandom's theory of expressive rationality focuses on the linguistic power to make explicit the inferential connections between those implicit suppositions on which our interactions with the world rest. Thus, the first rung of Brandom's ladder consists in the implicit normativity of things that are done. In the conceptual framework of a theory of religious experience, this step might be linked to its qualitative aspect, the lived experience prior to its semantization. Second comes the use of ordinary language in order to weave the inferential network, in which a particular action/situation is embedded. Here, the parallel lies in the process of articulation, of finding the right words — or nonverbal symbols — that might do justice to the meaningfulness of lived experience by transforming it into concrete meaning. The next and third rung is marked by explicit reasoning, by the use of logical categories in order to spell out the logical structure of the material propositions produced on the

¹ Robert B. Brandom, *Making it Explicit. Reason, Representing and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994).

² Brandom, 650.

second rung. With regard to religious experience, this could be seen as the phase of codification, of explicating the interdependencies and normative hierarchies between the narratives of step two. And the fourth step, finally, is reached when reason reasons upon reason, when the whole comprehensive structure is made explicit in philosophical reflection. Theories of religious experience, quite detached from lived experience as they necessarily are, should be located on this fourth and last level. As I would like to assert, this formal structure of Brandom's ladder is a helpful tool when it comes to understand the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and furthermore the structure of religious experience in general. But it can be and has to be detached from Brandom's own specific vision of language, which I regard as misleading insofar as it focuses entirely on propositions and offers no help for understanding the place of emotions, the important role of expressivity in the personal sense of the word and anyway the multiplicity of expressive media as distinguished from propositional language.

Brandom's focus on «making it explicit» belittles his general project by leaving *us* implicit: the whole holistic structure of lifeworldly convictions, emotions and values, composed not out of mere propositions, but of an inextricable variety of symbolic media. And Cassirer's comprehensive idea of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, I shall argue, should be seen as a conceptual alternative, sharing with Brandom's concept the dynamics of mind as explicating what is first of all acted out, but managing to pay tribute to the full-fledged scale of human expressivity.

The process of explication, of shaping our interactions with the world by making explicit its emotional, cognitive and practical implications, is what distinguishes the human form of life. But, as Cassirer can teach us, if we read him as anticipating a critical assessment of Brandom's focus on propositional language, the concept of explication implies no inbuilt hierarchical order between the several irreducible symbolic media. To the contrary: at the heart of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* I see a fierce attack against the philosophical conception that semantic meaning terminates in the reflexive, propositional and detached use of language. Pro-

positional language is indeed special insofar as it must be seen as the medium of meta-reflexivity, the medium in which we spell out the irreducible coloring, the specific structure of each symbolic form. But this important function should not be confused with the misleading idea that each case of semantic meaning can be brought into a propositional form. For Cassirer, the very idea of symbolic pregnancy implies that it constitutes an internal relationship between the specific meaning of a given utterance and some intrinsic properties of the chosen medium. When it comes to matters of religion, this is a very important insight, because it protects us against the common philosophical temptation to isolate some set of propositions concerning the nature of the divine as the hard core of the phenomenon, thus losing sight of the fact that any vital religious life incorporates a multitude of symbolic practices over the full-fledged expressive scale from bodily movements to elaborated reflexive language.

Brandom locates the anthropological impact of our expressive powers in our ability to make explicit the inferential structure of our linguistic relation to the world. Against this background, Cassirer's concept of various symbolic forms with specific modes of symbolic pregnancy reminds us of the fact, that expressivity as the distinguishing anthropological feature operates along criteria that vary in accordance with the specific symbolic form. Thus the project of «making *it* explicit» in the propositional sense is transformed into the idea of «making *life* explicit», of spelling out the meaning of our interactions with the world by using the full scale of expressive media. «Jedes Merkmal unserer Erfahrung und unseres Erlebens», as Cassirer puts it in his «Essay on Man», «hat Anspruch auf Wirklichkeit».³ And thus we cannot lead our lives, as he underlines in the concluding remarks of this essay, without expressing it. Inspired by the linguistic theory of Wilhelm von Humboldt with its focus on language as articulation and by the German tradition of «Lebensphilosophie», Cassirer develops a picture of our symbolic act-

³ Ernst Cassirer, *Versuch über den Menschen. Einführung in eine Philosophie der Kultur* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1996), 124.

ivities as closely interconnected with our everyday experience. Leading our lives interacting with our social and natural environment, we are constantly involved in the process of making explicit what actually is meant by what we do — the process of semantic explication — and the reverse activity, which we might call «pragmatic implication». Strictly spoken, experience forms a hermeneutic circle between action and semantic understanding: lived experience is semantically determined in its meaning and vice versa does semantic meaning guide actions which lead to different experiences etc. To be sure, the aspect of action, the necessity to move up *and* down on the ladder of explication is not very prominent in Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. But his latest work, the *Essay on Man*, shows a significant approximation towards pragmatic positions, so now and then I will take the freedom to read him as an emerging pragmatist.

Having developed the idea of making life explicit by the use of a variety of mutually irreducible symbolic media, we can now turn to the distinguishing properties of religious experience. Along the sketched lines we might say that religious experience emerges when not only this or that aspect of life, but its meaning in general is made explicit by the use of symbolical means. If we look at it this way, we can see that talking about this special type of experience presupposes at least three structural components: (1) an experience that is acted or lived out («Erleben»), (2) the symbolic media available in a given culture, and (3) the attempt to bring those two aspects together by articulating the meaning of lived experience symbolically.

For the remainder of my article I will try to clarify this structure using Cassirer's concept of symbolic pregnancy. And I will do so by focusing on the intricate relation between feeling and symbolic form, because this will enable us to see the systematic benefits and the shortcomings of his concept at the same time.

I shall begin with a closer consideration of the basic idea, the concept of symbolic pregnancy. The most elaborate definition can be found in the third volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*: «Unter «symbolischer Prägung» soll also die Art verstanden werden, in der ein Wahrnehmungserlebnis, als «sinnliches» Er-

lebnis, zugleich einen bestimmten nicht-anschaulichen Sinn in sich faßt und zur unmittelbaren Darstellung bringt.» It is «die Wahrnehmung selbst, die kraft ihrer immanenten Gliederung eine Art von geistiger «Artikulation» gewinnt».⁴ The German term «Prägung», chosen with care by Cassirer, combines the two aspects of *conciseness* on the one hand and *density*, meaning-ladenness on the other. Both aspects are important: conciseness enables us to individuate our experiences by articulating them as having dealt with this and not with that, and thus inevitably produces distinctions and dividing lines. For the concept of religious experience, the second aspect is even more important: saturatedness with meaning. I suggest to distinguish between two facets of this term, as closely related as the two sides of a coin, but marking a very important difference. Meaning-ladenness can be understood both as semantic density and as experiential content. As semantic density, the emphasis lies on the rich and manifold manners in which a given coined phrase is interwoven with its semantic context, providing new inferential connections between hitherto unconnected aspects.

But as long as we focus on this aspect exclusively, we are never forced to leave the linguistic level. And indeed I see a tendency in Cassirer to conceptualize pregnancy in a manner that emphasizes the inferential structure only — not in the Brandonian, but in the enriched sense of multiple symbolic media —, namely the internal relation between symbolic forms and symbolic pregnancy. But in order to see the impact of his thought on the concept of religious experience, we have to concentrate on the second sense of meaning-ladenness: relatedness to first-person-experience. What does that mean exactly? It means that semantic density in symbolic forms is underdetermined if seen on the linguistic level alone and must be embedded within a theory of lifeworldly experience. If we focus on the performative or pragmatic aspect, we see that symbolic pregnancy emerges only when people use

4 Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen, Dritter Teil: Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1954), 235.

language or other symbolic media in order to articulate the meaning of their experiences. As William James has shown in his famous essay on the *Will to Believe*,⁵ symbolic density or pregnancy alone will never produce meaningfulness in the sense of guiding action or expressing experience. Only if a given instance of symbolic pregnancy is, as James puts it, «live enough to tempt our will»,⁶ only if we regard it as a possible expression for some personal experience, it becomes meaningful in the unrestricted sense of the word. Thus, the horizontal aspect of rich inferential interconnectedness has to be supplemented by the, so to speak, vertical aspect of expressivity for first-person-experience.

This leads us to the threefold structure of experience mentioned above. Symbolic pregnancy cannot be explained on the level of mediality alone, it emerges when semantically dense symbols are seen in relation to personal experience, either as its appropriate expression or as the appropriate means to induce, to make possible, some lived, first-person-experience. The concept of symbolic pregnancy should in my eyes be located precisely in the middle of those intercrossing horizontal and vertical lines. In the process of «making life explicit» it designates the point where two aspects come together and something new emerges: the personal attempt to articulate the meaning of an experience which first of all is lived through or acted out on the one side and the social objectivity of semantic meaning on the other.

The decisive point here is to realize that Cassirer's concept of symbolic pregnancy aims at overcoming the idea of symbolization as mirroring, as the representation of presemantic thoughts or sensual impressions. Producing and understanding semantic symbols — primary and secondary articulation — should both be understood as cases of, as one might say, «bounded creativity», as creative interpretations of situated experience. In his marvelous essay on «Qualitative Thought»,⁷ John Dewey has worked out in detail the nature of this process of

explication as an intrinsic element of action, which leads from some «single pervasive quality»,⁸ from which a given cycle of experience starts, to some explicit formulation, to the kind of pregnancy Cassirer sees as characteristic of our cultural world. As Dewey puts it, the qualitative situation is present as «that of which whatever is explicitly stated or propounded is a distinction», but «to call it <implicit> does not signify that it is implied».⁹ The anthropological idea of making life explicit, taken from an enlarged Brandomian setting and applied to Cassirer's concept of symbolic pregnancy, rejects the idea of presemantic meaning implied in semantic expressions, but emphatically embraces the concept of implicit meaningfulness, experienced in qualitative situations and brought to explicit formulation in a creative process that transforms situative concrete possibilities into symbolic pregnancy. Thus, the difference between implied and implicit meaning is by no means a minor one: for it introduces the possibility of what Charles Taylor calls «the exploration of order through personal resonance».¹⁰ If symbolic meaning were already implied in presemantic action and/or perception, its symbolic formulation would entirely be a matter of adequate representation. Consequently, in religious matters, pluralism had to be conceptualized in terms of cognitive or morally deficient deviations from the one and only true religion. But if we substitute the idea of isomorphic representation by the idea of symbolic pregnancy as an internal component of qualitative experience, we are enabled to accept pluralism without having to embrace the anything-goes-attitude. The implicit guides explication and hence the production of symbolic pregnancy not by providing some primordial meaning independent from our symbolizing faculties, but by delivering the

⁷ John Dewey, «Qualitative Thought», in *The essential Dewey, vol. 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy* (ed. by L. Hickman & Th. M. Alexander; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998), 195-205.

⁸ Dewey, 198.

⁹ Dewey, 197.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989), 511.

⁵ William James, *The Will to Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy. Human Immortality*, both books bound as one (New York: Dover, 1956).

⁶ James, 29.

background of a qualitative unity without which the process of semantization would never get of the ground.

Thus the concept of symbolic pregnance with its emphasis on the internal relation between semantic meaning and qualitative experience can be seen as connecting the hermeneutical insight that understanding presupposes an unthematized horizon of meaningfulness with Dewey's contention, that qualitative situations provide the unobjectifiable background of every explicit formulation. In my eyes, it is above all this constitutive tension between the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of density in symbolic pregnance that contributes to the richness of Cassirer's conception and establishes its importance for the concept of religious experience.

By giving two examples, I hope to elaborate this central point further: *first*, I will deal with Cassirer's important distinction between mythical thought and religion, and *second*, I will use his concept to argue against two counter-productive dichotomies in our field: collective vs. individual and active vs. passive.

In the second volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer explores mythical thought as a specific way of interaction with reality. Right from the beginning he combines a diachronic with a synchronic perspective: mythical thought is seen both as an early phase in the development of culture and as an anthropological constant. And throughout the text, Cassirer's focus is not on material content, but on structural unity. In his eyes, mythological consciousness as such can be characterized through the interdependence of two aspects: semiotically by a complete fusion between meaning and sign — Cassirer talks about «Konkreszenz»¹¹ — leaving no room for reflexive distance, and anthropologically by the physiognomic stance, that is the attitude to interpret all experience in terms of its emotional coloring, its importance for the well-being of the self and its social group. By the second aspect, mythical consciousness is closely connected to a basic feature of life-worldly-, first-person-experience in general: its

qualitative character, which, in John Dewey's words, is due to its «care or concern for human destiny».¹² I would even go one step farther and insist, that it is precisely this aspect of qualitative thought that enables Cassirer to conceptualize mythical consciousness as, so to say, a symbolic form that is here to stay: the physiognomic stance of ordinary, nonscientific experience is not prone to cultural rationalization and can be preserved when then mythical mode of symbolization is overcome by the discovery of the semiotic difference between sign and meaning.

And this is precisely what happens when we move from myth to religion. As Michael Moxter has shown recently,¹³ Cassirer construes the development to the latter as a gain in semiotic rationality: in general, this amounts to the discovery of signs as signs which stand for something that eludes its symbolization, in religious terms we talk about the discovery of transcendence. Mythological pregnance is guided by the logic of *presence* in which experiential content is semantic meaning and vice versa. In contrast, religious pregnance is guided by the logic of representation in which semantic density is taken to refer to a reality transcending its symbolization.

This process of semiotic rationalization, as reconstructed by Cassirer, exhibits very interesting parallels with the historico-sociological debate about the discovery of transcendence in the so-called Axial Age, started by Karl Jaspers and currently associated above all with the name of Shmuel Eisenstadt. Instead of going into the details of this ramified debate, I will pick out one point of special importance: the relation of transcendence and experience. According to Moxter's reading of Cassirer, it is the semiotic switch from presence to representation that distinguishes religion from mythical consciousness. But in my eyes, the emergence of transcendent categories introduced yet another semiotic difference that has influenced the history of religion and of interreligious dialogue ever since: the difference between representation — in the

¹² Dewey 201.

¹³ Michael Moxter, *Kultur als Lebenswelt. Studien zum Problem einer Kulturtheologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 139–142.

¹¹ Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen, Zweiter Teil: das mythische Denken* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 82.

platonian sense of prefiguration and image — and *articulation*. Following the logic of representation, we will no longer be tempted to confuse meaning and sign, but we may still hold the conviction that a given symbolism — say: the dogmatic framework of some religion — is the only valid expression of the transcendent truth, all intolerant consequences included. Jan Assmann's books on the «mosaic distinction»¹⁴ underlines this problematic point strongly, but it never contemplates another possible long-term effect: for the idea, that the divine transcends our semantic categories, may also enhance the role of human experience: a divine, that eludes any attempt to capture it in adequate symbols calls for yet another move on the semiotic ladder of explication: the move from representing some pre-given divine order to articulating the human experience of the divine. The latter attempt goes beyond the logic of presence *and* of isomorphic representation, and I suggest that Cassirer's account of the transition from myth to religion should be read in this light, in line with his general conception of experience.

