Imago Dei: The Biology and Theology of Freedom

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The quest to understand freedom is deeply bound up with the biological sciences and cannot be pursued without them. Yet neither biology nor the scientific study of human behavior that relies upon it — and today virtually all serious scientific work on human thought and behavior falls under that category — by itself can produce a complete theory of human freedom. Theologians have often maintained, by contrast, that they alone are in the position to put forward a viable theory of human freedom, since only the notion of the image of God (*imago Dei*) can ground strong claims to freedom. (Actually, dualists and metaphysicians who are not theists make similar claims, so it's probably not true that the theologians' claim to exclusivity is indeed warranted.)

Beginning with the limits encountered in any purely biological quest for freedom, I suggest that we consider whether theologians are indeed in the position to carry the discussion further than natural science is able to go. Above all I would like to know how theologians can build constructively upon the biological and philosophical results so as to maximize rather than minimize contact. Karl Barth is famous for his skepticism regarding *Anknüpfungspünkte*, points of contact. As a student of Wolfhart Pannenberg, I wish to see how far we can go in the *other* direction; when connections fail, I want to know *why* they must fail — if indeed they must. Like Pannenberg, I have worked for several decades to develop the most robust possible "theology from below," arguing that work within "philosophy proper" leads eventually to the need for theological reflection. The freedom debate is an archetypical example of this pattern. Still, this is not just a paper on method, for the goal is to make some real progress on the problem of freedom itself.

Freedom and the "More Than" of Human Action

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The emergence of spontaneous behaviors in biology commenced with the origins of life and increased over the long history of evolution; it extends to the most intricate forms of cultural and conscious behaviors. In humans, the "biology of freedom" has everything to do with the most complex natural object science has yet discovered in the universe: the human brain, with its some 10^{11} neurons and roughly 10^{14} neural connections. Considering the implications of biological evolution will force us to struggle with fundamental questions about the nature and functions of the evolutionary process, of science, and of the human religious impulse. It will require is to clarify the various meanings of the word "freedom" and the question of whether it actually exists in the world.

I grant that the kind of freedom that social and cultural emergence produces is sufficient for practical purposes. As long as you are ignorant of the specific causes of your action, you may reflect, feel that you are deciding, and hold yourself morally responsible for the decisions you reach. You may likewise view others who are ignorant of the full set of causal influences that are operating on them as morally responsible for their actions and reasoning. When a group of us agree to treat each other as free in this way, and assuming that we share in common a sufficient degree of agreement about moral principles, these assumptions are sufficient to establish a social-linguistic community, a community of moral reasoning, which shares common evaluations concerning moral praise and blame. This, in barest outline, is the emergentist theory of freedom. It holds that the emergence of freedom is gradual and asymptotic; that there is an increasing freedom, or rather freedom-likeness, across the stages of biological and cultural evolution; and that one can therefore speak of agents who are, for all intents and purposes, free.

The trouble is, there is no scientific reason to think that *any* biological behaviors are causally unconstrained — that is, no reason to think that, given a particular organism with its unique history and set of causal influences, its next action might be free in the sense of transcending that web of constraining factors altogether. Nevertheless, increasing degrees of self-determination across evolution *do* incline us to say that

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organisms act more and more *as if* they are free. As biological complexity increases, actions become increasingly difficult to predict with precision; they are increasingly determined by dispositions and memories within the agent him- or herself; they thus increasingly express the internal structure or nature of the individual. Indeed, the explosion of biological and, later, cultural complexity produces an exponential increase in these factors. Hence, *as-if freedom* not only increases with complexity but does so asymptotically. The biologically based theory of freedom might therefore be described as an *asymptotic* theory of freedom.

An asymptotic equation is one that produces a line with a steeper and steeper curve. In figure 1, which graphs the simple equation $xy = 1$, the curve that begins almost parallel to the x axis (reading from right to left) eventually draws closer and closer to the y axis. As the distance between the line and the y axis goes toward zero, the slope of the curve increases toward infinity. Yet it never actually intersects with the axis. An asymptote is thus a curve whose distance to a given line tends to zero (from Greek *asumptotos*, not intersecting).

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Speaking of freedom in this "asymptotic" or "emergent" sense is sufficient for practical purposes; is it also philosophically sufficient? An important philosophical school holds that it is. *Compatibilists* such as Daniel Dennett hold that free will is compatible with determinism. That is, ascriptions of freedom and moral responsibility can still be made even if all of our behaviors are in fact fully caused — and indeed could still be made even if we knew that our behaviors were caused

But there are problems. Consider the position of the Oxford philosopher Anthony Kenny, who defends a similar position. Kenny emphasizes the central task for defenders of this view: "Any viable form of compatibilism must do justice to the difference between reasons and causes."[2] All one needs in order to preserve this distinction, Kenny thinks, is the notion of different levels, different languages with which to speak of events in natural-scientific and human contexts. As long as one can

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distinguish between diverse explanatory levels, something like the freedom and moral responsibility can be defended, yet without the high costs of a strong Kantian dualism (148f.).

It turns out, however, that the simple distinction between the level of causes and the level of reasons is not by itself enough to save freedom. In the end Kenny has to add another condition. He sees that the compatibility of reasons and causes — and hence the position that one can decide on the basis of reasons even though (sufficient) causes for one's behavior also exist —requires in addition that there not be any "transition rules" that express connections between the two levels (150). He puts the point more fully in another essay:

> physiological determinism is compatible with liberty *only if there is no possibility* of systematic translation from one level of language to another. There seems to be good reason — though I will not argue the matter here — for doubting whether any systematic correlation could ever be established between physical events and human behaviour.[3]

Yet neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and evolutionary psychology have radically changed the context of the debate since Kenny wrote those words. Today the cognitive and evolutionary sciences are beginning to formulate precisely these sorts of transition rules. Although a full reduction of reasoning to neurophysiological processes is not on the horizon, study of the neural correlates of consciousness is unearthing exactly the sorts of connections that Kenny realizes would undercut his compatibilist response.

