

Phase 2 Case Study into “Fake News”

Day 5: The Transcendental Realm as the Primary Sublating Level

Reflections

At the end of day 4, we observed that there was no possibility of an innate intelligibility among global scale institutions, that in fact various institutions were developed for a wide variety of reasons at different points in time and various locations on the surface of the earth. They were constructed by intelligent people of common sense who unfortunately have one failure: they accept no overriding theoretical, philosophical, theological or other “impractical” disciplines to their task of carrying out the never-ending cycle of work that needs to be done. There are also the distortions made in the name of rationalizing or justifying the rise to power of an individual or a group. Then combined, different regions of the world developed their own common sense approach to managing the affairs of their world, in effect creating functional worlds mediated by meaning that may or may not translate into the affairs of other areas of the globe. The result is a mishmash of institutions that sometimes cooperate with each other while at other times are in conflict—sometimes in both states at the same time. The Darwinian principle of natural selection would seem to hold true, though this is quite different from Lonergan’s world view of emergent probability.

One way to visual this is to think of the earth as a patch-work of specialized ecosystems, each on adapted over long periods of time to the unique geographic circumstances and the broad historical processes played out over generations of human activity. Each “institutional ecosystem” has its own geographical constraints as well as unique history, as humans sought to create and maintain a civilization that suited their own interests and needs. Even within each ecosystem, there are a mix of institutions that suffer from the same twin influences of common sense bias and the justification of power-holders/seekers. But the situation is worse at the global level, for there’s no really acceptable may for different “institutional ecosystems” to interact across boundaries other than the threat of the brute exercise of physical power. Attempts to create a “super-ecosystem” that would incorporate each specialized sub-ecosystem is doomed to failure for the simple lack of coherence: the “higher level” system would suffer the same effects of common sense bias and the rationalizations involved in exercising power.¹

¹ Currently, global institutions are simple organizations that have their roots in a specific institutional “ecosystem” but, like invader species, have taken up residence in non-native habitats. When this takes place, two things happen. The first is that as a non-native organization, the global institution can “prey” as it likes without historically evolved constraints on their behavior. The second is that as resources migrate out, the “host” culture is left out in the cold as less and less relevant to the survival of the “global” institution. If left unchecked, the result is that *all* local or regional time-and-space-specific socio-political “ecologies” are destabilized.

The other factor is that not all types of organizations make the transition to a global recurring scheme of operations. The primary type of organization that makes such a leap in scale are usually commercial in nature, either in the spread of technology through industry or the extensive banking organizations that make it all work. Politicians are absorbed into this economically-driven web in their quest for money, the essential commodity that enables them to reward those who support them in office. But this divorces them from their fellow countrymen,

The “solution” is in fact derived from the sublating effects of the transcendental realm of meaning. These sublating effects, as well as a few of the conditioning effects on the transcendental realm by the core institutional level, will now be considered.

Revelation

The brute fact is that on our own we are incapable of devising a proper way of living. Over and over again new strategies are proposed, policies formulated, and plans enacted—and invariably things don’t work out as expectations and hopes would have them. We are simply not capable of standing outside ourselves to “see” us as an external “unbiased” observed would; we are limited to the proportionate understanding best fitting our symbol creating and using species.

Furthermore, it is not evil that needs to be explained, for that seems self-evident. What needs to be explained is the presence of good in the world. The assumption that all people are created good is a Rousseau notion of the “noble savage” uncorrupted by civilization. As for the church, humans may be created in the image of god but “original sin” lies in the way of achieving such a noble way of living. The “natural” state of humankind is probably represented by Muslim countries dominated by Sharia law under the totalitarian ideology of Islam as represented by that perfect of all men: Mahammad. War lord, high priest, and supreme judge, he embodied that perfect alpha male who, like his god Allah, brooked no resistance. Slavery, tribal justice, polygamy, the submission of women, and intertribal raiding are all features of human life back to the dawn of Homo sapiens. Why this is no longer the state of things across the world can only be attributed to a Divine Mystery operative in human affairs.