My second point is closely connected to Cassirer's emphasis on symbolic pregnance as the centerpiece of a creative process, in which lived experience is transformed into semantic meaning, and semantic meaning vice versa structures the way in which we act and experience the world qualitatively. This focus on symbolic experience as *energeia*, not as *ergon* — if I may borrow Wilhelm von Humboldt's distinction — allows him to overcome some deeply entrenched dichotomies, above all those between activity and passivity and between collectivity and individuality. If we move, with Cassirer, from the idea of representation to the concept of articulation, the mirror-metaphor no longer leads us astray in suggesting that the validity of our convictions and values depends on passive impressions. The basic fact about consciousness, then, is that it is not content with impressions, «sondern daß es jeden Eindruck mit einer freien Tätigkeit des Ausdrucks verknüpft und durch-

dringt».¹⁵ The active/passive-dichotomy is thereby transformed into aspectual differences within the active process of experience. Following Cassirer, the question: is the content of religious experience received or produced by its subject? makes no sense at all. A cycle of experience may have started with the subject's attraction to some unifying quality perceived as just being there, but the process of semantization, of delineating the content and fixing its inferential connections, inevitably involves creative and formative activities. And without symbolic pregnance, not even the experiencing self would know what his or her experience was all about.

This leads me to the other futile dichotomy, the one between collective and individual experience. Ever since the classical theories of Durkheim and James, theorizing in our field has been torn between those two polar aspects. Durkheim emphasizes strongly the social character of religion and defines it as a solidly united system of convictions and practices,¹⁶ whereas James, in his famous lectures on the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, focuses on personal religion only and announces straightaway to «ignore the institutional branch entirely».¹⁷ Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* offers a mediating position: following the idea of symbolic pregnance we can realize, that — on the one hand — personal, lived experience in its qualitative-emotional dimension remains dumb and has no power to transform behavior as long as it is not articulated symbolically, and — on the other hand — that any system of convictions and practices, that from the first-person-point of view is no longer seen as expressive for qualitative experience, becomes increasingly obsolete. The officially so-called scientific world-view of socialism in the last years of the GDR offers a

¹⁵ Ernst Cassirer, «Der Begriff der symbolischen Formen im Aufbau der Geisteswissenschaften», 169–230 in *Wesen und Wirkung des Symbolbegriffs* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 175.

¹⁶ Cf. Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1960), 65.

¹⁷ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 34.

¹⁴ Jan Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur* (München/Wien: Hanser, 1998); *Die mosaische Unterscheidung oder der Preis der Monotheismus* (München/Wien: Hanser, 2003).

good example for the latter collapse of symbolic experience, the corresponding failure on the other side being what Robert Bellah called the religion of Sheilatism.¹⁸ inferentially unarticulated lingering on emotional qualities without any normative consequences. Symbolic pregnancy in its unrestricted sense — both as semantic and as pragmatic density — can thus be interpreted as a mediating term between the cultural objectivity of symbolic forms and personal experience. And this line of thought can once again be connected with the development from mythical consciousness to religion: as Cassirer points out in part III of his book on mythical thought, it is the very process of mythical articulation itself, that triggers a process leading from undifferentiated mythological collectivity to the idea of a reciprocal relation between the self and the community: «Indem jede neue Stellung, die das Ich sich gegenüber der Gemeinschaft gibt, ihrem Ausdruck im mythischen Bewußtsein findet, indem sie sich vor allem in der Form des Seelenglaubens mythisch objektiviert, wird die Entwicklung des Seelenbegriffs nicht nur zur Darstellung, sondern zu einem geistigen Werkzeug für den Akt der <Subjektivierung>, für die Gewinnung und Erfassung des individuellen Selbst».¹⁹

This process, as Cassirer points out, is guided by what he calls the physiognomic stance — his idiosyncratic way to evoke the central role of emotions in mythical as well as in everyday-experience. My critical assessment of Cassirer is centered around this point. As I see it, Cassirer realizes the intimate connection between qualitative experience and symbolic pregnancy, but his conceptual framework produces some significant distortions and keeps him from fully appreciating the role of emotional qualities. The first limitation seems to be that, by bringing together mythical consciousness, emotional qualities and physiognomic experience, Cassirer overemphasizes the parallels between perception and emotion. His model is our human ability to «read» facial expressions of emotional qualities

and the propensity of mythical consciousness to «physiognomisation» of reality in general. The importance of the physiognomic stance has recently been supported with massive empirical evidence by Paul Ekman,²⁰ and Cassirer has a strong point here. But it is deeply misleading to conceive of emotional qualities in general along this line of thought. Interestingly, in the chapter on «myth and religion» in his *Essay on Man*, Cassirer elaborates this point with a lengthy quotation on qualitative thought, taken from John Dewey's *Experience and Nature*. He praises Dewey for having pointed out the importance of emotional qualities, but it seems to escape his attention, that Dewey rejects the perceptual conception, allows emotions to be semantically elaborated and sees the qualitative aspect as indispensable even for scientific thought. As Dewey shows in his essay on *Qualitative Thought*, every cycle of experience starts with some emotionally experienced «underlying and pervasive quality»,²¹ in which the meaning-ladenness of a situation is contained and from which the articulation of meaning has to start. But during this process of semantization, the emotional aspect remains alive, and semantic meaning fuses inextricably with emotional coloring, thereby structuring the content of forthcoming experience. Primary emotions, in other words, are capable of semantic refinement and of evaluations by second-order emotions, commonly called values. Cassirer's conception of emotion doesn't capture this decisive point because it focuses on the reciprocity of physiognomic impression vs. mimetic expression: «Der sinnlich-affektive Zustand geht, indem er sich geradezu in den mimischen Ausdruck umsetzt, in diesem letzterem auch gleichsam unter; er entläßt sich in ihm und findet darin sein Ende».²² And even though Cassirer underlines that higher symbolic functions emerge precisely when this discharging is

¹⁸ Cf. Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: California UP, 1996).

¹⁹ Cassirer, *Das mythische Denken*, 210.

²⁰ Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed. Understanding Faces and Feeling* (London: Weldenfeld and Nicolson, 2003).

²¹ Dewey, 197.

²² Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Erster Teil: Die Sprache* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 21953), 134.

inhibited and finally substituted by linguistic articulation, emotional qualities seem to lose all importance when it comes to climb the higher rungs of the ladder of explication, namely «Darstellung» and «Bedeutung». Thus, two important features of emotional qualities get lost: their thoroughgoing importance in even the most sophisticated forms of symbolic experience, and their plasticity, their capability of being transformed by processes of articulation.

In matters of religious experience, these are important points, since every adequate reconstruction of its inner form will have to refer to some emotional unifying quality which guides the attempt of semantically fixing its meaning. And here we have another example illustrating the impact of the discovery of transcendent categories: for the emotional quality detaches itself from the mythological-physiognomic point of view when, in axial religion and in accordance with the «Bilderverbot», the face of God is conceived of as invisible. Yet the intensity and importance of emotional qualities remains, albeit transformed into higher-order emotional attitudes. The specific symbolic pregnance of religious experience is shaped by the articulation of those value-laden attitudes. But if the procreation of symbolic pregnance, as I have suggested, is to be seen as the mediating term in the triangular structure of symbolic experience, the other terms being qualitative experience and socially available semantic systems, we realize that pregnance is always precarious. Since it articulates experience, it always incorporates an indissoluble tension between what is meant and what is said, between the qualitative unity of lived experience and semantically articulated meaning. From Cassirer's idea of symbolic pregnance we can learn that experience itself collapses and loses all relevance for the guidance of life when presemantic qualities are confused with the semantic content that is produced only by the endeavor of articulation. But the symbolic forms of culture, and the semantic universes of religious worldviews are also prone to the opposite danger, namely experiential lifelessness.

And here we can begin to see the full cultural importance of religious experience, conceived of as the transcendence-conscious attempt to achieve an expressive relationship between ar-

ticulation and qualitative experience. The semiotic rationalization from myth to religion, as Cassirer, followed by Moxter, saw realized in Jewish prophecy with its Bilderverbot, must anthropologically be seen as placing an hitherto unimaginable emphasis on personal experience. Thinking in categories of transcendence and the conscious attempt to articulate experience mutually reinforce each other, and it would definitely be very rewarding to investigate this intimate connection more closely. The process of cultural symbolization, the life of the symbolic forms, gains an unprecedented dynamics when fueled by the ever elusive difference between qualitative intensity and symbolic pregnance. And transcendent categories can be seen as the conceptual placeholders of this chasm, whose existence protects us from confusing the world of semantic meaning with reality.

Having come thus far, we can finally close the circle and return to my reading of Cassirer as anticipating a semiotic critique of Brandom's ladder of explication. Religious Experience, released to its full meaning by the discovery of transcendence, can not only be valued as an important step in semiotic rationalization in comparison to mythical consciousness; it can also safeguard us against the debasement of personal experience implicit in propositionalistic views of our relation to the world. Without doing justice to the transcendence implicit — though not implied — in the chasm between the qualitative and the symbolic aspects of experience, we will leave ourselves implicit even though we might move around with ease and competence in the space of reason.



Lutheran Ethics and the Common Values of Mankind

HANS-OLOF KVIST

Hans-Olof Kvist är professor emeritus i systematisk teologi från Åbo akademi, Finland. Hans akademiska intressen har sträckt sig över samtliga systematisk-teologiska ämnen som dogmatik, etik, religionsfilosofi och ekumenik. I den här artikeln diskuterar han relationen mellan en luthersk etik och en allmänmänsklig etik.

Introduction

Lutheran ethics is a very complex matter having biblical, historical, theological and philosophical dimensions. Different churches, ecumenical organisations, theologians, theological schools and church workers often conceive of it in different ways. On the one hand, the prevailing feeling arising from efforts aimed at working out a clear Lutheran ethic is dissatisfaction. On the other hand, due to different needs, Lutheran ethics is continuously being scholarly enriched with new points of view, so that there is hope to understand it in a more comprehensive way.

During the history of Christianity the Ten Commandments, in different churches often numbered differently, have been the object of people's general instruction. Together with the Three Ecumenical Creeds, particularly *The Apostles' Creed* (*Apost.*) and *The Nicene Creed* (381), these Ten Commandments, formulated in Ex.20, have also been an essential part of the Lutheran church tradition. The *Apost.* and the Ten Commandments are contained in Martin Luther's Catechisms from 1529, *The Small Catechism* (*SC*) and *The Large Catechism* (*LC*), which belong to *The Book of Concord* (*BC*, 1580). Since the first Finnish Church Law, which was adopted in 1869, they have been defined as official confessions of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland* (*ELCF*). For centuries and even today — after the acceptance of the new *Catechism* by the Finnish Church Synod¹ — the *SC* has been an important instrument for instructing Christian faith among the

population. The internationally most recognised Lutheran confession, *The Augsburg Confession* (*AC*, 1530), together with the important *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (*Apol.*, 1531), *The Smalcald Articles* (*SA*, 1538) and *Formula of Concord* (*FC*, 1577), the latter consisting of *The Epitome* (*Ep.*) and *The Solid Declaration* (*SD*) are, too, Lutheran confessions contained in *BC*. With the exception of the *FC* they are mentioned in the introductory parts of the *Ep.* and *SD*. Crowning all is the fundamental significance of Holy Scripture in every definition of Christian faith: «Holy Scripture alone remains the only judge, rule, and guiding principle, according to which, as the only touchstone, all teachings should and must be recognized and judged, whether they are good or evil, correct or incorrect.» (*Ep.*, Introduction 7; see also *SD*, Concerning the Binding Summary).

There are many studies about what is meant by Lutheranism — these including books and articles on Luther and his theology and on the theology of Lutheran orthodoxy as well as later «Lutheran» theologians and their theologies, but in the *Church Law* (*CL*, 1994) and the *Church Order* (*CO*, 1994) of the *ELCF* only Holy Scripture, the Three Ecumenical Creeds and the confessions of the *BC* are mentioned as the basis of Lutheran faith, either as *norma normans* or

¹ In 1999 the Church Synod of the *ELCF* adopted *Katekismus. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon kristinoppi* (= *Catechism. The Doctrine of the Christian Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*) founding, in principle, on Luther's *SC*.

norma normata. When turning to *Lutheran ethics* might there be more useful and relevant sources to describe them than the normative documents of a Lutheran church or Lutheran churches?

In order to point to these intertwinings, in my article «Kristillinen etiikka ja globaali etiikka» (= *Christian Ethics and Global Ethics*) in the Synodal Book of the *ELCF*, called *Raamattu ja kirkon usko tänään* (= *The Bible and the Faith of the Church today*) (2004), I pointed to the *CL* and *CO*.

Considering their fundamental ecclesiastical importance it is surprising to note the scarcity of modern articles and studies that relate Lutheran ethics to the normatively fundamental confessional documents included in the *BC*.

In what follows I will therefore explain how Lutheran ethics is embedded in the context of central Lutheran doctrinal decisions. I will focus on three documents: first of all on Luther's *LC* (and *SC*) which contain his explanations of the Ten Commandments and, which throughout the centuries have been, and are, so important to the general spiritual and ethical instruction given by Lutheran churches, and secondly and thirdly on the *AC* and the *Apol*. All these documents are claimed to be writings truly expressing the Christian faith, founded on the Holy Word of God, on the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament.

After discussing the main elements of Lutheran ethics, I will comment on how it should be assessed in relation to values which are thought to be common to mankind. In this respect the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, adopted by the UN, will be taken into consideration. I will also refer to the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, adopted by the Parliament of the World's Religions at the beginning of the nineties. Reference will be made to the proposed new *A Constitution for Europe* (2004), at present sent to the EU member states for approval, rejection, refinements or amendments, and I will comment on the values presented. Also values defended by *Charta Oecumenica. Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe* will be considered.

First, however, something should be said about relatively recent Lutheran ethical thinking

in Sweden and Finland, which are predominantly connected with the thoughts of singular academic theologians, rather than with fundamental official doctrinal declarations by the churches. The reason for this is to do justice to the discussion of what, in the last decades, was generally presented as Lutheran ethics. I will not deal with the results of catechism instruction given by parish ministers.

Lutheran Ethics in Sweden and Finland During the Twentieth Century

There are two surveys explicitly dealing with the development of the foundations of Lutheran ethics in Sweden and Finland during the last century, Göran Bexell's study *Teologisk etik i Sverige sedan 1920-talet* (= *Theological Ethics in Sweden since the 1920es*; 1981) and my own study *Etiska grundpositioner och -frågor hos lärare i systematisk teologi vid universitetet i Helsingfors* (= *Fundamental Ethical Positions and Issues Advocated by Teachers of Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki*; 1980). Without making a detailed comparison it could be said that twentieth century Swedish theology on matters concerning Luther's ethical thinking has to a large extent influenced Finnish theologians working with corresponding matters, whereas nineteenth century work done in Finland (Granfelt) influenced Swedish theological approaches to ethical instruction from the first decades of the twentieth century.