Strategies like Kenny's thus no longer provide an easy way to be a physiological determinist and at the same time to advocate human decisions that are "free" in the compatibilist sense. If they fail, one must either give up on the notion of freedom altogether or become a strict Kantian dualist, proclaiming that the difference between the language of reasons and the language of causes is unbridgeable in principle. It does not suffice merely to express one's doubts that "any systematic correlation could ever be established between physical events and human behaviour," as Kenny does.

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Compatibilists today must either make the case for a difference-in-principle or grant that their position on freedom remains open to empirical falsification by the neurosciences, the scope of whose explanations is increasing more rapidly than many have acknowledged.

If compatibilism doesn't work, what about the other classical philosophical response, libertarianism? Libertarians defend the "liberty of true spontaneity." For some action A, A is free if and only if you can decide to carry out either A or not-A at some given moment, *independent of all other causal factors whatsoever in the universe, internal or external*. If you decide (say) to do A, you *might have decided* not-A — even if the causal influences operating on you at that moment had been identical. (Hence this is sometimes called a "counterfactual" theory of freedom.)

I cannot here develop the full critique of libertarianism. Critics have made a fairly effective case that there is insufficient evidence to show that this kind of freedom actually exists.[4] Certainly the natural sciences could not uncover the sort of radical or counterfactual freedom to which libertarians appeal. Rather than making that case here, however, I wish to draw attention to a neglected mediating possibility. Between the two opposing schools that have dominated discussions over the last decades lies an under-explored region, a set of positions that draws strengths from both approaches to the freedom question. Ian Ramsey recognized at least the outlines of this response:

> the various expressions of Libertarianism ... amount to a claim that what is extra in a moral decision (i) in some way or another is *more than* spatio-temporal events, and (ii) has something or other to do with our sense of obligation.
>
> These claims do not fall simply because Libertarianism has not discovered a respectable language in which to express them.[5]

Ramsey is exactly right to note that moral decisions require an element or dimension that is somehow *more than* spatio-temporal events. More specifically, he argues that free will concerns

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> *subjectively* a characteristic sort of decision in which a person transcends his public behaviour, acts more than "officially"; and this as a response to what is *objectively* a challenge which equally transcends public terms, a challenge we call "duty" or "obligation". ... [W]hen Duty breaks in on us, it is something not limited to the observable factors which are its translation in spatio-temporal terms. What makes duty *characteristically* Duty is the *transcendent* setting that these terms are given. (37f., 42).

The "more than" that Ramsey introduces is deeply significant. It suggests that the idea of freedom is linked to a level of reality that is intrinsically different from the natural (physical-biological) world as a whole. But how should one conceive such a level of reality? And can one do so without utterly negating the knowledge we have amassed of the natural world?

Imago Dei **Correlations**

Let's begin with a thought experiment. Imagine that one is not satisfied with the absolutely-different-in-kind dualism of grounds and causes in Kant, but that one still wants to show that reasoning (or the conscious life in general) involves a form of agency that rises above the kinds of constraining causal influences that social/biological explanations provide and for that reason should count as free. This position could be established if one could show *directly* that human reasoning must be free; but this has turned out to be a difficult case to make in contemporary philosophy. Or it could be established *indirectly* if one could locate conscious human agency within a broader account of reality that tied it to an ontological level significantly different from, or "more than," the natural (physical-biological) world as a whole. One would argue that the dynamics associated with this higher or deeper level of reality cannot be reduced to the causal categories of biological evolution. If this level of type of reality does exist, those dimensions of human personhood that are connected to it will not be explainable in terms of the bottom-up, bio-social dynamics of animal and human being assumed by the theory of emergence.

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Could introducing a broader account of reality in this way break the stalemate that compatibilists and libertarians have reached concerning the question of freedom? The stalemate exists in part because, as long as one works within the framework of natural emergence, one cannot make sense of the notion of humans as free in the strongest sense, except in the context of a regulative (and hence fictional) account of behavior that is in fact causally determined. It just may be that the only way to defend strong human freedom, apart from an appeal to a metaphysical dualism of the person, is to turn to some sort of broader account of reality of this sort.

Note that there is in fact a wide variety of metaphysical positions that might serve this function. One thinks of theories of karma or reincarnation (at least those that ascribe some level of genuine free choice to living beings), as well as various metaphysical systems in modern Western thought, not all of them theistic. Remember that our interest here lies in the *logic* of the move, not in a proof of the existence of God. Still, theism is certainly *one* of the frameworks that would provide the ontological framework we are seeking, and this is the metaphysical framework on which I will concentrate here.

Of course, there is a certain line of argument within theology, associated for example with Karl Barth, that is highly resistant to all such correlations between the freedom question and the God question. The name of Ludwig Feuerbach is often invoked to express the fear that theology will thereby be reduced to anthropology. Although the matter is contentious and complex[6], for the moment I will assume that such fears are unjustified and that theologians do not need to avoid every type of God-human correlation.[7] Indeed, I hope to show that the correlations can be both anthropologically and theologically fruitful, rather than leading inevitably to the demise of any adequate theology as Barth feared.

