

Properly religious assertions of the existential beliefs necessarily implied by authentic self-understanding (i.e., *credenda*) are correctly said to include "symbolic metaphysical assertions" (cf. *The Point of Christology*: 144 f.). Such assertions are indeed about ultimate reality, including strictly ultimate reality. But what they express as distinct from what they imply is the meaning of ultimate reality for us as distinct from the structure of ultimate reality in itself, which properly metaphysical assertions express, and that literally, not symbolically. Their point as properly religious assertions, in other words, is not intellectual but existential: they are indeed assertions about ultimate reality but only such as also call for a certain self-understanding and therefore also a certain form of moral action—of acting in certain ways and doing certain things (i.e., *agenda*).

But isn't this to say that such assertions are precisely *not* metaphysical assertions at all, not even "symbolic" metaphysical assertions? Yes—and No: Yes, in the sense that they are, as has been said, properly religious rather than properly metaphysical assertions. But also No, in the sense that they're assertions about ultimate reality in its meaning for us as the objective ground of their call for a certain self-understanding, and thus also for believing certain beliefs as well as for performing certain actions. As such, they necessarily imply certain properly metaphysical, and so also literal, assertions about the structure of ultimate reality in itself.

In sum: properly religious assertions include, in addition to existential-historical assertions, "symbolic metaphysical assertions," just as, conversely, "symbolic metaphysical assertions" are not properly metaphysical but properly religious or philosophical. On the other hand, "symbolic metaphysical assertions," religious or philosophical, necessarily imply properly metaphysical assertions, even as, conversely, properly metaphysical assertions necessarily imply the authentic self-understanding that any true "symbolic metaphysical assertions" somehow express.

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