There are, however, a lot of specialised studies and articles on ethical matters in Luther. First and foremost, I would like to mention Herbert Olsson, a Swedish theologian, who in the thirties wrote a dissertation called *Grundproblemet i Luthers socialetik. I* (= *The fundamental problem in Luther's Social Ethics I*) (1934), a study on the foundations of Luther's social ethics. According to Lauri Haikola, ethicist in Helsinki, at the end of the sixties Olsson was still the most competent work on natural law (natural rights) in Luther. In his article «Luther und das Naturrecht» (1969,128) Haikola mentions, that he in *Usus legis* (1958, second ed. 1981), which includes a comparison of Lutheran

orthodoxy with Luther, only gives an account of what Olsson wrote on law. Later on Olsson's longtime thinking on Luther's ethics was summarized in a monumental posthumous work called *Schöpfung, Vernunft und Gesetz in Luthers Theologie* (1971), edited by the Swedish Luther-researcher Ingemar Öberg, a study, that, due to its Swedish origin, has been neglected in German- and English-speaking areas.

Traditionally, the concept of *natural law* has been associated with Stoic philosophers, the representatives of which stressed the need for a life in accordance with <nature>, which, at the same time, meant a unified and integrated life, a good life, intelligible to reason. In *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas defines *law* as being nothing other than a rational order toward the common good, given by the person, who cares for the community and who promulgates the law.² Quoting Paul, the apostle, who in Rom. 4,17 speaks of the God, whose command brings into being what did not exist, Thomas understands the eternal concept of a divine law as having the reason of an eternal law, i.e. containing the idea, that every ordinance of God is made in order to govern things beforehand known to him.³ Thomas calls the participation of the eternal law in rational creatures *lex naturalis*.⁴ Pointing to Rom. 2 he stresses, that every activity of the reason and will in human beings is derived from what is in accordance with nature and that every ratiocination is derived from principles known by nature and that the first goal oriented acts of human beings happen through natural law.⁵ The first command of the natural law is that good should be sought and evil avoided. All other commands of the natural law, which practical reason by nature apprehends, are based on this.⁶ In Thomas' thinking on natural law ancient (Aristotelian) philosophical elements, together with biblical and Christian theological interpretations, form an intellectual mix.

What, then, is, to be said of natural law in Luther? A modern Swedish textbook on theological ethics (Göran Bexell & Carl-Henric Grenholm, *Teologisk etik. En introduktion*, 1997) states, that <natural law> was important to Luther's ethical thinking. However, in regard to that concept Luther was critical of a theology that was influenced by Aristotelian philosophy. Instead, he used biblical arguments in support of his doctrine on natural law. As voluntarist Luther sees natural law as being an expression of God's acts and will. In the textbook Luther's distinction between a worldly and a spiritual kingdom and between human law and divine law, as well as his conception of law as written in the hearts of all human beings, his conception of a political use of the law, his doctrine of vocation and his distinction between <person> and <office> are seen as expressions of, or at least as belonging to, the context of <natural law>.

When Nordic theologians — for example, when Gustaf Wingren in his books on Creation and Law and on Luther's Doctrine on Vocation argues for a humanly anchored <natural law> through pointing to the interconnected relationships of human beings in their social environment and Ragnar Holte in his article on «Human and Christian» in the book *Kristet samhällsansvar* (= *Christian Social Responsibility*; 1975) argues for a humanly founded Social Ethics, and the Dane Knud E. Løgstrup, in his book *Den etiske fordring* (= *The Ethical Demand*) (1956), on the basis of the idea of creation, argues for the non-existence of a special Christian ethics, it is clear that their <referring to> or <developing> the idea <natural law> can only loosely be interpreted as representing Luther's idea of natural law. Here it is enough to recall how Haikola, referring to Olsson's earlier insights and on the basis of writings dating to the reformative Luther, argues for the concept of *natural law* in Luther through pointing to God's commandment in Rom. 2. He argues as follows (transl.): «However, God's command binds the human being also with respect to his innerlife, through his conscience. God's command is written in the heart of the human being. The command demands faith and love [= 1. Commandment] and as such it is identical with the demand of natural service and natural love of one's neigh-

² *S.Th.* II,1, q 90, a 4.

³ *S.Th.* II,1, q 91, a 1, ad 1.

⁴ *S.Th.* II,1, q 91, a 2.

⁵ *S.Th.* II,1, q 91, a 2, ad 2.

⁶ *S.Th.* II,1, q 94, a 2.

bour [= the Golden Rule] in natural law.»⁷ Eleven years later Haikola states (transl.): «According to Luther there is only one <virtue>, one <work>, which is commanded absolutely: Faith and the trust of the heart. So it is commanded in the *First Commandment*, which is written in the heart of every human being. *The First Commandment as a demand is the content of the natural knowledge of God and of natural law.*» Haikola strongly stresses the will of God in his interpretation of Luther. To put it in another way: According to Haikola Luther's view of God is voluntaristic. Haikola takes a firm stand against the view that general rational ideas of God are sufficient for establishing a union with God.⁸ Though rational, also *natural law* is also conceived of in a voluntaristic, not intellectual, way by Luther. — The two first chapters of Olsson's posthumous study to some extent repeatedly and in an exhaustive way discuss these ideas.

Jorma Laulaja's dissertation *Kultaisen säännön etiikka. Lutherin sosiaalietiikan luonnonoikeudellinen perusstruktuuri* (= *The ethics of the Golden Rule. Natural Law as the basic structure of Luther's social ethics*) (1981) makes use of the results concerning natural law reached by Olsson and Haikola and at the same time adds some further comments. Laulaja focuses on the significance of Luther's theological interpretations of the Golden Rule as a way of elucidating the social ethical content of *natural law*. With respect to the question concerning the common values of mankind the result of Laulaja's analyses is interesting: unity and community as the basic meaning of life, the priority of the interests of the whole community, peaceful settlement of disputes, a life of moderation, that is, compromises for the good of the community, with respect to the standard of living and to economic aspirations. The just use of power includes the need for an impartial judge and, in addition, sovereignty, moderation and control.

Laulaja notices, that Luther's applications of the idea of a natural law could be similar to those of the Scholastics. There is, for example,

in both cases a similar interest in seeing the common interest of the community as prior to that of smaller groups. There are also similarities on the unity, universality and reasonableness of the law. Luther's stand on these matters also enabled him to consider non-Christian social ethical views. Also, dissimilarities arising from the difference between *lex aeterna* and *creatio continua* exist, in its turn due to the difference between an intellectualistic and a voluntaristic conception of God and God's creativeness in relationship to man's nature and moral actions. Loving oneself in accordance with Aquinas' instructions was, furthermore, rejected by Luther. — The significance of the concept of a Natural Law for Lutheran ethics was, later on, stressed in Laulaja's book *Elämän oikea ja väärä. Eettiset valinnat tänään* (transl. *The right and wrong of life. The ethical choices of today*) (1994), which was ordered by the Bishops' Conference of the *ELCF*.

In his thesis on *Luther's Golden Rule, Summe des christlichen Lebens. Die «Goldene Regel» als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510 bis 1527* (1993), Antti Raunio widens and at the same time changes the perspective. He finds that Luther applies the Golden Rule to God, who is love, and the relation to him. Raunio's main point is that, in Luther's theology until 1527, the Golden Rule expresses the law of the divine nature. According to Raunio, this means that the Golden Rule, the Natural Law, demands such a being and such an acting that the divine agape realizes itself. Man has a natural knowledge of God, but has no knowledge of the way in which God remains faithful to his will to be the source and giver of all good. Man's sin has the effect that he is unable to give God what God expects from him. The problem of the Golden Rule can only be solved by God himself. God gets back the properties that man has taken away from him when he paradoxically makes it possible for man to participate in his properties. The Golden Rule is, thus, conceived of as a law demanding what the Gospel gives, as the law of God's nature. Luther calls it «natural law» or «the law of love», «pure Christian doctrine» and «the sum of love». Raunio's study has been positively influenced by the research on Luther done by scholars at the University of

⁷ Haikola 1958,94–95.

⁸ Haikola 1969,130.

Helsinki. Through also holding the view that man, on the basis of his nature, has knowledge of the first principles of morals, he, when making use of results reached by Tuomo Mannermaa, at the same time unites the traditions from Olsson, Haikola and Laulaja with later research on Luther done in Helsinki. It is, however, clear that, when the Golden Rule is applied to the relation to God, it cannot primarily be conceived of as a moral rule but as a medium for elucidating God's love. When Christ as present in faith is the basis of good works, loving one's neighbor means to put oneself in the situation of the neighbor.

Lutheran Ethics — a Confessional Ethic

I think there is some need to emphasize Lutheran ethics as an ecclesiastical and denominational ethic, because ethics even in Lutheran contexts is sometimes treated as being without any religious preconditions. The tight connection between Christian faith and ethics taught by Lutheran churches will emerge from the analysis I will present in the following. Right at the beginning I would like to make a general remark concerning the treatment of ethics on the basis of the Lutheran confessions. Even in such cases where there are no explicit references to natural law in the Lutheran Confessions, such a law can be thought of as presupposed. Only the *Apol.*, in its twentythird article on priests' marriage, contains some clear statements pertaining to natural law. Philipp Melancthon, referring to the first chapter of *Genesis* (1:28) states explicitly: «Because this creation or divine ordinance in the human creature is a natural law, the jurists have accordingly spoken wisely and rightly that the union of male and female is a matter of natural law. However, since natural law is immutable, the right to contract marriages must always remain. For where nature is not changed, it is necessary for that order with which God has endowed nature to remain; it cannot be removed by human laws...Therefore, let this remain the case, both what Scripture teaches and what the jurists wisely have said: the marriage of male and female is a matter of natural right. More-

over, a natural right truly is a divine right, because it is an order divinely stamped upon nature. However, because this right cannot be changed without an extraordinary act of God, the right to contract marriages must of necessity remain, for the natural desire of one sex for the other sex is an ordinance of God in nature.»⁹ This passage reveals influence from earlier church thinkers, for example Aquinas, particularly with regard to the conception of natural law as an immutable law, but is still, due to its totally different finalistic context, to be construed as a conception of its own.

In order to understand the Lutheran view of the interconnection between faith and ethics, I will now turn to Luther's explanation of the third article of the Creed in the *LC*. Here he has an idea of man's fundamental position before God. Luther says: «For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this very purpose he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy...».¹⁰ Luther continues that God, to make us holy, has granted and bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. At this point Luther refers to his explanation of the first article. According to him the Creed in its totality can be understood only as a response to the First Commandment. God, in whom the believers believe, is the Father, who has created heaven and earth and who has given human beings their lives and constantly sustains them. God has given human beings their senses, their reason and understanding and the like; their food and drink, clothing, nourishment, spouse and children, houses and farms, etc. He also makes all creation help provide the benefits and necessities of life... Moreover, he gives all physical and temporal blessings — good, peace, security. Nobody receives his life from himself, but only from God.

Obviously, what is given to human beings, is given to them by God, so that they will be able to serve the plan he is implementing concerning

⁹ *Apol.* XXIII,9–12; see also XXIII,4,6–7.

¹⁰ *LC* II,64.

man. God wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth. Therefore, a quiet and peaceful life is what pleases God, man's Saviour (1 Ti. 2:2–6). According to Luther, every human being is primarily to be seen in the light of God's plan of salvation. Consequently, man's fundamental value as a human being must be interpreted in accordance with that. All man's abilities are given by God. Even his ability to act morally, through God's will, or more precisely, through the commandments of the second tablet, are put into the service of man's fellowman and, thus, into securing a peaceful life for all human beings. And in doing so, they ultimately serve God's plan for man.

Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed in the *LC* is, so far as man is concerned, presented in a very realistic manner. Because everything man possesses, and everything in heaven and earth besides, is daily given, sustained and protected by God, it inevitably follows, that we are in duty bound to love, praise and thank him without ceasing and, in short, to devote all these things to his service, as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments. Luther, however, sees, that all men daily sin with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and property, and that man, in a particular sense is a sinner through fighting against the Word of God. Man does not trust in God with his whole heart. Instead, he boasts and brags as if he had life, riches, power, honor, and such things of himself, as if he himself were to be served. According to the *LC* «this is the way the wretched, perverse world acts, drowned in its blindness, misusing all the blessings and gifts of God solely for its own pride, greed, pleasure, and enjoyment, and never once turning to God to thank him or acknowledge him as Lord and Creator». Therefore, if man believed it, the First Article should humble and terrify everyone. Nevertheless, according to the catechism, Christians have the advantage «that they acknowledge that they owe it to God to serve and obey him for all these things.»¹¹

According to Luther sin is, first of all, an offence against the First Commandment, i.e. not

believing and trusting in God. If man could, every commandment would be kept, not only the first, but also the nine other commandments. With respect to the second tablet, the commandments could be conceived of as being only moral norms, and as such may be implemented also only externally (in an outward manner). The commandments are, nevertheless, in both cases God's commandments. Every offence against the commandments, whether the commandments are understood as expressions of God's fundamental will concerning man, or only as such God-given moral norms as may be faithfully or only externally implemented by human beings, requires reconciliation with God. That is possible only by repentance, where God acts by using Law and Gospel. Man, confessing his sins, his trespasses against God and his fellowmen, turns to God, who is merciful, and according to his will, forgives trespasses. In the *BC* the doctrinal issue of repentance is comprehensively treated in the *AC*, article XII, in the *Apol.*, article XII, in the *SA*, III:2–4, in the concluding passage «A Brief Exhortation to Confession» in the *LC*, in the *Ep.*, article V, and in the *SD*, article V.

According to what has been presented above, Lutheran ethics can be treated on three levels. The first one relates the central tenets of Christian faith to Christian Ethics (depth level 1). The second one concerns the fulfilment of the commandments, in so far as it is significant for the implementation of Christian morals (ground level of Christian Ethics or level 2). This level presupposes, that God acts by using Law and Gospel in order to awaken faith. The believer gets new strength and motivation to implement good works directed to his fellowmen. The third one (the level of everyday Christian ethics or level 3) has to do with the external keeping or fulfilment of the commandments.

It can be concluded, that, according to the Lutheran Confessions, faith and ethics are connected and intertwined. There is no such view in the Lutheran Confessions that ethics could be treated autonomously or separately from central faith convictions, this being true even when ethical acts in everyday life do not reveal their religiously motivated background. God has created man with specific abilities, also moral abilities, and man is in a fundamental way included in

¹¹ *LC* II,9–24.

God's plan until the life of the age to come. The Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of human beings, and so, these are able to distinguish between what is according to God's will and what, in a general sense, is to be held morally right and wrong. What according to revelational belief was given in the creation, the natural law, was later on, because of man's sin, explicitly revealed. God uses Law and Gospel in order to implement his plan concerning man's salvation and with the help of morals and legislation to govern and protect everybody, so that as many as possible would be included in the work the Holy Spirit does when the Gospel is preached in order to lead men to their ultimate goal. When speaking of Lutheran ethics all this is to be kept in mind. The religious bond of Lutheran ethics can, of course, be assessed differently. Compared with non-religiously founded ethical convictions its strength and advantage is that it is not reducible to ideas of anthropocentric human efforts and successes. The believer's experience of being bound to a sovereign authority outside man gives Lutheran ethics — whether it be on creational grounds or on the ground of the gospel — quite specific credibility, including the power to motivate believing persons to act morally. For Lutheran Christians under no circumstances are moral implementations prior to fundamental truths of faith.