It turns out that there is a surprisingly large number of ways in which specific notions of God correlate with specific interpretations of human freedom. Let's call correlations of this type *imago Dei correlations*. *Imago Dei* correlations attempt to formulate analogies between God's relationship to the world on the one hand, and the

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relationship of human persons to their bodies, and hence to the entire physical-causal order, on the other. In any given correlation the two sides are not identical; and yet in any coherent system, I suggest, they must be at least analogous. Consider, for examples, those who construe God as substance by contrasting the divine substance with the qualities of physical substances. As long as they accept the *imago Dei* correlation, the analogy gives them grounds for conceiving human persons as mental substances who are likewise defined in contrast to the physical dimensions of human existence. (We know this move well from Augustine and other Platonically influenced forms of Christianity.) Conversely, if one defines God as emerging through temporal process, as in Whitehead's process philosophy, then one will tend to construe the human person as likewise an instance of emerging process. (The positions that should really puzzle us are those that understand God as pure spirit and humans as purely physical, as in those theologies that yoke traditional theologies of God as pure Spirit with physicalist anthropologies. One thinks for example of the recent work of Nancey Murphy and Warren Brown. [8])

In what follows, however, I would like to explore a different anthropology, and hence a different *imago Dei* correlation, than these three examples. This particular correlation of anthropology and theology utilizes a logic (or, better, a dialectic) not of exclusion but of difference-through-inclusion, inspired by the Neoplatonic tradition and by theories of divine immanence within the history of theology. On this view one conceives God not as standing outside of or over against the world, but as including all existing things within the divine being — yet without making God and world identical. Let's call this position, or rather this group of positions, *panentheism*. Panentheism is the view that the world is included within the divine, though God is also more than the world.

The details of the required inclusion relationship have their roots in Patristic thought; they are worked out with particular precision in the logic of the infinite in Hegel. Recall that for Hegel the infinite is that which includes the finite rather than being set over against it; yet the infinite is not identical to the finite. An infinite that excludes the finite would be *eine schlechte Unendlichkeit*.[9] A finite placed outside the

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infinite would limit the infinite; and a limited infinite is, after all, not infinite at all. *Das wahrhaft Unendliche*, the truly infinite, must comprehend the finite[10], including it within itself. Including within, yet not confused with — this is the dialectical nature of the finite's relationship to its infinite source. There also exist some powerful options for understanding the nature of this inclusion relation in Trinitarian terms, as well as in terms of a social ontology that speaks of "being as communion," as in the work of John Zizioulas and Hans Urs von Balthasar.[11] Accepting the dialectic of difference-through-inclusion still allows God to be characterized by certain qualities that cannot be predicated of the created world, qualities such as necessary being as opposed to contingent being, infinity as compared to finitude, and moral perfection as compared to imperfection. On this view God is not set over against the created world, but rather includes it within Godself — yet without the ontological distinctions between the two being dissolved, so that the two become one.

I have suggested that the logic of the God-world relation offers a potentially fruitful way to approach the problem of human freedom, and indeed the question of the nature of the human agent in general. Given the current stalemate between approaches that understand human agency in purely physical terms and those that understand it in substance-dualistic terms, and given the inability of Kantian dualism to answer the new challenges being raised by advances in neuroscience, it has become necessary to find models that open up new conceptual space for the debate. I believe that *imago Dei* correlations of the sort presented here offer an important resource for overcoming this stalemate.

Of course, *any* response that includes theological elements, or even that begins to raise metaphysical questions, will be unacceptable to some of our discussion partners. One thinks of the so-called "new atheists" (Richard Dawkins and crowd), whose vitriolic attacks on theism are more bluster than argument. Aside from such cases, it does seem that certain broader models of reality, including theistic ones, can open up a unique and valuable space in the human quest to understand freedom in an age of science.

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Two Modes of Self-Transcendence

The transition to theology is more complex and subtle than most are willing to admit. We have found that the pattern of emergence points toward a variety of new forms of complexity and causal patterns. The more complex the life form, the greater the range of possible responses it can make, and the more its behaviors will appear spontaneous. An animal with a great variety of spontaneous or self-generated behaviors might be said to show a greater degree of transcendence of its immediate environment. *Homo sapiens*, with its ability to create inner models of imaginary worlds radically different from the actual one, would then qualify as the most radically self-transcending species to date. So deeply does this self-transcendence, this plasticity of behavior, characterize humanity that Pico della Mirandola in the 15th century spoke of humankind as the "species without a form." The school of philosophical anthropology in Germany described this phenomenon accurately as "openness to the world" (*Weltoffenheit*, Max Scheler) and as an "excentricity," a having one's center outside oneself (*die Exzentrizität des Menschen in Bezug auf Aussenwelt, Innenwelt und Mitwelt*, Helmuth Plessner). For these reasons Arnold Gehlen even characterized humanity as a "deficient being" (*Mängelwesen*).[12]

The starting point for a theologically open emergence theory must therefore be an exploration of the phenomenon of self-transcendence. Sometimes our intentions are directed beyond the set of natural givens as a whole. We ask about the meaning of human existence as a whole; we strive to think the unthinkable or to become the impossible; we orient our lives around the experience of the sublime. Nothing in natural emergence need close off this capacity of self-transcendence; in fact, emergence theory supports the idea that new contexts continually become something *more than* the laws and causal forces that preceded them. Nevertheless, in the standard presentations of emergence, there is no further *telos* for this capacity of self-transcending[13]; it is not a transcendence *toward* something.

There are two very different ways to construe this phenomenon of self-transcendence, of thinking beyond the natural framework as a whole, namely, with and

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without an actual goal. The latter way assumes that a person's transcendence of her given context is not a movement *toward* something; such self-transcendence is either judged as a pointless use of biologically evolved faculties or interpreted in terms of its inner-worldly functions alone. On this second view theological reflection and concerns are byproducts of cognitive faculties that may have contributed significantly to the evolutionary struggle for survival in other contexts but are now uselessly extrapolated into a realm where they have no purchase and nothing to which they correspond. Biologists call such byproducts "spandrals" (Stephen J. Gould) or "pleiotropic traits" (Francisco Ayala). Or perhaps theological concerns are biologically useful even though they are false, as David Sloan Wilson argues in *Darwin's Cathedral*. Perhaps theology is an empty game that sharpens intellectual skills that individuals can then use for more valuable activities such as law or medicine. Or perhaps being a theologian gives a male social status and sex appeal, so that he has access to more women and more reproductive opportunities (though this last suggestion strikes me as rather highly implausible).