In the Western world, this Divine Mystery revealed himself first to the Jewish people and then through Christ’s death and resurrection. These revelations are unfolding themselves in history as the Divine Mystery continues His subtle influence on human affairs. For example, as David Prentice points out in “Wisdom and the Smartest People ever,”

Culturally, valuing knowledge and intellect has three main sources: The Greek philosophers, the Bible, and the Church. There were others, but these three more than any other sources provided the basis for the respect for knowledge and wisdom in our culture. . . .

Wisdom is the subject of Solomon in the Book of Proverbs. Some central quotes:

“Seek wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Find wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”

“Does not wisdom call out?”

who are then left to face faceless bureaucrats whose dictates become law. While the affected population may not rebel, the very fact of this discontent leave open a path to power by someone who can take advantage of the situation who might not otherwise come to prominence.

“Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.”

...

Our culture. It’s why we are prosperous, live longer, live better, and have so much in depth in so many areas of life. C. S. Lewis called the Bible our “instruction manual.” If you follow the manual, the human machine works at its best, tuned finely for maximal effect and output. The wisdom of Solomon was a huge part of the manual.²

The Divine Mystery not only holds the position as the only entity capable of putting human living in its proper context but as expressed in Christ becomes the ultimate expression of pure love and charity. The opposite position, expressed in a policy of multi-culturalism, is that to maintain some semblance of peace *no* individual is allowed to criticise another’s culture lest violence erupt. The point is that multi-culturalism allows for cultural positions that may be directly opposed to each other, a dialectic between position and counter-position that leaves the possibility of outright violence always on the table. If the public realm is not to disintegrate, this conflict cannot be allowed to rise in the public’s mind—at least at the level of a formal recognition of the problem. The result is a society whose members may well know what is going on and yet cannot say anything against counter-positions advocated by different groups. The public sphere is fragmented, but no one can be allowed to point out that no longer do ethical or moral standards exist to guide people in their daily lives. In fact, the deliberate suppression of free speech becomes a new standard for public behavior. Hence the calls to “racism” when racism is not on the table.

The Problem of Liberation

Human beings may reach up to the demands of the transcendental precepts on their own, but invariably intellectual, moral, and religious conversion cannot be sustained without the sublating effects of the transcendental realm of being. The transcendental precepts guiding human consciousness may beckon and at times individual humans or small groups of humans may succeed in reaching up to them through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. But these are statistical aberrations not the norm. It is our belief that humans are not born good, but have to undergo periods of formation during which time different sets of terminal values are played out in individual and communal lives. We are free; we can learn; and the Divine Mystery acts as a guide and mentor in this process of truly becoming human.

The Three Modes

There are three basic ways in which the Divine Mystery operates through the transcendental realm of meaning inherent in any human being as an emergent property following the

² David Prentice, “Wisdom and the Smartest People Ever”, (*American Thinker*, August 23, 2018), https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2018/04/wisdom_and_the_smartest_people_ever.html.

development of the non-conscious brain (psyche) and the conscious mind (awareness): institutional, adherent, adept (though not gnostic). All three are variations on living a life build around values that transcend the physical (psychic and consciousness) capabilities of humans. It is to live a life grounded in charity.

The very fact of the existence of the Church as an institution in human affairs sets standards of moral and ethical behavior for the collective. The majority of people may reject these standards, yet still because there is an institution that advocates and lives these principles such a rejection is understood by authentically orientated people as being “evil,” i.e., beyond the pale. This is experienced as guilt, an error not against the Divine Mystery per se but against the norms of human society. In fact, for those in rebellion against god, the first item on the attack list is the Church—and those who first proclaimed such standards, the Jews. Remove the Church, remove the Jews, and you have a society whose elites stand as gods, declaring both good and evil in their own name.