External and Radical Fulfilment of the Law

I will now focus on a distinction important to Lutheran ethics: the distinction between a radical (absolute) fulfilment and an external fulfilment of the Ten Commandments. In the *LC* this issue is treated by Luther and in the *Apol.* by Melancthon. The idea of an external fulfilment of the commandments opens the door to discussions on what unites them with, or distinguishes them, from ethical norms belonging to other contexts.

In the *LC*, in the explanation of the Fourth Commandment, Luther insists that everyone should respect and obey his/her superiors or persons, whose duty is to command and to govern,

and, likewise, obey the civil authority. According to Luther it is through civil rulers, as through parents, that God gives us food, house and home, protection and security and preserves us through them. Therefore it is the duty of those governed to honor and respect them as the most precious treasure and most priceless jewel on earth. Luther continues by saying, that those who are obedient, willing and eager to be of service, know that they please God and receive joy and happiness as their reward. If they do not do so in love, but despise authority, rebel, or cause unrest, they will have no favor or blessing. From this it is clear that the commandment can be kept in an external way — otherwise it would be useless to insist on it as a duty to be fulfilled by subordinates.

The commandments are directed to sinners living in this world. Therefore, due to man's sin and evil will, even the external implementation of the Fourth Commandment remains deficient. However, it will, to a certain degree and occasionally, be fulfilled, particularly when faith and trust in God motivate the Christian to act morally. Even if the Christian, in that case, implements the commandment cheerfully praising God, the giver of all good things, he is, nevertheless, due to sin, unable to fulfill completely the commandment concerning authority.

The explanation of the Fifth Commandment demonstrates that the commandment is given to man as a daily exhortation not to kill. The occasion and need for the commandment is the evil world and the life of misery, within which human beings are living. Through the commandment God wants to separate good and evil. The meaning of the commandment is that no one should harm another person for any evil deed. Because murder is forbidden, everything that may lead to murder is also forbidden. According to the explanation, the commandment «not to kill» means that one should not harm anyone, either by hand or deed, and that one should not use one's tongue to advocate or advise harming anyone. Furthermore, one should neither use nor sanction any means or methods whereby anyone may be mistreated.

What is presented above indicates undoubtedly that an external fulfilment of the Fifth Commandment is possible, though, due to the

sin, not always. By giving man faith God endows him with the power necessary for a moral fulfilment of the commandments. Nevertheless, man is never able to fulfil the commandment in that radical manner God requests of him. Man is not able in every situation to do good to his neighbors and to prevent, protect, and save them from suffering bodily harm or injury. He does not always act for the good of his neighbor, even if it would be possible for him (cf. Mt. 25:42–44). When it according to the *LC* it is right to call all persons murderers, who do not even offer counsel or assistance to those in need and peril of body and life, there is a good reason to ask, whether an external or moral implementation of the commandment is enough to carry out the commandment radically, that is in accordance with what God really wants.

This holds, *mutatis mutandis*, true of all other commandments of the second tablet and partly also of the first tablet. Here, it is enough to confirm, that, according to the *LC*, an external fulfilment of the commandments is possible.¹² Luther stresses, however, man's inability to fulfil the commandments in the radical way God wants them be fulfilled. So, the distinction between an external and a radical fulfilment points to what God, due to man's sin, does by using law and gospel, that is, to the depth level of Lutheran ethics.

I would also like to point out another distinction: that between the areas of validity of the Fourth and the Fifth Commandments. Because God, according to the explanation of the Fourth Commandment, has delegated his authority to punish evildoers to the civil authorities, the Fifth Commandment, which restricts an individual in his relationship to another individual, does not apply to the civil government.¹³

The *CA* reveals the same ethical levels as does the *LC*. Human will has some freedom to produce civil righteousness, but it does not have the power to produce the righteousness of God, or enable human beings to begin anything that

pertains to God. It is only able to perform the good or evil deeds of this life.¹⁴ There is free will in all human beings. All have a natural, innate mind and reason. Their freedom is, however, confined to choose good or evil only in the external works of this life.¹⁵ Concerning public order and secular government it is taught that all political authority, orderly government, laws, and good order are created and instituted by God, and that Christians may exercise political authority, be judges, pass sentences and administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws, punish evildoers with the sword, wage just wars, serve as soldiers, and take required oaths, etc. Christians are obliged to be subject to political authority and to obey its commands and laws in all that may be done without sin. One must still obey God rather than any human being.¹⁶

Also in the *Apol.* it is maintained, that human beings by using their free will, to some extent can produce civil righteousness. Human beings are able to obey rulers and parents. By choice human beings can keep back the hand from murder, adultery, and theft. Human nature still retains reason and judgment concerning things subject to the senses and also the ability to choose in such matters. Scripture calls this «the righteousness of the flesh». People, who outside grace perform works prescribed by the law, still do sin. It is, nevertheless admitted that free will has freedom and power to perform external works of the law. However, to free will cannot be ascribed capacities such as true fear of God, true faith in God. Spiritual righteousness is outside its range. Due to sin, even civil righteousness, which people can produce, is rare among human beings.¹⁷

According to the Lutheran Confessions ethics is instructed primarily with reference to what God has ordered in the Ten Commandments, which are expressions of the natural law. The Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of

¹⁴ *CA* XVIII,1–2,4.

¹⁵ *CA* XVIII,4–5, German text.

¹⁶ *CA* XVI,1–2,5–7, German text; *Acts* 5:29; see also the *SC*, The Preface 13,18; *SD* II,26,31.

¹⁷ *Apol.* XVIII,4–6,9.

¹² Cf. Haikola 1958,90,100. Die moralische Verantwortlichkeit des Menschen gründet sich in seiner Fähigkeit, frei zu wählen. Haikola 1958,93.

¹³ *LC* I,181.

human beings, but the Ten Commandments, due to the sin, do not succeed in making us Christians. Without Christ and the Holy Spirit nobody can fulfil the law.¹⁸

The Common Values of Mankind

When Lutheran Churches have to take a stand on the common values of mankind their point of departure cannot be anything other than their general conception of how ethics is intertwined with the central truths of faith. When faith expresses itself as trust in God, who creates, redeems and makes holy, the fundamental and practical moral contentions that are connected with the faith and the creed of the Lutheran churches, are anchored in a source of power, which influences Christians so that they receive a personal motivation to act morally that corresponds to their faith. In a world, in which there are differently motivated moral contentions, a motivation of this kind naturally inspires and increases man to act morally.

The Ten Commandments, revealed by God and written in the hearts of all human beings, are global in that they, according to the Lutheran conviction concerning creation, are believed to be significant for all human beings and their fields of influence. Lutherans see in them norms and values that may be thought and experienced to be common to every human community, such as promoting what is good for fellowmen, obeying civil authorities in order to secure peace, not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying and not envying the wealth of your fellowman. Consequently, there is, from the Lutheran point of view, also a remarkable openness toward the moral convictions of other religions.

In his article «Universalism in ethics and Cultural Diversity»¹⁹ Göran Bexell notes, that in the great world religions there is, in fact, moral

agreement about many basic norms, values and virtues. According to him, there is particularly a profound moral agreement on what he terms «an anti-egoistic norm». Individuals' own interests should be restrained by a broader social consideration. In Islam's «sharia», in Judaism's «Torah» and in Hinduism's «dharma» he sees a prevailing agreement on the indivisible combination of personal ethics and social ethics. To him, the Golden Rule also serves as an example of what is widely accepted by many world religions. Bexell widens the perspective to include the role of religions in giving motivation, education, social traditions, practices and rituals to uphold and inspire everyone to do what is right, to be good people. He even thinks, that this is the most important ethical function of the religions. Bexell proposes a normative aim that is a combination of universalism and cultural diversity. According to him a well-balanced universalism in ethics should base its normative statements on the thick moral traditions and the diversities of many cultures. At the end of his article he warns about two risks, the first the risk that highly esteemed cultural diversity is used as a hidden political argument against universalism in ethics and against universally accepted moral values, norms and virtues, like human rights. The second risk is that universalism is a hidden political argument against the richness of cultural diversity, because of the threat of diversity against the expansion of ones own culture, economy, ideology. Bexell states that this risk, the risk of elevated particularism, is real for all-powerful cultures, like Western cultures.²⁰

The idea of a universal ethic is fascinating because of its capacity to catch what might be common values in ethics, despite all the disagreements of human ethical experience. It might also be very useful to refer to such an ethic in a world divided by different religious traditions, views of life, conflicts and political ideologies. Despite its attractions there are problems due to its intellectual nature. My first question focuses on the connotations of the concept of agreement. In many cases, what is agreed upon are only stipulations of agreements or

¹⁸ *Apol.* IV,269, Latin text; XVIII,6,9; *LC* II,68.

¹⁹ In: Göran Bexell & Dan-Erik Andersson (eds.), *Universal ethics. Perspectives and Proposals from Scandinavian Scholars*, The Raoul Wallenberg Institute Human Rights Library Volume 11, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. The Hague/London/New York 2002,3–13.

²⁰ Bexell 2002,7–8,12–13.

agreements in a formal sense, with the omission of the needed substantial definitions of the concepts in their broader morally motivating contexts. Here, I would like to point to what I have said about anchoring Lutheran ethics in central Lutheran views of belief. But, even within Lutheranism, not to mention Christendom, religious ethical traditions differ, sometimes even considerably. There are differences depending on the connotations of the concepts in their connected contexts, for example the connotations of the concept of the Golden Rule. The concepts of tradition differ, but also, to mention a few, the larger theological contexts of the ethical assessments of marriage, fertilisation, justice, natural law and human rights. Including non-Christian religions in your analysis makes the situation even much more difficult.

Nevertheless, there are admirable efforts to unite people and nations through accepting common values. One is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted and proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December, 10th, 1948. In the UN discussions prior to the adoption of the declaration Catholic Christians strongly defended religious interpretations as arguments, for example, that the inherent dignity, and the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings, are founded on the divine origin and destination of man to immortality. Or, that all human beings in creation have got their intrinsic value, because they were created in the image and likeness of God. Delegates particularly delegates from the Netherlands, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia and Lebanon argued along such lines. Opposite reactions came particularly from the Soviet Union. The political situation at that time did not allow explicit mentions of God and natural law in the adopted declaration, but the previous debate on the foundation of human rights was totally concentrated on the question of the significance of Christianity for that foundation. In the end, there was no decision by the UN about the foundation, in principle, of the human rights. Still, in a pre-version of the text the preparatory commission, appointed by the UN, proposed that human beings «by nature» were endowed with reason and conscience. In the final text it is stated that all human beings are «born» free and equal in

dignity and rights and that they are endowed with reason and conscience.²¹

Agreed common values of the declaration are, for example, the right to life, liberty and security of person, no subjection to torture or to cruel, inhuman treatment or punishment, equality before the law, entitlement without any discrimination to equal protection of the law, effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the constitution or by law, no arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, entitlement in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of rights and obligations and of any criminal charge, freedom of movement and residence, seeking and enjoying asylum from persecution, entering into marriage only with the free and full consent of the intending persons, no arbitrary deprivation of one's property, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including manifestation of one's religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work, to free choice of employment, the right to rest and leisure, the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, the right to free education.

In some sense a religious counterpart to the declaration is the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* adopted by 6500 representatives of a lot of different religions assembling at a meeting arranged by the Parliament of the World's religions in Chicago, 1993. This declaration also contains the idea that every human being must be treated humanly. Four commitments form its irrevocable directives. These are a commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, a commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order, a commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness, a commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership

²¹ See Carl-Gustaf Andrén, «De mänskliga rättigheternas religiösa och rättsliga bakgrund. Debatten inom Förenta nationerna och Europarådet i slutet på 1940-talet» (= «The Religious and Juridical Background of Human Rights. The UN and Council of Europe debate at the end of the 1940s»), *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 4/1975, 158–166, esp. 160–163.

between men and women. The explanation of the last commitment contains a passage on marriage. It is underlined that marriage, despite all its cultural and religious variety, is characterized by love, loyalty, and permanence. All cultures should develop economic and social relationships in order to enable marriage and family life worthy of human beings, especially for older people.

I would, further, like to point to two European documents, one of which is the called *A Constitution for Europe* adopted by the Heads of State and Government in June, 2004, but rejected by referenda in France and Holland, the other being a religious counterpart to it called *Charta Oecumenica. Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation Among the Churches in Europe* adopted by the Conference of European Churches and the Council of the European Bishops' Conferences in Strasbourg, 2001.

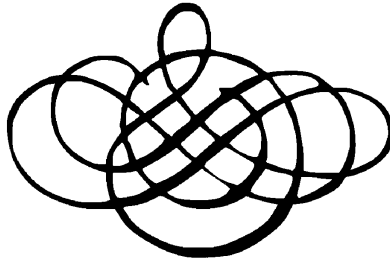
The first part of the European Constitution contains statements about the Union's values. Article 1–2 enumerates them as follows: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. It is said that these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. Article 1–3 defines the Union's aim, which is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. More objectives are offering its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice and an internal market where competition is free and undistorted. Other values are the development of a sustainable Europe, balanced economic growth, a highly competitive social market aiming at full employment and social progress, a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, and scientific and technological advance. The EU shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, promote social justice and protection and the rights of the child. It shall respect cultural and linguistic diversity. The Charter of Fundamental rights of the Union (part II) reaffirms, with due regard to the principle of subsidiarity, the rights as they result, in particular, from the constitutional traditions and international

obligations common to the Member States. In that spirit, under five titles, it deals with dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizen's rights and justice. Citizen's rights include, for example, the rights to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections, and the right to good administration. In the third part of the Constitution, under the title concerning the Union's external action, section 2, in article III-309, the military relevant tasks of the Union are mentioned. Such tasks shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. The tasks mentioned may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including the support of third countries in combatting terrorism in their territories. As generally known, the EU has, on the basis of current legislation, already taken some concrete measures of crisis management.

The *Charta Oecumenica*, in its third chapter, contains some commitments which, from our point of view, are relevant. There is a strong emphasis on the integration of the European continent and on common values and unity necessary for endurance. The spiritual heritage of Christianity, it is said, constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for Europe. The churches work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail, and they insist on the reverence for life, the value of marriage and the family, the preferential option for the poor. They commit themselves to social responsibility, to defend basic values against infringements of every kind, to resist any attempt to misuse religion and the church for ethnic or nationalist purposes. Furthermore, there are commitments to strengthen the position and equal rights of women in all areas of life, to strive to adopt a lifestyle free of consumerism and a quality of life informed by accountability and sustainability. Strengthening community with Judaism and cultivating relations with Islam are underscored, and, generally, freedom of religion and conscience.

From the above will be discerned many similarities concerning common values, but also dissimilarities. According to its emphasis on the Ten Commandments and their openminded implementation in this world with the help of reason and free will the role of Lutheran ethics in these and other contexts of mankind's values is to reflect on the extent to which it is possible for Lutheran Christians to participate in common political or religious endeavours to promote peace, freedom and justice in the world.

There are no definite moral solutions in respect of the needed motivations and applications. In accordance with the Lutheran explanations of the Ten Commandments it can be said, that it is the task of Lutheran Christians to promote good for one's fellowmen, particularly to protect their lives, but Lutherans always stress God's plan and his sovereign will concerning man. That is, ultimately, the motivation of their churches in questions concerning the common values of mankind.