But there is also another possibility. What if there really is a "more than" the finite world as a whole, or at least a deeper ground for its reality? How would this result cause us to interpret the fundamental phenomenon of humans continually transcending their given context? In this case, self-transcendence would be not only an anthropological datum but also a theological clue, a pointer beyond the finite world as a whole, an intimation that it might be grounded in a deeper reality.

These two very different interpretations of self-transcendence, it turns out, are deeply relevant to the question of freedom. If self-transcendence merely involves random judgments on one's existence as a whole, it offers no help with the problem of freedom. On the other hand, if a person's emergent capacity to transcend her given context and framework allows her to orient herself vis-à-vis a really existent transcendent being and dimension, then it may well give rise to a richer notion of freedom. This type of freedom would not be random, since it would concern one's relationship to the ground of one's being. Yet neither would it have to be determined by the order of natural causes, since it involves a postulated stance toward that order as

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a whole. As far as I can tell, this solution to the problem of freedom is possible only at the level at which an individual might be oriented toward the ultimate source of her being, rather than toward other finite objects within the natural world.[14]

Of course, the naturalist emergence theorist may respond that there *is* no level beyond the "broad naturalism" presupposed in the natural and social sciences. Mental phenomena may emerge from the chemical and neurophysiological substrate, and one may ascribe a certain unity to the actions of a particular agent over time; but no broader unity-producing context exists. Nature has no ground, no goal, no telos. We have seen above that broad naturalism can produce at best a regulative or asymptotic theory of freedom. Still, many advocates of a naturalistic worldview will respond that "nothing is missing," that a compatibilist freedom within the chain of natural causality is all one needs.

It is, I believe, not possible to prove that "broad naturalism" and its theory of freedom *must be* supplemented. But for those of us who are struck by the limitations of compatibilist theories of freedom, the dimension of transcendence offers an important resource for supplementing the scientific results. It is valuable to ask how one might conceive this broader unity-producing context and what views of human agency and freedom it might produce.

Freedom, Ground, and the Emergence of Spirit

What happens, then, if the process of self-transcending emergence is iterated one level further than we have so far considered? Karl Rahner formulates the question powerfully:

> [W]hat is the basic act of man into which quite absolutely he can synthesise his whole nature and life, the act which can embrace everything and incorporate everything within itself, everything which goes under the name of man and the life or man, happiness and despair, everyday life and starlight hours, sin and redemption, part and present[?][15]

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It is not hard to describe what this step would mean. It would involve the person taking a stance vis-à-vis the whole of her existence. According to Rahner's famous thesis, influenced by Heidegger: "Man is a transcendent being insofar as all of his knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of 'being' as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality."[16] If one assumes the existence of this infinite dimension, "the movement of transcendence is not the subject creating its own unlimited space as though it had absolute power over being, but it is the infinite horizon of being making itself manifest" (34). Or, more fully:

> Whenever man in his transcendence experiences himself as questioning, as disquieted by the appearance of being, as open to something ineffable, he cannot understand himself as subject in the sense of an *absolute* subject, but only in the sense of one who receives being, ultimately only in the sense of grace. In this context "grace" means the freedom of the ground of being which gives being to man, a freedom which man experiences in his finiteness and contingency, and means as well what we call "grace" in a more strictly theological sense. (34)

One notices immediately that this notion of an openness toward a transcendent dimension of being produces a rather different anthropology than is produced by broad naturalism. Not only does the human person experience an "openness ... to being as such," but this openness is also constitutive of what it means to be a subject or "Spirit" in the complete sense of the term. For Rahner, "man is and remains a transcendent being, that is, he is that existent to whom the silent and uncontrollable infinity of reality is always present as mystery" (35).

Note that the possibility of this level or mode of being is not a datum of any empirical psychology but only emerges out of a broader context of analysis. Self-transcendence is a basic phenomenon of natural human existence. But only through careful metaphysical and theological reflection can one determine whether the drive toward self-transcendence is a meaningless byproduct of biology (say, of brain

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structure), an expression of human species being (Feuerbach) that is in the end "human, all too human" (Nietzsche), or whether it reveals something fundamental about the telos toward which our existence points. By itself the context of scientific explanation is unable to resolve this question. In the sciences explaining some behavior means listing the constraints and causal influences that made it more likely to occur than other behaviors. But this method does not provide a framework within which free action can be thought in any sense stronger than the regulative or "asymptotic" sense. As Karl Jaspers notes,

> If one limits one's evidence to actual experience, there is no freedom and no existential communication. But both produce something that can become the object of experience, even though its appearance cannot be sufficiently explained from this perspective. This process points toward the genesis of a freedom which, in itself, is comprehensible and compelling when we are able to participate in it.[17]

Freedom in the full sense can thus never be given within the context of finite explanations. We might therefore conceive it, following Rahner, as "the capacity for the eternal."[18]

What conceptual framework can do justice to this sense of freedom? The human capacity for transcendence either becomes empty transcendence — transcendence "away from..." but toward nothing — or it is transcendence toward some really existing level of reality. What is the minimum description of the type of reality that could in principle make freedom possible? Only in the relationship of a finite being to its infinite ground, rather than through its relationships to other parts of its finite causal network, could it be said to be free in a more-than-compatibilist sense. Karl Rahner interprets this relation in explicitly theological terms: "true freedom is born from the transcendence of man, hence it is freedom before and towards God."[19]

From a theological standpoint, the existence of (at least some) agents within the world cannot be fully explained only in terms of the overall network of finite causes; the ontological ground of finite existence as such must also be included. If one thinks of

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this ground as not less than personal, one must ask about God's overarching goal in the process of emergence. Apparently the goal was that organisms would eventually emerge that were complex enough that they would be able to raise the question of the ultimate meaning of their existence and to freely enter into relationship with the ground of their existence. Seen theologically, then, the purpose of the finite world as a whole and God's purpose in creating it was to produce agents capable of this free response to the ground of their existence.