The existence of the Church as a functional institution and not a replaceable organization in society applies to those who stand outside it. But the Church does offer entrance in the realm of the transcendental in human affairs, and this power of attraction of an authentic and fruitful way of living in the world can draw in adherents who take up the challenge not of living an ethical or moral life but as living as a *Christian*. This can be a powerful presence of the “good news” in society, offering not only a better way of living than a purely human reality based on scarcity, lack, and death. Not only this, but the active presence of such people in human affairs acts as a moral brake on the perhaps more egotistical and group bias interests of individuals, for it does place their activities in the context of a way of living that is far more universal in nature. For such people are drawn to the transcendental precepts in their lives, not as an abstraction but as an encounter with the world around them “in all their affairs.”

In addition, participation in the life of the Church is to participate in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. The latter clearly goes beyond any empiricist understanding, for while the birth and death of Christ can be affirmed through historical research, the resurrection itself relies on a combination of the original reports attesting to this event as well as the changes brought about through participation in the event itself through faith. Birth and death relate to human experiences in time-and-space; the resurrection affirms the reality of reality beyond the physical existence that we know and are so familiar with. That our destiny lies beyond this life is announced in the Gospel and played out in the daily life of Christians. But the reality of Christ’s resurrection and the corresponding affirmation of “eternal life” operate at a deeper level in human history: the personal transformation of the individual to become one with Christ.

This third impact is perhaps the hardest to understand, but it is not truly an “adept” in the sense of someone possessing specialized knowledge (a gnostic) but as someone truly touched by the Divine Mystery at the center of their very being. There are the contemplatives drawn to experiencing the Divine Mystery either through an active participation in life (active contemplation at the level of truly being a Christian) or through an infused from of direct encounter. Thomas Merton notes that the latter are characterized by three things: a divinized

subjective expressed through charity (God Himself), an inability to understand any of this in human terms (darkness of the external and internal selves), and a total transformation of the individual as he or she is drawn ever deeper into the divine life of the Father, Son, and Spirit. It is here that the individual begins not only to separate true value from artificially human-created value but live a truly authentic life as their true self.

It is here, in these three aspects of the transcendental realm in human affairs that one of the key functions of the news becomes a true reality: exposing to the light of day the shady activities of individuals and groups that prefer to operate in darkness where evil can flourish without opposition. But note that there are two elements to this: the exposure itself, which may require a great degree of courage at the personal risks involved, and the public reaction to the exposure, which if the public has been well conditioned to an immoral and unethical way of living may be nil. If the latter, the Divine Mystery is there in His very absence—and people of a more authentic nature will become aware of this.

The fundamental institutional change

One of the fundamental institutional changes over the last hundred or so years is the downgrading of religious institutions from “institutional” status to that of “organizational.” No longer are religious organizations considered an essential part of western culture to be defended if threatened, but as one of a number of interchangeable organizations that can be allowed to fail—if not induced to fail—should such once-former institutions collapse. This ideologically-driven “secular” mentality has lost any sense of the sacred, any awe of the possibility of a Divine Mystery operative in human affairs, and any sense of either a life after death or the survival of their own culture after collective non-reproduction.

Yet, the struggle between good and evil, something that really has meaning only within a Jewish or Christian religious context leaves people only with a sense of guilt over not meeting the norms of their family, clan, or culture rather than failures to reach up to the demands of their true transcendental self. In is in such godless situations that an ideology can emerge that demands totally “religious” obedience to the dogmas of the state and in doing so removes all feelings of guilt from “true believers” and their camp followers or groupies.

Also, if the fundamental creation myth or narrative is lost as the religious context is loss, than all narratives, all “creation” or “founding” myths or up for grabs. With no reasonable and intelligent standard to apply, the only recourse for those who wish to exercise power over others is the application of pure power—the ultimate in Mafia or Islam “protection” rackets. Hence the increase of the possibility, the probability, of the emergence of pure totalitarian regimes supported by various rationalizations and justifications that become embedded in history.