The Epistle of James and the Dhammapada Commentary

J. DUNCAN M. DERRETT

J. Duncan M. Derrett, a doctor of laws and doctor of theology, taught Hindu Law (Classical and modern) at the University of London from 1949 to retirement in 1982. He has published works on Jewish law in the New Testament (his Law in the New Testament, 1970, was reprinted in 2005) and pursues passages in Buddhist works parallel with some in Greek, Jewish, and Christian sources.

Buddhist texts, classed as *hīnayāna* or *mahāyāna*, make use of Greek, Jewish,¹ and Christian material.² In view of principles adumbrated in the Lotus Sūtra (i) that all scriptures come from the Buddha,³ and (ii) that the preacher, all things to all people, will accommodate himself to «heretical» views,⁴ the appearance of non-Buddhist material in Buddhist texts alarms no one. It stimulates the questions how much foreign material attracted the Buddhist eye, and why. Mutual borrowings seem to have provided cosmetic enhancement,⁵ but some Christian authorities deny the possibility of biblical material owing anything to non-Christian sources.

Whether New Testament texts could owe anything to Buddhist inspiration has been ventilated for a century and a half.⁶ It is known⁷ that Jews were employed in the Persian, Seleucid

(and one may add Parthian) empires, and Jewish Christians will have inherited their opportunities and their rewards. Such contacts encouraged confabulation. Dr Christian Lindtner propounds⁸ an unexpected explanation for parallels, viz. that Matthew and others copied Buddhist texts almost verbatim. Indian readers take kindly to the idea that Christian texts owed something to Indian originals, but few Western Buddhologists have been convinced.

Lindtner points out⁹ that the very old Buddhist simile for rarity, that a blind turtle should put its neck through a hole in a yoke thrown into the ocean by someone,¹⁰ has a parallel in the saying of Christ that a rich man can enter the Kingdom as readily as a camel, or may it be a

¹ J. Duncan M. Derrett, «Mishnāh, 'Avōt 5:13 in early Buddhism», 79–87 in *B.S.O.A.S.* 67 (2004). The same, «Angels Jewish and angels Buddhist», 73–92 in *Indologica Taurinensia* 26 (2000).

² J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Bible and the Buddhists* (Bornato in Franciacorta: Sardini, 2000), 57–67.

³ Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (SDP) VIII.6–7; Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York: Columbia UP, 1976), 160.

⁴ SCP XV, trans. Hendrik Kern, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or the Lotus of the True Law* (SBE 21; Oxford: Clarendon P, 1884 reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 301–2.

⁵ Derrett, *Bible*, 97–99.

⁶ Derrett, *Bible*, 19–23.

⁷ Philo, *Vita Mosis* II.20 (Loeb Classical Library, *Philo* VI, 458–459). Graham Shipley, *The Greek World after Alexander* (London: Routledge, 2000), 296 (references).

⁸ For example «A new Buddhist-Christian parable», 27–55 in *Exactitude, Festschrift for Robert Faurisson* (ed. Robert H. Countess, Chr. Lindtner & Germar Rudolph; Chicago: Theses and Dissertations P, 2003). He claims (47) that the New Testament is «propaganda for Mahāyāna».

⁹ Lindtner, 36–39.

¹⁰ Sources listed by Lindtner, 37 include *Therīgāthā* 500, trans. Caroline A.F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*, I. *Psalms of the Sisters* (London: Pali Text Society, 1909), 173; *Majjhima-nikāya* iii. 169, trans. Isobel B. Horner, iii. 214–15; *Samyutta-nikāya* v. 455. Frank L. Woodward, v. 383; SDP 463, trans. Kern, 423.

able?¹¹ may pass through the eye of a needle. That a rich man can indeed reach heaven, through a technique like that of Dhānañjāni's conversion by Sāriputta,¹² suggests that the New Testament story¹³ did indeed reach Buddhist ears. But there is no actual Jewish saying¹⁴ closer than that alleged Buddhist quasi-parallel. One may try to discard Lindtner's discovery on the ground that a needle does not resemble a yoke, nor a turtle a camel.

More fruitful are parallels where verbal similarity,¹⁵ or thematic likeness, especially where the receiving culture does not anticipate the material, call for an explanation of the similarity if borrowing is not to be entertained. We have an example by no means as problematical as the turtle/camel saying and it does not lend itself to the «cosmetic» explanation.

The Epistle of James is notoriously eccentric.¹⁶ The essentials of the Christian faith are not emphasised, or are wanting. It uses an

¹¹ Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25. «Cable» is a conjecture (noticed by Lindtner, 39) supported by no manuscript. Erick F.F. Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine* (London: Lutterworth P, 1955), 201–202.

¹² J. Duncan M. Derrett, «Unregarded Buddhist-Christian parallels», 91–110 in *Archiv orientální 73* (2005), 98–99.

¹³ See J. Duncan M. Derrett, «A camel through the eye of a needle», 36–40 in Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament V* (Leiden: Brill, 1989). Qur'an 7:40 uses the simile to mean «never». But «camel» is related to the Hebrew root *gāmāl*, «to treat», and «camel» suggests loads of wealth (2 Kings 8:9).

¹⁴ Third- and fourth-century sayings (the elephant) in the same area: Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch I. Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Munich: Beck, 1926, reprinted 1961), 828.

¹⁵ Derrett, «Mishnāh» (n. 1 above).

¹⁶ A thorough treatment of the Epistle is that of Christian Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 182–189; but one may consult James H. Ropes, *Epistle of St James* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1941), 276–282; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (Exeter: Paternoster P, 1982), 171–174; Ralph F. Martin, *James* (Waco: Word Books, 1988), 165–171; Luke T. Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 291–298; Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise. The Letter of James* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity P, 1997), 218–222.

international idiom. One passage most naturally fits not merely an oriental but even an Indian environment.¹⁷ Its date is as uncertain as its provenance.¹⁸ It could reflect early Christianity and its attribution to James the brother of Jesus, often rejected,¹⁹ may not be altogether misleading.²⁰ Now at 4:13–17 we find an independent passage belonging to the genre of Wisdom, which could be disregarded as a commonplace.

¹³Now a word with all who say, <Today or the next day we will go off to such and such a town and spend a year there trading and making money.> ¹⁴Yet you have no idea what tomorrow will bring. What is your life, after all? You are no more than a mist,²¹ seen for a little while and then disappearing. ¹⁵What you ought to say is <If it be the Lord's will,²² we shall live to do so and so.>

¹⁷ James 3:6. Therīgāthā 61 (200), trans. Caroline A.F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms*, 101. Sophie Laws, *Epistle of James* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 151; Gananath Obeyesekere in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (ed. Wendy D. O'Flaherty; Berkeley: University of California P, 1980), 152; Elmar R. Gruber & Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1995), 92–93; J. Duncan M. Derrett, «An Indian metaphor in St John», 271–286 in *J.R.A.S.*, 3rd ser., 9 (1999), 276–277; Burchard, *Jakobusbrief*, 144–145, cites Marc Philonenko, «Un écho de la prédiction d'Asoka dans l'Épître de Jacques», 254–265 in *Ex Orbe Religionum. Fests. G. Widengren* (ed. Jan Bergman and Kaarina Drynjev; SHR 21–22; Leiden: Brill, 1972), vol. 1. Verg., *Aen.* 6.748 is not entirely parallel.

¹⁸ Adolf Jülicher, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Smith, Elder, 1904), 215–229, esp. 217; William E. Oesterley, «The General Epistle of James», 385–417 in *Expositor's Greek Testament IV* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910); James Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1920), 456–475 (bibliography); Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1966), 284–291; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London: Inter-Varsity P, 1974), 736–771; Howard C. Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 4th edn. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 322–328 («James» as a Hellenistic work).

¹⁹ John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: Oxford UP, 1976), a work which astonished its original audience.

²⁰ Cf. Oesterley, 405.

¹⁶But instead you boast (cf. LXX Prov. 27:1) and brag, and all such boasting is wrong.²³ ¹⁷What it comes to is that anyone who knows the right thing to do and does not do it is a sinner.²⁴

This passage consists with a corpus of Jewish teaching that death is certain and plans which do not take account of God's will are futile. Some of these warnings are couched in parables of imagination and pathos.²⁵ None refer specifically to long-distance trading. However, James 4:13–17 obviously belongs to a Jewish environment. The date of the Epistle may be A.D. 100–140, at any rate after 125 according to some.²⁶ It is older than the *Dhammapada Commentary*, which has been placed in the fifth century, incorporating materials of uncertain ages.²⁷

²¹ Cf. Job 7:9, 8:9; Psalms 102:11, 144:4. Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 82:3 (A.F.J. Klijn, «2 Baruch»), 615–652 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 649. 2 Baruch belongs to the first or second decade of the second century (Klijn, 617).

²² A commonplace of Jews and Greeks. Acts 18:21; Aristophanes, *Pluto* 1188. Cf. Euripides at Plutarch, *Moralia* 107C; Dio Chrysostom 16, 8; Seneca, *ep. morales* 101, 4–5.

²³ Davids, *James*, 173. Psalms 10:3, 49:6, 51:1, 94:4; Romans 1:20; 2 Timothy 3:2. Cf. Galatians 6:14. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, III, 541.

²⁴ Verse 17 may be an addition, but it fits. On sins of omission see Matthew 23:23; 25:41–48.

²⁵ Midrash Rabbah, *Deuteronomy IX.1*, trans. Joseph Rabinowitz, 3rd edn. (London & New York: Soncino P, 1983), 156–157. Joannis Wetstenius, *Novum Testamentum I* (Amsterdam, 1751), on v. 14. Strack and Billerbeck, I, 148. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin*, 68b; Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar IV/1*, 511, lines 17–18; 512, lines 8–10; *Midrash Rabbah*, Ecclesiastes III. 2 §3, trans. Louis Rabinowitz (London & New York: Soncino P, 1983), 72–79. Strack and Billerbeck, I, 148. The medieval *Alphabet of Ben Sira* (See *Encyclopedia Judaica* IV, Jerusalem 1972, 548–550; Hermann Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrash*, 7th edn., Munich: Beck, 1982, 307–308) as translated by Strack and Billerbeck, III, 758 on 4:15 (repeating material in Christianus Schoettgenius, *Horae Hebraicae*, Dresden & Leipzig: Hekelius, 1733, 1030–1).

²⁶ Mofatt, *Introduction*, 471; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 291 (no later than A.D. 100).

The *Dhammapada Commentary* on Dh. 286 contains the following:²⁸

A merchant called Great Wealth undertook a long journey for trade and found a river in flood. He thought, «I have come a long distance and if I go back again I shall be delayed; right here will I dwell during the rains, during the winter and summer, doing my work and selling those cloths.» The Buddha said to Ānanda, «Not realizing that the end of his life is near, he has made up his mind to dwell right here during this entire year for the purpose of selling his goods ... Only seven days longer will he live and then he will fall into the mouth of a fish.» The Buddha utters a stanza recommending that one should do what should be done this very day: who knows but what on the morrow death may bring? ... The Buddha tells the merchant that he has only seven days left ... «Disciple, a wise man should never allow himself to think, «Right here will I dwell during the rain, during the winter and summer. I will do this work and I will do that work.» Rather should a man meditate on the end of his own life.»

This applies Dh. 286.²⁹ There is no protection against death (Dh. 288). The Buddhist understands the hint in the theme *river-crossing*. Only with the aid of the Buddha's teaching may one cross the flood; but one will cross it. No reference to God's will is appropriate in a Buddhist text. Meanwhile post-Christian Jewish legends illustrate the folly of assuming plans will work out without God's approval. In one instance the bridegroom asserted he would enjoy his bride whether God agreed or not, and he did not reach the bride-chamber.

It is obvious that the passage in the *Dhammapada Commentary*, going beyond Dh. 286,

²⁷ Eugene W. Burlingame, trans. *Buddhist Legends: Dhammapada Commentary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1921, reprinted London: Pali Text Society, 1979), pt.1, (Harvard Oriental Series 28), §8, 57–60.

²⁸ Dh. comm. XX.10, text (ed. Harry C. Norman), iii, 419–431, trans. Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, pt.3 (Harvard Oriental Series 30), 164–165.

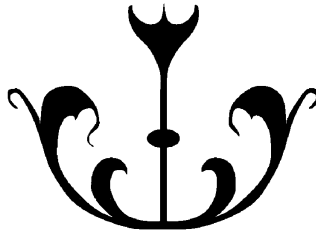
²⁹ «Here will I live in the rainy season, here in the autumn and in the summer; thus muses the fool. He realizes not the danger (of death).» Text and translation at Narada Thera, *The Dhammapada*, 4th edn. (Dehiwela, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2000), 233–234.

agrees with <James> not only in spirit but also in small particulars. Why should Buddhists use a foreign work to illustrate a commonplace? If <James> was, as some have suspected, a Hellenistic work in the genre Wisdom with a strong Jewish aroma it would attract the attention of Buddhists who had a special interest in long-distance plans of merchants, and their stock. The presence of this parable in such a text would only strengthen a message as international as it was robust. Alternatively Buddhists and Jews may have used a common source, in which case the Buddhist testimony would throw light on <James>' composition — but we cannot (as yet) be sure what happened.

No question arises here of a missionary enterprise directed to converting peoples adhering to any or no religion.³⁰ Nor am I suggesting that there has been an *interpolation* in <James>.³¹

³⁰ Cf. J. Duncan M. Derrett, «The Buddhist dimension of John», 182–210 in *Numen* 51 (2004), 205–206.

³¹ Cf. Robert M. Price, «Apocryphal apparitions», 69–104 in *The Empty Tomb* (ed. Robert M. Price and Jeffery J. Lowder; Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 70–71, 92.



Sushil Mittal & Gene Thursby (red.): *The Hindu World*. 657 sid. Routledge, New York och London 2004.

The Hindu World är en ambitiös och storskalig inledning till hinduismen. Sammanlagt trettio forskares arbete ligger bakom boken, som i tjugofyra kapitel försöker fånga och belysa denna världens tredje största religion ur en mängd perspektiv. Varje kapitel har som rubrik ett för hinduismen centralt begrepp, en hinduisk huvudriktning eller textsamling, och kapitlen samlas i tematiska avdelningar.

Ett inledande kapitel diskuterar själva termerna *hindu* och *hinduism*, deras historia, innebörd och berättigande, och för fram uppfattningen om «polycentricitet» som hinduismens mest utmärkande drag: egenskapen att, likt ett mäktigt banyanträd med sina många stamliknande luftrötter, trots den uppenbara mångfalden utgöra en organisk enhet. På denna inledning följer en tematisk avdelning om hinduiska texttraditioner — muntliga såväl som skriftliga — med särskilda kapitel om Veda och upanishader, om vardera av de två väldiga eposen Mahabharata (där Bhagavadgita ingår) och Ramayana, samt om den vidsträckta, huvudsakligen medeltida purana-litteraturen.