It is an interesting thought experiment to reflect on what conditions would have to be fulfilled in order for this free response to be possible. I propose four. At a minimum, (1) the agents must have some sort of identity that continues over time; (2) they must be able to form some idea of the transcendent ground of their existence; (3) they must be able to take a conscious position regarding their existence as a whole; and (4) this position-taking must be of a different order and hence follow a different logic than the order of finite causes. What does this last condition mean? It turns crucially on the distinction between ground and cause. The ground of something is never a cause in the sense of being another constraining factor within the order of causes. It is logically distinct from that order in that it serves as the ontological basis thanks to which the finite order exists in the first place.

What picture of human being emerges from the theological notion of a freedom oriented toward transcendence? In the context of broad naturalism, humans are agents responding to the sum total of causal influences at each individual moment; each response creates new causal conditions to which we then respond anew. The order of finite causes does not provide the conceptual resources for introducing an enduring subject or spirit, but only subject-like or spirit-like predicates.[20] By contrast, the hypothesis of a transcendent divine ground of human existence allows one to employ the *imago Dei* correlation that we discussed above. What is asserted theologically of God suggests an analogous structure for finite agents; that is, it supports the ascription to them of an enduring nature as well. This result is particularly important because, as far as I can see, without the notion of a transcendent ground there is no way to move from the science and philosophy of subjective moments of consciousness to the (not

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only regulative but) actual existence of an enduring human subject. It is *this* subject that is understood to be free in its fundamental response to the ground of its being. As Rahner writes, "Freedom only exists ... because there is spirit understood as transcendence."[21]

The more exact theories of the nature of this subject vary widely between (e.g.) the idea of an eternally existing subject-qua-substance in the Patristic or Thomistic sense, the "substance qua subject" in German Idealism, and (say) process theology. But all three approaches appear to be sufficient for a robust theory of human freedom.[22] What process, Hegelian, and substance-based views share in common is the sense that there must be *some* agent capable of taking a perspective on the sum total of its causal influences. The approach to the free will dilemma implied by this answer is *agent causation*.[23] The nature of person-being is different from other kinds of being, as J. B. Metz argues, "A person is thus never only 'nature,' but always already 'person'; never simply 'there,' but always already present. His being is never purely thing-like [*sachhaft*]; rather, he is constantly producing what he is."[24]

Metaphysicians and theologians have argued in great detail about exactly how similar and how different human and divine agency should be. For present purposes we will have to be satisfied with a somewhat more formal minimal condition: divine and human agency cannot be identical, such that the difference between Creator and created is lost, because then freedom would disappear; yet they also cannot be completely different from one another, because then the inference to an enduring human agent would be invalid.[25] Moreover, if these two types of agency are construed as diametrically opposed, all *imago Dei* correlations fail. In that case any inferences from the one to the other become invalid; there can be no comprehension of the one based on the other. It would follow that humans can only be either passive recipients of divine revelation or hapless victims of Feuerbachian projection (depending on one's starting perspective).

Implications for Theological Anthropology

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I have shown that only in relation to a level of being that is different from the finite order of causes can a robust enough sense of personal agency be maintained that one can coherently speak of free causal agency. And it turns out that "free action" just is the descriptor for actions that stem from personal agency. This is a core metaphysical and theological postulate; it receives its probative weight from the overall plausibility of the resulting theological picture and the strength of the theological anthropology that it produces.

The actions of a human subject, insofar as they are free, are concerned with the nature of her agency, and hence her personhood, as a whole. Since this freedom is constituted in relation to the ground of her being, it is by definition not determined by (or definable in terms of) the finite causal order, for the relationship finite-infinite pertains to an order of reality not fully captured by that order. In theistic terms, God is "present unthematically in every act of freedom as its supporting ground and ultimate orientation."[26]

This is the level of analysis at which freedom must be parsed theologically. (It would be interesting to compare this argument with the notion of "infinite responsibility" in Levinas, where the infinite call stems from one's neighbor as "totally other."[27]) J. B. Metz correctly notes

> Theological anthropology views freedom as a basic and unchanging characteristic of human being. In and through freedom the partnership with God is actualized – a partnership that always lays claim on the entire person and concerns her unconditionally. In short, for theology freedom represents the origin of human being itself as unitary and complete.[28]

In the final analysis, then, the concepts of uniquely personal being and of freedom are correlated with and mutually imply one another. The constitution of one's personhood as a whole requires a relation to the ground of one's being, a relation that is free because not constrained by any finite object; conversely, the existence of full freedom in this sense helps to constitute full human personhood. Thus Metz concludes, "Freedom,

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understood transcendentally, reveals itself as the ability for human existence to become complete and unified. Freedom is the (internal) ground of *completeness* that gathers together and the (internal) ground of the *unity* of human existence; it is that which unifies."[29]

As we have seen, this position naturally leads one to a hypothesis about the divine creative intent. Theologians maintain that God intended beings to arise who would manifest this form of freedom; God thus built structures and laws into the initial conditions of the universe that would eventually lead, with certainty or with a high degree of probability, to this outcome. A. N. Whitehead beautifully describes the resulting cosmology and view of evolution:

> The religious insight is the grasp of this truth: That the order of the world, the depth of reality of the world, the value of the world, in its whole and in its parts, the beauty of the world , the zest of life, the peace of life, and the mastery of evil, are all bound together — not accidentally, but by reason of this truth: *that the universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom*, and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but that this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the completed ideal harmony, which is God.[30]

The Unity of the Person, Moral Responsibility, and the "Basic Orientation"

