

Just how different, really, is my position from Phillips's?

In earlier formulations of my position, I could still speak of symbolic talk of God's love as expressing "a true metaphysical claim," albeit "a symbolic metaphysical claim"; and I resisted the contention of noncognitivist theories of religious language that the *only* function of such language is noncognitive, even while agreeing that its *primary* function is exactly that (*The Point of Christology*: 144 f.). But even then I had gone a long way toward making something like the same point that Phillips makes—for example, in analyzing what we mean by "the reality of God." "This reality," he says, "is independent of any given believer, but its independence is not the independence of a separate biography. It is independent of the believer in that the believer measures his life against it The immortality of the soul refers to the state an individual is in in relation to the unchanging reality of God" (*Death and Immortality*: 54 f.).

Just what Phillips means to say by this is not entirely clear. Is his statement that God's reality is independent of "any given believer" by way of allowing that God's reality is nevertheless dependent on *some* believer, that "God" designates a belief-dependent reality (or, perhaps, a socially constructed reality)? Or, again, what is the scope of his denial that God's reality involves "the independence of a separate biography"? Granted that it would clearly seem to exclude any *categorial* metaphysical theism, for which the independence of God's reality is that of at least a distinct, although hardly a separate, biography, would it also exclude my kind of *transcendental* metaphysical theism, for which the independence of God's reality is the independence of the universal individual, in Whitehead's sense of "the Whole," i.e., "the one which is all," as distinct from "one among the many"?

I'm not at all certain about how to answer such questions. But what does seem clearer to me now than before is that, if Phillips, for his part, could allow that, although religious language itself may not be metaphysical, it nonetheless has metaphysical (as well as moral) implications, I, for my part, could allow that religious talk of God's love, as distinct from the metaphysical talk that it necessarily implies, does not itself express a metaphysical claim, not even "a symbolic metaphysical claim." But, then, I would no longer need

to resist the contention of noncognitivist theories that the only function of religious language as such is noncognitive. For although religious language necessarily implies language that functions cognitively—namely, metaphysical language—still its own function as properly religious is only the noncognitive function of explicitly authorizing authentic self-understanding and a life-praxis according to it.

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