Nästa avdelning behandlar hinduismens teistiska fromhetsströmningar i deras tre huvudsakliga varianter, med inriktning på Shiva, Shakti respektive Vishnu. Ett kapitel tillägnas vardera riktningen, med ett avslutande allmänt kapitel om nyckelbegreppet *bhakti*,hängivelse eller gudskärlek. Dessa kapitel behandlar också ytterligare en viktig hinduisk skriftkategori av särskild betydelse för det som ibland något missvisande kallats «sektarisk hinduism», nämligen de tantriska texterna. Även moderna västerländska yttringar av hinduisk teism, såsom Church of Saiva Siddhanta och ISKCON (Hare Krishna-rörelsen), berörs här.

De två följande avdelningarna diskuterar hinduiska perspektiv på den kosmiska och den sociala ordningen. Människans fyra traditionella livsmål — pliktuppfyllelse, välstånd, världslig njutning och andlig befrielse — behandlas vart för sig, och åtföljs av en diskussion om den för alla indiska religioner så centrala läran om *karma*: handling och handlingens moraliskt retributiva återverkan på den handlande genom en rad återfödelse. Separata kapitel belyser sedan hinduiska livsritualer, det så kallade kastväsendet, samt syntesen av världsbejakande och världsförsakande i det ideala systemet med fyra livsstadier (lärjunge, hushåll, asket och försakare).

Mer vardagsnära religiös praxis behandlas i bokens näst sista avdelning, med kapitel om mat och kostregler, om folkreligion på lokal nivå, om tempel och bildkult, om pilgrimsorter och sakral geografi. Den sista avdelningen låter så pendeln svänga över till hinduismens mest abstrakta aspekter: dess språkfilosofi och språkmystik, dess exegetiska och teologisk-filosofiska tanke-system — där kunskapsteorin får en sådan direkt betydelse för frälsningsanspråken — samt dess tidsuppfattning.

Det är glädjande att en så mångsidig och samtidigt djuplodande framställning av hinduismen nu finns att tillgå. Att andra liknande initiativ nyligen tagits (där ibland Arvind Sharmas *The Study of Hinduism* samt *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, båda 2003) förtar inte betydelsen av det föreliggande verket, utan kan snarast anses komplettera det. Otvivelaktigt är detta ett viktigt och värdefullt bidrag till främjandet av en djupare och mer nyanserad förståelse av hinduismen bland såväl västerländska religionsvetare som en intresserad allmänhet.

Bokens uppläggning är klar och välgenomtänkt, men har också nackdelar: kapitlens stickordsliknande rubriker leder tankarna till artiklar i ett uppslagsverk, och ger därigenom lätt den felaktiga uppfattningen att ett givet kapitel rymmer allt boken har att säga om ämnet i överskriften. I själva verket återkommer många av ämnena gång på gång, belysta ur nya synvinklar, och genomgående korthänvisningar mellan kapitlen hade därför varit till hjälp för läsaren. Likaså hade en mer noggrann korrekturläsning av sanskrittermer varit önskvärd; som nu är, framgår de olika medförfattarnas varierande kunskaper i hinduismens klassiska språk bara alltför tydligt.

Även ämnesmässigt råder en viss ojämnhet mellan bidragen, om än inte större än vad som kan förväntas i antologiska verk av detta slag. Medan exempelvis Gavin Floods genomgång av shaivitisk teologi och ritual och Vasudha Narayanans analys av sydindisk tempelkult är utmärkta, är John Grimes' översikt över hinduismens filosofiska system mindre imponerande, och Randy Kloetzlis och Alf Hildebeitels knapphändiga redogörelse för den hinduiska astrologin (i bokens sista kapitel) direkt missvisande. Just astrologin – och i viss mån andra divinationsformers – stora betydelse för många hinduer, och dess nära förbindelse till vissa kultformer, är över huvud taget en aspekt som dessvärre saknas så gott som helt i boken.

Andra utelämnanden är av utrymmesskal mer förtärliga. Många läsare hade säkert gärna sett särskilda kapitel om modern reformhinduism, politisk hinduism

och kvinnors roll i religionen, men dessa aspekter har i stället fått behandlas under andra rubriker. Överlag är detta dock ett mycket läsvärt och välkommet bidrag till den engelskspråkiga hinduism litteraturen.

Martin Gansten

Melissa Raphael: *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz. A Jewish feminist theology of the Holocaust (Religion and Gender)*. 228 sid. Routledge, London and New York 2003.

Vad gjorde Gud när Förintelsen pågick? Fanns det judiska folkets Gud i Auschwitz? Är det möjligt att skapa judisk teologi, och vara troende jude, efter Förintelsen?

Frågorna bearbetas i judisk *post-Holocaust theology*. 2003 kom det första feministteologiska arbetet: *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz* av Melissa Raphael, brittisk, judisk teolog f 1960, numera «Professor of Jewish Theology» vid Gloucestershire University.

Efter *Introduction* om kontext, utgångspunkter, uppläggning ges i kap. 1–2 feministisk kritik av tidigare *post-Holocaust theology*. (Indirekt får den som inte kan fältet en orientering.) I tidigare *post-Holocaust theology* är judiska män i centrum som de som trots allt bar traditionen och den mänskliga värdigheten. I *The Female Face* är kvinnor i centrum, som ska visas nedan.

I tidigare *post-Holocaust theology* är gudsbilden patriarkal: Gud som makt, som Härskare. Frågan är varför denne Gud inte visade sin makt i Förintelsens tid och räddade sitt folk.

Ett svar är att Gud dolt sitt ansikte, vilket kan ses som ett mysterium eller som att Gud drog sig tillbaka för att inte inkräkta på den mänskliga friheten. Raphael avvisar dessa svar då de gör Gud delansvarig för Förintelsen. Ett annat svar är att Gud är död. Mot detta invänder Raphael att en viss *gudsbild* dött, den patriarkale guden. Han höll inte vad Han lovade och är alltför lik den makt som skapade Auschwitz. Det innebär inte att Gud själv är död.

I kap. 3-6 utformar Raphael sitt svar. Överlevande kvinnors nedtecknade minnen är centrala. De läses tillsammans med texter ur judisk tradition så att texterna belyser varandra: mystikens texter, Hebreiska Bibeln, Talmud, judisk feministteologi, tidigare *post-Holocaust theology*.

The Female Face är alltså inte en rekonstruktion av kvinnors erfarenheter i Auschwitz och vill inte tala för de kvinnor som var där. Raphael gör en tolkande, konstruktiv teologi där de marginaliserades erfarenheter förs in i teologiskt arbete. Detta ger möjlighet att lakas frågorna om Gud och Auschwitz på ett nytt sätt.

Det svar Raphael själv ger kan här bara ofullkomligt antydast. Hon läser kvinnornas berättelser i ljuset av läran om *Shekinah* (Guds närvaro som följer folket i exilen). Då *Shekinah* är grammatiskt femininum kan det bli ett feminint namn för Gud. Detta sker i judisk feministteologi: Gud är *Shekinah* «Hon som bor ibland oss». Om Gud är närvaro vart folket än förs fanns Gud i Auschwitz, men var inte delansvarig.

Berättelserna ger exempel på kvinnors gemenskap med kvinnor och barn, på solidaritet och omsorg. De försökte tvätta av varandra, dela mat, ge barn trygghet, se varandra som människor. I ljuset av tanken på *Shekinah*, feministiskt tolkad, blir dessa medmänsklighetens handlingar mer än medmänsklighet. Den kvinnliga omsorg som marginaliserats i historieskrivning och religiös utövning blir här centrum, för genom den bjöds Gud in till den plats där Gud stängts ute. Gud hade inte dolt sitt ansikte, men det doldes av smuts när Guds avbilder doldes av smuts. När kvinnor såg varandra genom smutsen, när de torkade bort smuts från varandras ansikten, återspeglades Guds ansikte i deras. Omsorgen var också motstånd. Att torka ett smutsigt ansikte med snö är motstånd mot att människor berövas sin mänsklighet, motstånd mot att Guds avbild döljs av smuts och motstånd mot att Gudsfolket gjordes orent, oheligt.

Raphael förnekar inte att det också fanns kvinnor som utövade våld, enbart kämpade för sin egen överlevnad eller bröts ner till apati. Men i allt som Auschwitz var fanns också något annat. Gud fanns där, inte som övermakt utan som närvaro — *Shekinah*, Hon som bor ibland oss — och den närvaron förmedlades genom kvinnlig omsorg och närvaro.

Detta svar utvecklas och fördjupas i kap. 3-6. Kap. 6 tecknar också en teologi för dem som nu vill «göra världen hel» (*tikkun olam*). Boken avslutas med en feministisk *maaseh* — traditionell judisk berättelse med drag av allegori, folksaga, magi och religiös myt — som på ett annat sätt gestaltar Raphaels svar på frågorna om Gud och Auschwitz.

The Female Face är betydelsefull då för första gången feministiska perspektiv förs in i *post-Holocaust theology* och bearbetning av Förintelsen i judisk feministteologi. Det blir därmed tydligt att feministteologi inte är ett eget hörn i teologin — om nu någon tror det — utan bidrar till teologisk bearbetning av de mest centrala och svåra teologiska frågorna.

The Female Face är en distinkt judisk teologi, som inom judiska tolkningsramar reflekterar över det judiska folkets lidande vid en viss tid i historien. Samtidigt är den en bok för alla som vill läsa feministisk teologi och för alla som vill fördjupas i reflektionen över Guds förhållande till mänskligt lidande. Trots att Raphaels svar inte utan vidare kan införlivas i kristen teologi rymmer det mycket som jag tror kan integreras

i kristen reflektion — om vi därigenom inte förnekar dess judiskhet.

Att jag rekommenderar boken, och är tilltalad av dess svar, betyder inte att jag anser den vara invändningsfri. Betoningen av kvinnlig omsorg väcker frågan: utgår Raphael från och befäster patriarkala stereotyper? Själv bemöter hon detta främst med att betona att det «kvinnliga» inte är biologiskt givet utan också kan utövas av män, samt med tanken på omsorg som motstånd. Räcker det? Å andra sidan: vad är alternativet när det gäller just Gud och Auschwitz?

En annan fråga som boken väckt är om Raphael — eller vem det vara månde — får använda andras ner-tecknade minnen i sina egna projekt som den andre kanske inte velat vara del i. Överlevare har invänt att allt de mötte i Auschwitz var hunger, törst och köld.

Så kan vi fortsätta ställa frågor utifrån *The Female Face* om allt från historisk metod till Guds existens. Raphael diskuterar fortlöpande med möjliga och faktiska kritiker, så att läsaren inbjuds till fortsatt reflektion. Därigenom blir *The Female Face* ett tydligt inlägg i ett samtal, som besvarar viktiga frågor och väcker nya. Därför hoppas jag denna bok får många läsare.

Hanna Stenström

James D.G. Dunn: *Jesus Remembered (Christianity in the Making, vol. 1), 1 019 sid. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2003.*

Denna bok är nr 1 i serien «Christianity in the Making», där Dunn i tre volymer vill beskriva kristendomens första 120 år, och den blev det arbete med vilket han avslutade sin akademiska bana som professor i Durham och sitt år som President i Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas. I den första av bokens fem delar, «Faith and the Historical Jesus», tecknar förf. jesuforskningens historia och metodproblem i sex kapitel (9–136), för att sedan i «From the Gospels to Jesus» (137–336) gå igenom källorna och den historiska kontexten, och slutligen i kap. 10 sammanfatta de föregående 300 sidornas resonemang om detta och den historiska metoden.

Det mest notabla av Duns ställningstaganden i denna inledande metoddel är hans resoluta hävdande av jesustraditionens muntliga karaktär. Evangelierna skall inte ses som ett slags textlig motsvarighet till en arkeologisk *tell*, där varje skikt bygger på och förändrar det närmast föregående. Denna standardidé från 1900-talets jesuforskning innebär att vi skulle ha ett stort antal tolkande och vanställande filter mellan oss och den ursprungliga händelsen eller utsagan, vil-

ket skulle göra Jesus så gott som oåtkomlig för historisk kunskap. Men den bilden bygger på en grundlig missuppfattning om hur muntlig tradition fungerar. Där står varje «performance» av traditionen, formad av minnet hos dem som upplevde händelsen, i stort sett lika nära ursprunget. Och Dunn menar att vi i de tre första evangelierna på det hela taget kommer ganska nära «the original impact», dvs. intrycket av Jesu egen person. Det formulerade minnet av Jesus startade nämligen omedelbart, i hörandets stund, och fasthölls av en engagerad grupp människor som var Jesu «lärjungar» i kvalificerad mening. Och i den hängivna muntliga traditionsprocessen finns både kontrollerad fasthet i återgivandet av kärnan, det viktiga Jesusordet, och variabilitet i detaljer och i den narrativa inramningen.

För svenska exegeter skapar Duns muntlighetso-rienterade perspektiv onekligen igenkännandets snarare än nyhetens glädje: detta påminner ju om vad man kallar «svensk traditionshistorisk syn» som funnits i ett halvt sekel. Dock är för Dunn traditionsprocessen fortfarande anonym, kollektiv och okontrollerad, och man saknar en diskussion av den centrala idén hos Gerhardsson, nämligen memoreringens roll i processen, som också vidareutvecklats av Byrskog (2000 och senare). Detta tillsammans med att Dunn trots sitt betonande av traditionsprocessens muntlighet ändå inte vill avstå från tvåkällshypotesen eller idén om en rejäl redaktionell bearbetning av traditionsmaterialen, ger intrycket av ett påbörjat men inte fullbordat uppbrott från det föregående seklets stelbenta källanalytiska synsätt.

Efter de inledande tio kapitlen är scenen iordningställd för den drygt 400 sidor långa, välinformerade och lärorika framställningen av Jesu verksamhet och syften i resten av boken. Efter en inledande diskussion av varför en historisk framställning av Jesus måste börja med Johannes Döparen och inte i krubban i Betlehem (kap. 11), placerar Dunn sitt kap. 12 om Guds Rike i Jesu förkunnelse som en portal till allt man kan och bör säga om vad Jesus gjorde och ville. Denna 100 sidor grundliga behandling av frågan om gudsriket innebär leder vidare till frågan för vem Jesus avsåg budskapet om gudsherraväldet (kap. 13) och vad ett accepterande av det innebar (= lärjungaskap, kap. 14).

Del IV om Jesu självförståelse delas mellan ett kapitel om hur andra uppfattade Jesu roll (kap. 15) och hur han själv såg sin roll i Riket (kap. 16), vilket i sin tur är en fråga som bara kan besvaras om man vet hur han såg på sin egen död (kap. 17). Detta svär mot metodkapitlens upprepade påstående att historisk forskning bara kan komma fram till «Jesus remembered» och inte till Jesus själv, men bekräftar att praktiken ibland är bättre än teorin, även inom vetenskapen. Till skillnad från John P. Meier (*A Marginal Jew*,

1991–2001) och med bättre skäl menar Dunn att en diskussion av berättelserna om den tomma graven och mötena med den Uppståndne både kan och bör behandlas i en historisk undersökning av Jesus. Hans slutsats av den analysen (kap. 18) är att upphovet till dessa traditioner troligen är att något hände med Jesus själv, snarare än (bara) i lärjungarnas inre (876).