What happens when one attempts to work out the form of moral or ethical responsibility that corresponds to this self-transcending openness toward the ground of our being as finite agents?[31] A number of theologians have defined this freedom and its resulting responsibility in terms of a "fundamental option" or *Grundorientierung*. Thus Jacques Maritain explores "la dialectique immanente du premier acte de liberté" (the immanent dialectic of the first act of freedom).[32] Now one may be skeptical that this orientation "through which a new basic direction is imposed upon my life" (88) can be identified with *one specific act*, and in particular with the first free act of a child, as Maritain claims. Still, the broader possibility remains that a person can turn her attention beyond particular finite goods and goals to the question of the ground of her

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very being as finite. It was in this sense that Rahner spoke of "the total self-understanding and the radical self-expression, the *option fondamentale*."[33] Leher describes this option as that of

> an *Optio fundamentalis*, a "basic decision" [*Grundentscheidung*] of a free and responsible subject.... This theory emerges out of on going dialogue with Neo-Scholasticism, though it seeks to overcome its essentialism; and it remains obligated to personalist thought, to transcendental philosophy, and to hermeneutics. The theory of a "basic decision" also arises out of the theology of grace, which means that it connects with a tradition in which one seeks to think together dogmatics and morality.[34]

Bernard Häring famously linked the idea of a fundamental option to Abraham Maslow's notion of a "peak experience." Maslow had identified certain experiences or moments that accompany (and contribute to) the highest level of personal self-actualization. Häring added the condition that a peak experience is "an expression that reaches the depth of the person and entails a profound realization that this is the right direction in life. It is an experience of wholeness and of gratitude, a new way of knowing that self-realization is possible only in self-transcendence. It is a 'yes' to the scale of values, arising from the depth and giving direction to the whole of life."[35] In such moments of self-actualization the focus is on the quest for the deepest unity of one's selfhood, despite the many masks that persons wear and the constant change that characterizes our existence.[36]

Contrary to some of these presentations, the notion of an *option fondamentale* should turn less on identifying one specific and unique experience that stands apart from all others, in which "a subject as such experiences himself" or knows an "original and indissoluble unity"[37] (though in some cases subjects do speak of this unity in the context of a specific experience), and more on the quest for wholeness or completeness itself as a basic dimension of human existence. Karl Rahner, despite recognizing that freedom can't be discovered "as an individual datum of my categorical experience in time and space," still wishes to speak of "an a priori, transcendental experience of my freedom"

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(36). One critic comments,

> ...one can never be completely certain about the level of freedom that particular moral actions, whether virtuous or vicious, engage... While one can never exercise transcendental freedom apart from concrete action, even those actions in history that the agent perceives to be an exercise of freedom may not, in fact, engage transcendental freedom in a definitive way.[38]

The point is well taken. The goal is not to locate a specific religious experience within human experience that proves humans are free, but rather to identify a dimension or level at which — if it indeed exists — one can speak of a fundamental freedom. In Rahners's words, freedom involves the location where "a subjective and personal response to the infinite and the incomprehensible confronts this existent in his transcendence, and is either accepted or rejected.... When freedom is really understood, it is not the power to be able to do this or that, but the power to decide about oneself and to actualize oneself."[39] Since it may well be that no individual event or choice within life can meet these conditions, we should understand this as *transcendental freedom.*[40] Freedom in this sense "thus always concerns the person as such and as a whole."[41]

When freedom is understood as a "basic decision," it implies a "free, transcendental core orientation of the person (i.e., of the transcendental subject),"[42] a level or dimension of experience at which one's identity as a whole is at stake. Some have identified this dimension with a final orientation toward good or evil, a basic decision about one's eternal fate: "choose this day which way your soul shall go." But any possible integration with science requires a more metaphorical interpretation of the "soul" and the decision "it" makes. Whether at a single moment or over the course of one's life as a whole, one does determine one's identity: who one is, for what purpose or purposes one is living, toward which goals one is striving. Questions of the final identity of one's self *are* intrinsic to human existence and recur across ages and cultures. As Häring recognizes, "the fundamental option for the good and a profound experience of conscience are [both] distinguished by the dimension of totality; it is an experience that

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one's wholeness and all the basic relationships are at stake."[43] For "every free act has the tendency to grasp the totality of one's being and to express it" (111); thus "history, in each Now, in the *kairós*, stands before transcendence" (131).

Note how closely bound together are the anthropology and the theory of freedom that result from this conception of a self-transcendence toward an ultimate ground:

> The human person is that self-transcending spirit who in the act of knowing or willing implicitly experiences both itself as subject (that is, free) and something of the ultimate structure of reality.... [The] self-disposition, known as fundamental option, involves the subject's definitive acceptance or rejection of God by means of free, moral action.... The human experience of transcendence is ultimately a spiritual experience, or, in Christian terms, an experience of grace.[44]

The more strongly one specifies self-transcendence in terms of some specific theory about the goal toward which human existence is directed, the more detailed will be the theory of the human subject and of human freedom that results. Consider these four variants. At a minimal level, many today speak of a generic human spirituality. This way of speaking is fully consistent with a naturalistic and even deterministic perspective, since it requires only that there be a dimension or quality to human experience that they experience as "spiritual." One does not yet claim that (the source of) reality itself is ultimately spirit-like. Second, if one holds, more strongly, that self-transcendence has a *terminus ad quem*, an end or goal "toward which" it is directed (as in Schleiermacher's *Dialetics*), spirituality then becomes not only a *transcending out of* one's given context, but also a *transcending toward* an actually existing dimension of reality, which (theologically interpreted) is God, understood as the infinite ground of finite being. Enough freedom must be present to account for self-transcendence in this stronger sense. Third, when that toward which the whole person orients herself is specifically taken to be divine Spirit, then it is also natural to construe the *capacity* that transcends, the motor that drives the process, by analogy as human spirit. Traditional attributes of spirit, such as freedom and rationality, now can be attributed to human persons by means of the *imago Dei* analogy. A fourth level is reached when the entire

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process is explicitly affirmed to be created by God, whose goal is that individual agents might develop the capacities that are entailed by the *imago Dei* (e.g., the capacities of love, Christ-likeness, and genuine freedom) and who somehow guides the process whereby these agents emerge over history. This theological framework then gives rise to an explicitly theological anthropology in which categories such as the divine image, grace, and the gift of human freedom come to play a prominent role.

