

If I have correctly understood my analysis of "the different senses of 'transcendence,'" the first of the four senses it distinguishes is necessarily presupposed by each of the other three.

It also seems clear that religion simply as such, i.e., prior to the distinction between archaic and axial types of religion, necessarily presupposes "the transcendent" in the first sense. And it is certainly arguable that religion simply as such also needs to presuppose "the transcendent" in the second sense, in which it means the reality or existence of transempirical, metaphysical entities of some kind(s). But does religion *simply as such* necessarily presuppose the transcendent in either of the two remaining senses, i.e., either in the sense of a "naturalistic theism" or in that of a "supernaturalistic theism"?

It certainly does if I'm right in arguing, as I've argued more recently, that religion simply as such necessarily presupposes the applicability somehow of the two transcendental contrasts between the concrete and the abstract and the divine and the nondivine. But *am* I right about this? I more and more suspect I'm not.

No doubt, the axial religions, in their different ways, do all necessarily presuppose that both of these transcendental contrasts are somehow applicable. But this can hardly be said of archaic religions, whose metaphysics, if it can be called that, is, in Prozesky's term, some form of "mythological naturalism."

But, then, is Communism properly said to be a religion or not? It's certainly not an *axial* religion, because it does not necessarily presuppose the applicability somehow of the transcendental contrast divine/nondivine. On the contrary, it expressly denies that this contrast can be applied, all differences between concretes/abstracts being merely categorial differences, i.e., individual, specific, and generic differences, as well as categorial differences proper. Otherwise put: Communism is properly said to be "atheistic" because it affirms that all differences between concretes/abstracts are *finite* differences only: there neither is nor can be any *infinite* difference between them.

But none of this implies that Communism is not properly a religion, unless one is prepared to question whether archaic religions, also, are religions in the proper sense of the word. Where I was misled, I fear, in much of my more recent thinking about all this was in allowing myself to generalize, invalidly, from what is undoubtedly true of *axial* religion to what is true of religion simply as such. What any religion necessarily presupposes is only that life is ultimately meaningful or worth living, in the complex sense in which I have explained this, i.e., as involving a *basic supposition* that life is ultimately meaningful; a *basic question* as to how, exactly, we are to understand the meaning of ultimate reality for us so as to understand it authentically and truly, as it really is; and an *open commitment* to obey—which is to say, to understand ourselves authentically and truly, because realistically, in accordance with—whatever we are then given to understand explicitly of the meaning of ultimate reality for us and to lead our lives accordingly. But, as I have usually insisted in my analyses of religion, how different religions answer the basic religious question, or with what radicality of insight, is historically variable, depending on which of the conditions of human life are taken to focus the problem and on the depth at which these conditions are grappled with and understood (cf., e.g., *On Theology*: 108). This means that, in the nature of the case, there is never any guarantee that the account that a particular religion will give of the ultimate meaning of life will be at once clear and coherent, meaningful and true.

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