Vad blir då DUNNs slutliga bild av Jesus? Hans «New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition» (motsvarande det «New Perspective on Paul») som Dunn varit med om att formulera) så som man finner det sammanfattat på sid. 885–890, är trots allt ganska likt den bild som framställdes av exv. Günter Bornkamm i hans bok *Jesus von Nazareth* för nästan femtio år sedan: Jesus är en person som inte gör anspråk på någon messiansk titel, men som ser sig själv som Guds talesman och agent i den av gudsríkets närhet präglade yttersta tiden, en person vars budskap Israels folk skall tro på och handla efter. Han tillmätte kanske eller kanske inte sin död någon sonande betydelse, men räknade med att Gud skulle bekräfta och upprätta honom på andra sidan döden, som han gick emot med öppna ögon. Han hade en gemenskap omkring sig, men ville inte skapa en kyrka. Hans bild av gudsríket och av sig själv kunde inte formuleras i vare sig det första eller det tjugoförsta århundradets prosa, utan uttrycktes helt i ett metaforiskt, antydande bildspråk, där inte ens alla bilder tillsammans utgör en «grand narrative».

Bokens fördel är att muntlighetsperspektivet verkligen används i de konkreta texttolkningarna och traditionshistoriska resonemangen och att den genomsyras av en historikers tilltro till att källmaterialet ger kontakt med en verklig person och inte bara en textvärld. Svagheten ligger i dess inte färdigarbetade blandning av djärva nydaningar och konventionell vetenskaplig ortodoxi i både metodiskt och innehållsligt avseende. Sammanfattningsvis får den ändå bedömas som ett verkligt läsvärt arbete och ett steg framåt i en viktig historiografisk genre.

Bengt Holmberg

Birgitta Laghé: »Den Evangeliska Mariavägen till enhet«. *En studie av Paulina Mariadotters spiritualitet (Bibliotheca Theologiae Practicae 73)*. 280 sid. Artos, Skellefteå 2004.

Birgitta Laghés doktorsavhandling i kyrkovetenskap vid Uppsala universitet förtjänar uppmärksamhet ur flera aspekter. Hennes diskreta men tydliga teori-användning är föredömlig. Här finns inget av de kompendier över inläst teori- och metodlitteratur, som numera tynger så många historiska avhandlingar. Istället koncentrerar sig förf. på de teoretiska ramar som

verkligen används och fungerar i avhandlingen. Hon anknyter till Alf Härdelins spiritualitetsdefinition, där teologiskt lärande, kyrklig praxis och historisk och social situation bestämmer det andliga liv, i vilket kristna människor gestaltar sin tro, men avvisar ett tänkt motsatsförhållande mellan spiritualitetsforskning och fromhetsforskning. Genom att fokusera på personen gör hon tydligt att relationen mellan Gud och människa handlar om en erfaren verklighet — en intrinsikal religiositet. Andra teoretiska ramar är Antoon Geels definition av mystik erfarenhet och Niels Christian Hvidts teori om profetia. Från Kajsa Ahlstrand har Birgitta Laghé hämtat och ytterligare utvecklat distinktionen mellan den lilla och den stora traditionen, där den stora traditionen «traderas av religiösa specialister, har en skriftlig kanon och bestämda kultplatser», medan den lilla växer fram i vardagen, «förs vidare av ickespecialister och utövas i hemmen och på andra platser där människor möts». Poängen är att även den lilla traditionen influerar den stora, men den lilla undersöks här först, eftersom den behöver mejslas ut «utan att den kvävs av den stora traditionens tolkningsföreträde». Det är en metodisk fördel. Dessa distinktioner blir särskilt intressanta i arbetet med att formulera regel, konstitution och ordning för avläggande av löften.

Avhandlingens uppgift bestäms som att undersöka betydelsen av mystik och profetisk erfarenhet för Paulina Mariadotters spiritualitet, sambandet mellan spiritualiteten och framväxten av en «liten» tradition, hur ordenslivets grundprinciper levde vidare i en evangelisk-luthersk tradition, samt hur den «lilla traditionen» står i dialektiskt samspel med den «stora». Uppgiften är viktig, intresseväckande, och väl genomförd.

Gunvor Norrman/Paulina Mariadotter (1903–85) ägnade sig i 45 år åt att bygga upp och konsolidera Mariadötrarna av Den Evangeliska Mariavägen till enhet. I jämförelse med övriga systragemenskaper i Svenska kyrkan är det den enda som vunnit större anslutning. Kongregationens andliga rötter ligger i Oxfordgrupprörelsen. Här kunde förf. tydligare gjort klart att det faktiskt är genom att bryta med Oxfordgruppen och bygga upp en ny, gruppinspirerad gemenskap, där särskilt delningen, «sharing», spelar en stor roll, som Paulina Mariadotter förverkligar sin kallelse. Till Frank Buchmans efterkrigsprogram för Moral Re-Armament genom förvandlade demokratier förhåller hon sig relativt sval, med koncentration på en mera kristocentrisk linje, där Oswald Chambers betraktelser spelar en kontinuerligt viktig roll. Det blir därför lite för enkelt när förf. skriver att «vad Frank Buchman förverkligade på ett makroplan förverkligade Paulina Mariadotter på ett mikroplan».

Avhandlingen är föredömligt disponerad. Genom att inledningen följs av ett längre kapitel om huvudper-

sonens liv och kallelse, och först därefter av ett avsnitt om klosterlivets avveckling under 1500-talet och återkomst under 1800- och 1900-talen, förs läsaren direkt in i avhandlingens ämne. Därefter kommer huvudkapiteln om Den Evangeliska Mariavägen och om Mariadöttrarnas enhet och traditionen från Paulina Mariadotter. Förf. avgränsar sig från utformningen av ordenslivet hos de benediktinska, till romersk katolicism 1988 konverterade Mariadöttrarna i Vadstena, som behållit en överkonfessionell gemenskap med de evangeliska Mariadöttrarna i Vallby, och koncentrerar sig istället på historien och på de evangeliska Mariadöttrarnas liv i samtiden. Mariadöttrarnas undvikande hållning i ämbetsfrågan, som de inte vill diskutera, men accepterar den kyrkas ordning inom vilken de verkar, är endast skenbart lätt. De prioriterar här, som i andra sammanhang sin särskilda kallelse.

Kongregationens rättsliga ställning uppmärksammas: som orden inom Svenska kyrkan är den en sammanlutning «helt på den fria associationens grund». Egenartad är den starka ställning Maria Paulinadotters profetior eller uppenbarelser intar som «det av Herren givna», av vilket en del för en utomstående kan förefalla mycket tidsbundet. Annars är Jungfru Marias plats i Maria Paulinadotters teologi intressant: det är en kristologiskt och ecklesiologiskt motiverad mariologi i en evangelisk kontext.

Avsnittet om bilden som instrument för spiritualiteten är spännande. Den första bilden är Triermadonan från 1600- eller 1700-talet, som även pryder avhandlingens omslag, den andra är Den Evangeliska Mariavägen, som domineras av kongregationstecknet «Hjärtat på korset». Den tredje bilden är en framställning av Mariadöttrarnas hjärtpunkt i Vallby som en andlig källa i kyrkans mitt. Den fjärde bilden blir — överraskande, men träffande — Paulina Mariadotter själv.

En ytterligare, utomvetenskaplig kvalitet hos denna avhandling är att den ställer läsaren inför centrala, existentiella frågor om kallelse och livsväg.

Bland smärre anmärkningar kan särskilt nämnas att danska texter konsekvent återges med svenska bokstäver, något som med dagens datormöjligheter är helt onödigt. Någon gång blir stavdelningen rent besvärande («Marias-ånger»).

Birgitta Laghés avhandling är en mycket läsvärd undersökning av spiritualiteten i en gemenskap som skapats kring en kristen personlighet. Som framgått är uppgiften mycket väl genomförd och avhandlingen förtjänar därför mer än vanlig uppmärksamhet.

Anders Jarlert

Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft. Vierte, völlig neu bearb. Aufl., herausgeg. von H.D. Betz., D.S. Browning, B. Janowski, E. Jüngel. Band 7: R–S. lxxxvi + 1015 sid. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2004.

Utgivningen av den fjärde upplagan av *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* lider mot sitt slut. Därmed närmar sig också möjligheten av att använda sig av RGG som ett komplett uppslagsverk. Band 8 kommer ut under 2005 och tillsammans med ett registerband är utgåvan därmed komplett. Här har säkert en noggrann avvägning varit viktig för utgivarna: Under hur lång tid kan ett verk ges ut utan att de första delarna blir inaktuella innan de sista publiceras? Första delen kom ut 1998, vilket alltså totalt blir sju år. Acceptabelt skulle jag vilja hävda, inte minst med tanke på att det första bandet av *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* gavs ut 1977 och det trettiosjätte och sista först 2004.

Det sjunde bandet av RGG som omfattar bokstäverna R och S innehåller av självklara skäl ett antal inslag om svensk teologi och svenska teologer. Låt mig börja med de kortare omnämningarna. Johannes Rudbeckius får en kort notis, där han utnämns till den viktigaste biskopen under Sveriges stormaktstid, och även så Johan Ludvig Runeberg som ju skrev på svenska, och Henrik Schartau, som givet hans betydelse fått ett tämligen blygsamt utrymme. Artikeln om Nathan Söderblom är skriven av den tjeckiske forskaren Bretislav Horyna. En något längre artikel om August Strindberg är författad av den tyske litteraturprofessorn Heinrich Detering. Jacob A. van Belzen har skrivit en kort notis om den svenska religionspsykologins grundare Hjalmar Sundén och Christopher Steed om missionsvetaren Bengt Sundkler. Emanuel Swedenborg behandlas av Harry Lenhammar, emeriterad professor i kyrkohistoria vid Uppsala universitet. Förutom de korta biografiska notiserna om nämnda personer har Karin Sarja, TD i missionsvetenskap från Uppsala, skrivit en kort artikel om «Schwedische Missionen».

Mer utrymme ges givetvis i den kyrkohistoriska artikeln «Schweden» av Anders Jarlert, professor i kyrkohistoria vid Lunds universitet, där Sveriges kristna historia skildras i detalj efter en kort redogörelse för geografi och de ickekristna religionerna. Jarlert beskriver den kristna kyrkans öden i Sverige från Ansgar på 800-talet över 1500-talets reformation till 1900-talets sekularisering. I avsnittet om vår samtid påpekar Jarlert att den religiösa aktiviteten är låg, även om Svenska kyrkan fortfarande spelar en framträdande roll vid offentliga händelser och ett nytt intresse för religion kan spåras i kulturlivet. Det säger sig självt att en översikt som omfattar fem spalter inte

kan bli annat än summarisk, men som en kronologisk sammanfattning av Sveriges kyrkohistoria fungerar den utmärkt.

En litet längre artikel om svensk teologi läser man i artikeln «Skandinavien, Theologie in II. Schweden» som är skriven av Arne Rasmusson, verksam vid Umeå universitet. Rasmusson betonar, likt Jarlert, det nära sambandet mellan kyrka och stat som utgångspunkten för att förstå den moderna teologihistorien. Fram till 1974 var de teologiska fakulteterna i Lund och Uppsala knutna till Svenska kyrkan och därefter dröjde det ytterligare något innan den samtida pluralismen vad gäller teologiska och religionsvetenskapliga utbildningar etablerades. Rasmusson påbörjar sin redogörelse för den teologiska utvecklingen från 1800-talet och påverkan från Christian Wolff i Uppsala respektive Friedrich Schleiermacher i Lund. Det tidiga 1900-talet såg en renässans för teologistudiet genom Söderblom och Billing och sedan beskriver Rasmusson 1900-talet genom den klassiska lundateologin hos Aulén, Bring och Nygren, dess transformering hos Wingren, vidare till uppsalateologin hos Bohlin, Gyllenkrok och Jeffner för att till sist hamna i befrielse-teologiska, hermeneutiska och postsekulära nyansatser framför allt i Lund. Under rubriken «Skandinavien, Theologie in» finns även artiklar om Danmark, Norge och Finland som också tangerar den svenska teologin.

Den höga klass på övriga artiklar som blivit konsekvensen av de ofta mångsidiga perspektiven på ett och samma uppslagsord bibehålls också genom längre artiklar om religionsfilosofi, religionshistoria, religionssociologi och religionsvetenskap, liksom om rättfärdiggörelse, reformation, religion, rit, Rom, sakrament, sekularisering, Schleiermacher och synd — för att bara nämna några få. Med hjälp av RGG erbjuds man som vanligt både översikt och fördjupning, och därmed blir den ett oundgängligt hjälpmedel för både teologer och religionsvetare.

Ola Sigurdson

Thomas Ekstrand och Mattias Martinson: *Tro och tvivel: Systematiska reflektioner över kristen tro. 312 sid. Studentlitteratur, Lund 2004.*

Den konstruktiva systematiska teologin har återvänt till Uppsala, och det med besked. De båda uppsalateologerna Thomas Ekstrand och Mattias Martinson har skrivit en akademisk lärobok i systematisk teologi för B- och C-nivå som inte bara vill återge vad andra teologer har menat utan själv bidra med ett konstruktivt perspektiv på teologin. I fem kapitel om teologins förutsättningar, skapelsen, frälsningen, tron och tvivel formar de båda författarna en egen systematisk-teolo-

gisk position i dialog med andra teologer från historia och samtid liksom med teologikritiska bidrag hämtade utanför teologin. De an knyter tydligt till den tidigare uppsalateologins livsåskådningsperspektiv, men hävdar samtidigt att teologin i vår tid måste vinnlägga sig om en mer dialogisk attityd eftersom medvetenheten om *all* kunskaps kontextuella avhängighet blivit mer tydlig. Det kan därför inte finnas någon absolut skillnad mellan en akademisk och en kyrklig teologi, och därmed finns det inte bara möjligheter utan också positiva anledningar att på nytt ta upp den traditionella teologiska uppgiften att försöka formulera en teologi för den samtida kristna tron.

Ekstrand och Martinson vill i sin lärobok anknyta till traditionell dogmatik och bekännelseformen i dessa troskränningar, men samtidigt distansera sig från en alltför långt gången identifikation med denna genom att föra in «tvivlet» både som ett avslutande kapitel och som en genomgående strukturerande princip. Poängen med detta är att förhålla sig principiellt kritisk till dogmatiken — «avslöja bekännelsens skenbara naturlighet och normalitet» (s. 42) — och därmed söka att kommunicera med människor som inte delar författarnas egna utgångspunkter. *Tro och tvivel* blir därmed, trots de kritiska synpunkter den själv har på en sådan, en slags apologetik som vill visa på en rimlig teologi för den moderna människan (hon skymtar i bakgrunden även om de båda författarna aldrig nämner hennes namn). Även här fullföljer man på ett kreativt sätt en av uppsalateologins viktigare bidrag till den svenska teologin.