Conclusion[45]

In this paper I have developed a substantive theory of freedom, drawing on contemporary science, the *imago Dei* correlation, and a panentheistic model of the God-world relation. I argued that, if one assumes that there are qualities of ultimate reality that transcend the empirical givens of this world, then it is reasonable also to look for qualities of human beings that transcend their biological qualities. Of course, these qualities have arisen out of a specific biological-evolutionary history and are manifested in and through a body that continues to function according to biological principles. But the "whole" of human personhood and agency is more than this history of biological antecedents and necessary conditions. We found that the transcendental perspective, even in its general (not yet explicitly theological) sense of positing some ground of finite reality, already allows one to speak of the (pursuit of) qualities such as integration, self-actualization, and the sense of oneself as a free rational-moral agent. Seeking after qualities such as these correlates naturally with the quest for unified personhood, which ultimately requires reference to the infinite ground of our existence.

The result is all the more significant if, as I argued, natural emergence (or "broad naturalism") on its own does not support that attribution of freedom in anything more than a functionalist or regulative sense, viz. that humans act *as if* they were enduring subjects with such-and-such properties. Theological accounts of freedom, such as the one developed here, are among a rather small number of argument types that are able to move beyond that limitation. If there is a unity to the divine being as Spirit, and if humans are *imago Dei*, then one would naturally expect humans to possess a unity of spirit as well, even though the empirical sciences of human behavior on their own

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cannot differentiate between the actual existence of freedom and "acting as if" one were a free agent. From the theological standpoint, humans possess not only thoughts, feelings, and some form of personal agency,[46] but also "being-as-spirit," the ontological uniqueness of personal and spiritual being. The assertion of this "something more" to human agency turns essentially on a theological argument: God is an agent, so we are also; God is free, so we are also.

Without a doubt this argument form supplements *Theologie von unten* with an element of "theology from above," in an up-and-back movement of the sort that Wolfhart Pannenberg began to employ in 1970.[47] Having found reason "from below" to introduce the theological perspective, one then circles back from it to reinterpret the anthropological dimension in terms of one's new conclusions.

Given the past excesses of strong theologies from above, I should conclude by calling for a certain intellectual humility and caution. The Frankfurt theologian Hans Kessler gives powerful expression to the grounds for caution when he approaches the question of a comprehensive whole of reality:

> This would be a whole within which we always already find ourselves. For this reason we could not ever render it fully objective; in the best case we could only draw closer to it. We could only point outwards toward this most comprehensive whole from within, in a perspectival fashion. We could never encompass it, and hence we cannot undertake any sort of top-down deductions from the standpoint of the whole.[48]

When one forces the arrow of theology "from above" *too far downward* into the realm of the natural sciences, conflicts begin to arise that are at least methodological and epistemic, and that are not infrequently expressed also as substantive disagreements (one thinks in particular of the "intelligent design" movement). It is one thing for the theological dimension to *supplement* scientific study. But it is another matter altogether when theological or other metaphysically based arguments go head to head with well established scientific theories or with the fundamental commitments of scientific

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research, as occurs all too frequently today. In these cases the epistemic strengths of science should lead the theologians to tread softly. It is for this reason that I have not sought to deduce from this defense of transcendental freedom a full theology of men and women as eternal metaphysical subjects.

Endnotes

1. This paper was delivered as the 2007 Witherspoon Lecture at the Center for Theological Inquiry. I thank William Storrar, Director, and the Fellows at CTI for their hospitality and intense discussions during my stay at the Center. This paper conveys the central argument from chapters 4-6 of my *Die Frage nach der Freiheit. Biologie, Kultur und die Emergenz des Geistes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). The book will appear in English in late 2008 under the title *In Quest of Freedom: The Emergence of Spirit in the Natural World* Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht). I am grateful to Steven Knapp for detailed discussions of these topics, despite (or perhaps because of) our disagreements on the topic. I was first exposed to this entire debate during doctoral work with Wolfhart Pannenberg and wish to express here my gratitude to him for the challenge to develop a more strongly theological response to the problem of freedom.
2. Anthony Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 148.
3. Kenny, “”Freedom, Spontaneity and Indifference,” in Ted Honderich, ed., *Essays on Freedom of Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 87-104, quote 96, emphasis added.
4. For a summary of the main arguments against libertarianism or “incompatibilism,” see Kadri Vihvelin, “Arguments for Incompatibilism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/incompatibilism-arguments/>, verified October 27, 2007.
5. Ian T. Ramsey, *Freedom and Immortality* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 21.
6. I have dealt with these issues in some detail in *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
7. Paul Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* makes a powerful case for the importance of such correlations while avoiding the Feurbachian consequences; see e.g. the opening of vol. 1.
8. Something like this combination of humans understood in a “physicalist” context and God understood as pure Spirit appears to be the thesis of Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and of many of the essays in Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). More recently see Brown and Murphy, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
9. “Diese Unendlichkeit ist die schlechte oder negative Unendlichkeit, indem sie nichts ist als die Negation des Endlichen, welches aber ebenso wieder entsteht, somit ebensosehr nicht aufgehoben ist, — oder diese Unendlichkeit drückt nur das Sollen des Aufhebens des Endlichen aus” (G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse...*, § 94).
10. “Dieser Progreß ins Unendliche ist nun aber nicht das wahrhaft Unendliche, welches vielmehr darin besteht, in seinem Anderen bei sich selbst zu sein oder, als Prozeß ausgesprochen, in seinem Anderen zu sich selbst zu kommen” (ibid.).