En kritisk synpunkt på *Tro och tvivel* är emellertid att Ekstrand och Martinson trots sin dialogiska ambition formar en stereotyp bild av en «klassisk» teologi som ofördelaktigt för denna kontrasteras med den samtida «kritiska» teologin. Thomas av Aquinos teologi blir till sist «mytologisk», den platoniska teologin besläktad med «gnostisk» kristendom och egenarten i Gustaf Wingrens «skapelse-teologi» förbisedd — åsikter som vare sig är särskilt träffande eller särskilt självklara i dagens internationella teologi. Likaså avfärdar man «traditionens metafysiska uppenbarelseuppfattningar» liksom den traditionella inkarnationsläran på ett tämligen svepande sätt. Även om Ekstrand och Martinson vill hävda att det finns en dialektik mellan myt och förnuft tenderar det mytiska snarast återfinnas i «traditionen» medan förnuftet finns i nutiden. Tyvärr verkar alltså författarnas polemik hemsökas av de båda moderna spökerna «metafysik» och «mytologi» på ett sätt som egentligen inte tillåter den så kallade traditionens nyansrikedom framträda särskilt tydligt.

Även om Ekstrand och Martinson vidare uppvisar en medvetenhet om den ömsesidiga avhängigheten av abstrakta begrepp och konkreta föreställningar är det till sist de abstrakta begreppen som avgår med segern.

Mycket kort skulle man kunna säga att en sekulariserad världsbild blir normativ för teologin på ett sätt som man känner igen också från tidigare uppsalateologi och den samtida analytiska filosofin. Självklart kan detta vara ett perspektiv värt att förfäktas, men vad som hade gjort boken ännu intressantare vore om också ett mer självkritiskt perspektiv hade fått samsas med de kritiska och konstruktiva ambitionerna. Nu tenderar andra, mer postsekulära perspektiv, att — mot Ekstrands och Martinsons uttalade intentioner — i bästa fall förpassas till det irrelevanta. Frågan är om författarnas hållning är så «radikal» (ett positivt laddat ord i boken) som de själva menar. Kunde man inte tänka sig att det vore en mer radikal hållning att ifrågasätta den samtida nominalistiska, sekularistiska och ofta även nihilistiska vetenskapliga hållningen? Teologin skulle då inte bara utmana «religiösa människor till att tänka vidare», som det står på s. 5, utan även ickeregelgilla.

Tro och tvivel skulle kunna vara användbar som kursbok. Det som gör att jag tvekar en smula är att boken förutsätter en hel del kunskaper om och i den teologiska tradition och om den kristna kyrka som den tar spjärn emot. För att kunna tillgodogöra sig vad som är problemen med t.ex. en traditionell kristologi antar jag att en student först måste få någon insikt i vad som är poängen med den. Användbarheten har alltså mycket att göra med på vilket sätt den används och den möda läraren lägger ned för att visa på bokens sammanhang.

Den mer erfarne teologen lockas emellertid att invända på nästan varje sida — särskilt om man inte delar Ekstrand och Martinsons teologiska hållning utan lutar mer åt antingen en kerygmatiske eller en postsekulär teologi. Men det bokför jag på kontot för bokens styrka snarare än dess svaghet — det är synnerligen uppfriskande med ett så tydligt ställningstagande i ett så resonerande tonfall.

Ola Sigurdson

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen: *An Introduction to Ecclesiology. Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. 238 sid. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove 2002.

Även om det gångna århundradet beskrevs som ett ekklesiologins århundrade, var det mest katolska eller anglikanska teologer som sysslade med ämnet; «den nya kyrkosynen» i svensk tappning är kanske mer än något annat ett ekumeniskt fenomen. Bland reformert influerade och evangelikala teologer har kyrkosynsfrågor för det mesta varit sekundära.

Nu håller det på att förändras. Kanske är det ett tecken på att teologin blir mer fenomenologiskt inrik-

tad, men fr.a. är det nog tecken på att ekumeniska frågor blir alltmer närgångna och på tendensen att församlingen alltmer kommer i fokus — det har kallats «kongregationalisering». En signal om det nya klimatet är den ekklesiologiska översikt av Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen som här anmäls. Kärkkäinen har sin bakgrund i Full Gospel Church i Finland och Thailand, är professor i systematisk teologi vid Fuller Theological Seminary (och docent i ekumenik i Helsingfors), och är mycket produktiv inom områden som evangelikala teologer sällan beträder. När han nu skriver om ekklesiologiska frågor kan han visa vilka överväganden som ligger bakom de kyrko- och församlingsformer där genomsnittsekklesiologen bara ser formlöshet.

Boken är inte en ekklesiologi, utan en översikt över ekklesiologier. Han har inget tematiskt grepp, utom möjligen ett avslöjande intresse för pneumatologi, som ju måste anses vara legitimt i branschen. Boken är uppbyggd närmast som en handbok i tre delar. Först behandlas ekklesiologiska kyrkotraditioner, sedan ett antal nutida ledande ekklesiologer och slutligen ett antal kontextuella ekklesiologier.

I den första delen försöker han hitta nyckelbegrepp som kan karaktärisera resp. tradition. Han tänker sig då att varje klassisk tradition har utformat sin ekklesiologi med utgångspunkt i «its overall theological program», och att frikyrkor och nya rörelser får en kyrkosyn som kan extrapoleras på liknande sätt. Jag är något tveksam till båda förfarandena. De klassiska traditionerna (ortodox, katolsk, luthersk, anglikansk/reformert) är inte entydiga, och jag tror dessutom att kyrkolivet, spiritualiteten, ofta är kärnan i det teologiska programmet, inte ett utflöde ifrån detta. Lockelsen är dessutom att på ett orättvist sätt överdriva skillnaderna.

Två exempel: Romersk-katolsk ekklesiologi kan inte entydigt beskrivas med termen «Guds folk»: efter millennieskiftet blir det allt tydligare att det sakramental Kristusmysteriet spelar en minst lika stor roll — och gjorde det redan i Andra vatikankonciliet. Katolicitetsbegreppet får egentligen ingen genomlysning i hans framställning. Luthersk ekklesiologi karaktäriserar Kärkkäinen utifrån *simul iustus et peccator*, men det blir genast problematiskt: han tar sin utgångspunkt i kyrkan som *communio* och de heligas gemenskap. Trots att författaren är från Norden uppmärksammar han inte alls begreppen folkkyrka och nationalkyrka — i internationell ekklesiologi hör dessa teman till den historiska avdelningen.

Det är intressant att bland de ekklesiologiska traditionerna finns «den ekumeniska rörelsens ekklesiologier», och det är fr.a. dem i WCC som han då behandlar. Det är inte oproblemiskt att ekumenicitet som sådan riskerar att bli en konfession bredvid de andra. Samtidigt är det ju också så att de olika enhets-

begrepp som man prövar i det ekumeniska arbetet är bland de viktigaste ecklesiologiska redskapen idag. Kanske kunde en analys av dessa kunnat bli en användbar slagruta i framställningen av de olika konfessionerna.

De samtida ecklesiologiska författare Kärkkäinen behandlar — också dessa med hjälp av aningen förenklade begrepp — är Zizioulas, Küng, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Volf, McClendon och Newbigin. Urvalet går ju alltid att diskutera: det finns ingen representativ romersk katolik, Newbigin hör väl till en gången generation och ett par av dem är kanske ecklesiologer mer med vänster hand. Men det är synd att klaga: Kärkkäinen redovisar en bred beläsenhet och i en handbok som den han vill göra måste man vara mer entydig än verkligheten.

Att kontextuella ecklesiologier fått en egen avdelning i boken beror nog på att de är rörelser som inte har någon akademisk företrädare eller inte har blivit akademiskt analyserade på samma sätt som de som behandlas i de två första avdelningarna. Här behandlar han basgemenskaper, non-church movement, feminism, afrikanska oberoende kyrkor, den karismatiska förnyelsen, den «världsliga» kyrkan och postkristendomens kyrkoformer.

Kärkkäinen är brett orienterad, men framställningen är mycket refererande. I de två sistnämnda fallen presenteras bara var sitt exempel på en enstaka författare som driver tanken på en världslig resp. postkristen kyrka. Här handlar det om ecklesiologiska frågeställningar som väckts av diskussionen kring postmodernismen, och det är spännande. Man kan ju nämligen förstå denna just som ett teologiskt och spiritualitetsmässigt program i sig, med omedelbara ecklesiologiska implikationer. Den «världsliga kyrkan» representeras av Vincent Donovans böcker, där globalisering och religionsdialog spelar en stor roll — detta kunde ju mycket väl ha presenterats som ett spännande sätt att tänka just katolicitet. Postkristen ecklesiologi (vilket här betyder kyrkosyn för den postkristna eran) representeras av Barry Harvey, som förefaller ha ett program inspirerat av Stanley Hauerwas (en teolog som Kärkkäinen egendomligt nog inte behandlar) och detta skulle också mycket väl kunnat vara en slagruta i hela framställningen.

Utförliga namn- och ämnesregister gör att boken också är användbar som en enkel uppslagsbok bredvid de ekumeniska handböckerna. För den som vill ha en snabb överblick över aktuella ecklesiologiska frågeställningar är boken nog en av de bredaste som finns tillgänglig. Men, som jag antytt, läsaren måste veta att kartan är en förenkling av verkligheten, och det är verkligheten som gäller.

Peter Bexell

Bent Flemming Nielsen: *Genopførelser – Ritual, kommunikation og kirke*. 222 sid. Forlaget Anis, København 2004.

Kring sekelskiftet nittonhundra tar den moderna ritteoribildningen fart på allvar. År 1909 utkommer Arnold van Genneps klassiska verk *Les rites de passage: étude systématique des rites*. Hans ritteorier skulle under 1900-talet följas av en rad ritteorier med förklaringsmodeller av såväl antropologisk, sociologisk, filosofisk som samhällsvetenskaplig art. Här möter vi namn som Victor Turner, Roy A Rappaport, Frits Staal, Caroline Humphrey, James Laidlaw, Gunter Gebauer och Christopher Wulf, vilkas teorier alla behandlas av Bent Flemming Nielsen. I *Genopførelser* ger författaren på ett förtjänstfullt sätt en översiktlig introduktion, varför den bör kunna fungera som kursbok för akademiska studier om riter och ritteorier.

Förutom översikten undersöker författaren samspelet mellan ritualisering och den kyrkliga och religiösa verkligheten samt ger en reflektion över hur detta samspel kan tänkas fungera i en senmodern tid. Viktiga frågor, som vad det betyder för kyrklig praxis att arbeta med nedärva ritualer, skapade under andra historiska förutsättningar, vilka möjligheter som kan tänkas finnas för kommunikation när dessa ritualer används, hur samspelet mellan ritual och kommunikation ser ut samt förhållandet mellan den nerskrivna riten och den praktiserade riten, diskuteras. Författarens syfte är att försöka nå fram till en gångbar beskrivning av ritualer och ritualisering som är användbar för det praktiskt-teologiska arbetet med gudstjänst och predikan. För att hitta fram till en sådan gångbar beskrivning kopplar författaren samman ritteorier med kommunikationsteorier där ordet *Genopførelser* blir viktigt. Det är alltså förhållandet mellan den ritualiserade kyrkliga handlingen eller gudstjänsten och predikan som kommunikationsform som är syftet med framställningen. För att komma dit, vid bokens slut, börjar en lång vandring, i första kapitlet med en genomgång av de moderna ritteorierna ställda i relation till kyrkans rituella praxis. I andra kapitlet står kommunikationsteorierna i fokus när författaren diskuterar det predikade ordets förhållande till det rituella ordet. En viktig diskussion som handlar om människans möjlighet till reception och inte minst om samspelet mellan ett ord som man som åhörare endast hör (predikan) och ett ord som man som åhörare är med om att göra, kanske t.o.m. konkret gestaltar med sin kropp, sin röst osv. (riten/liturgin). Här öppnar författaren för ett spännande, viktig och obearbetat forskningsfält som vi homiletikforskare borde undersöka närmare. Vad betyder predikantens och åhörarnas rituella erfarenheter för predikan? För predikans innehåll?

För predikantens sätt att formulera sig och för åhörarnas sätt att tolka det som sägs?

Författaren argumenterar för att åhörarna endast kan förstå predikan i den givna kontexten. Detta innebär att predikan måste förstås som ett led i en komplex helhet, som en interaktion där såväl den omgivande liturgin/riten (gestaltning, psalmsång, nattvardsfirande, procession osv.) som predikans kroppsspråk och språkbehandling är avgörande för hur åhörarna uppfattar budskapet. Att den som hör en predikan blir påverkad av helheten och inte isolerat av predikans ord är något ganska självklart som homiletikforskningen allt för sällan tagit hänsyn till, kanske för att det är så svårt att hitta vetenskapligt hållbara metoder för en sådan forskning.

I kapitel tre diskuteras vilka de homiletiska konsekvenserna blir när man låter ritualteori brytas mot kommunikationsteori. Centralt för författaren är vad det betyder för teorin om predikan och för den praktiska predikan om man på allvar beaktar det rituella sammanhang som omger predikan. Utifrån denna frågeställning diskuteras särskilt predikans praktiska förberedelse och dess genomförande som religiöst tal eller som Guds ord. Här menar författaren att det finns en brist i den nyare homiletiska forskningen när den använder kommunikationsteorier men samtidigt inte i tillräckligt hög grad tar hänsyn till kyrkans förståelse av vad en predikan är. Tyvärr utvecklas inte detta resonemang, inte heller görs något försök att definiera kyrkans förståelse av vad predikan är, varken i historia eller nutid. Särskilt intressant hade det varit om uttrycket «den protestantiske prædikenförståelsen» hade blivit utredd. Troligen skulle det vara möjligt att göra en allmän dogmatisk definition som gör rättvisa åt de protestantiska kyrkornas teoretiska predikosyn, samtidigt som stora skillnader sannolikt skulle finnas mellan predikosynen t.ex. mellan de nordiska protestantiska folkskyrkorna.

Bent Flemming Nielsen har skrivit en grundläggande lärobok om samspelet mellan kyrkans rit och tal som är mer än en kursbok då den även utmanar den praktiska teologin att tänka i delvis nya banor.

Jan-Olof Aggedal

Resumé av doktorsavhandling

Ann Kull: Piety and Politics: Nurcholish Madjid and His Interpretation of Islam in Modern Indonesia (Lund Studies in History of Religion 21). 300 sid. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 2005.

Madjids idéer är starkt påverkade av den lokala indonesiska kontexten, men utgör också en del av en sekelgammal tradition av islamisk reform. Han utvecklade ett kontextuellt förhållningssätt gentemot både Koranen och en mängd andra källor från muslimsk historiografi. Genom att förespråka ett *ijtihad* som är kontextuellt, och i de fall det behövs också kollektivt, eftersträvar han en islamtolkning som fungerar i det moderna Indonesien – en tolkning som gör anspråk på att gynna även landets icke-muslimska befolkning. Under hela sin karriär har Madjid sökt formulera gemensamma värderingar till grund för social rättvisa, religiös pluralism och tolerans samt demokrati. Han har däremot inte behandlat genusfrågor på samma utförliga sätt. Andlighet, mystik och inte minst det islamiska konceptet *takwa* (gudsmedvetenhet) har spelat en alltmer central roll i Madjids tolkning av islam. Dessa idéer har också utgjort grunden för ett förverkligande av hans samhällspolitiska mål. Hans verksamhetsområde täckte därför in såväl en individuellt koncentrerad fromhet som en politisk tolkning av islam.