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11. For more detail see John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), and Nicholas J. Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Of course, there are also important disanalogies between the two correlates. In the human case the qualities of conscious agency that are foundational for personhood emerge out of the biological, whereas for a divine being the essential qualities would pertain to its eternal or "primordial" nature (Whitehead). Thus humans are "always already" embodied, whereas God may or may not be always related to a world. The essential qualities of finite things are created — they are contingent and have an origin in time — whereas God's essential qualities would be uncreated, eternal, and necessary. Nonetheless, these differences do not obviate the usefulness of the *imago Dei* correlation, that is, the analogy between God's relationship to the finite world on the one hand, and the relationship of human persons to their biological nature, and hence to the world of causes, on the other.
12. For a summary and elaboration of the school of *philosophische Anthropologie* see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985).
13. Behavior that is not biologically mandated becomes random behavior.
14. Contrast this argument with the ascriptive argument: we are free as long as it makes sense to ascribe to us moral responsibility. But God holds us morally responsible. Therefore we must be free in whatever senses are necessary for us to be morally responsible. This argument may well be theologically valid, but it is not philosophically helpful. Cf. the argument in Plato's *Euthryphro*: good is what the gods demand.
15. Karl Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6 (New York: Seabury Press, [1969], 1974), 178-96, 187.
16. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 33.
17. Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (München, 1950), 274: "Wo Nachweis durch Erfahrung beginnt, da gibt es keine Freiheit und keine existentielle Kommunikation. Aber beide bringen hervor, was dann auch Gegenstand der Erfahrung wird, ohne als Erscheinung genügend erklärbar zu sein, und was dann Hinweis ist auf das Freiheitsgeschehen, das in sich, wo wir daran Anteil gewinnen, verständlich und bezwingend ist."
18. Rahner, *Grace in Freedom*, 214.
19. Rahner, "Origins of Freedom," a lecture to the Evangelischer Kirchentag, Cologne, July 29, 1965, first published in M. Horkheimer, K. Rahner and C. F. von Weizsacker, *Über die Freiheit* (1965), 27- 49. Available online at http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2079&C=1967, verified November 27, 2007.
20. See Clayton, *Mind and Emergence* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), chapter 4.
21. Karl Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6 (New York: Seabury Press, [1969], 1974), 178-96, 179; cf. *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd. 6 (Einsiedeln: Verlagsanstalt Benziger & Co), chapter 13.
22. Process thinkers insist just as vehemently and with strong arguments that the actual occasion is free in that it adds a new valuation, a new creative response, to the sum total of its influencing factors. This seems right; it doesn't seem necessary to add in an eternal ontological ground, a substance, for human action. It's not clear why a substance-with-personal-qualities which is extended over time is a *better* way to do justice to the experience of freedom than any of the other alternatives. Whereas substance views might make it easier to hold the present agent responsible for actions carried out in the past — a more difficult ascription for process thinkers — it is in fact a separate task to provide justifications for punishing agents for their past actions; the more important first step is to show the possibility of freedom even at a given moment.

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23. Cf. the Boston Personalists, who took personal action or agency as a brute metaphysical given, not derivative from a causal framework outside the individual. See also Timothy O'Conner, "Causality, Mind, and Free Will," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14: *Action and Freedom* (2000): 105-17.
24. Johannes Baptist Metz, "Freiheit als philosophisch-theologisches Grenzproblem," in Metz et al, eds., *Gott in Welt: Festgabe für Karl Rahner*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 1: 287-314, 292: "Der Mensch ist also nie nur 'Natur', sondern immer auch schon 'Person', nie einfach 'vorfindlich', sonder immmer schon 'befindlich'; sein Sein ist nie rein sachhaft, er ist in seinem Sein vielmehr immer schon vor sich selbst gebracht."
25. There *is* no correlation if God is identical to the world. Making God utterly different from the sort of agents we encounter in the world, that is, not associated with body in any way, also vitiates the correlation. I thus advocate a panentheistic theology in which God is social in the eternal divine nature, and is thus in Godself an interpersonal reality in a way that gives content to the notion of divine personal agency apart from world.
26. Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," 180.
27. "This finite freedom is not primary, is not initial; but it lies in an infinite responsibility where the other is not other because he strikes up against and limits my freedom, but where he can accuse me to the point of persecution, because the Other, absolutely other, is another one (*autrui*). That is why finite freedom is not simply an infinite freedom operating in a limited field" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, tr. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981), 124; cf. "the infinite freedom of the equal," 53.
28. Metz, 289: "Die theologische Anthropologie sieht die Freiheit als eine ursprüngliche und unveränderliche Auszeichnung des Menschseins. In ihr und an ihr verwirklicht sich die menschliche Gottespartnerschaft, die jeweils den ganzen Menschen in Anspruch nimmt und ihn unbedingt betrifft. Freiheit gilt darum der Theologie ... als Aufgang des einen und ständig ganzen Menschseins selbst."
29. Metz, 299 and n. 32: "Die transzendental verstandene Freiheit zeigt sich einmal als *Vermögen zur Ganzheit und Einheit menschlichen Daseins.... Der versammelnde (innere) Grund der Ganzheit und der einigende (innere) Grund der Einheit menschlichen Daseins ist die Freiheit*."
30. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 126f.
31. Rahner's theology "is grounded in a commitment to the primacy of the subject's experience of God as holy and gracious mystery" (Brian Linnane, "Ethics," in Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005], 158-73, quote 163).
32. Jacques Maritain, " La dialectique immanente du premier acte de liberté," *Nova et Vetera* 20 (1945): 218-235, reprinted in Maritain, *Raison et raisons* (Paris, 1947), 131-165; cf. Maritain, "La fin dernière et la dialectique immanente du premier acte de liberté. La notion de norme," in Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale* (Paris 1949), 119-142. Note that this view actually enjoys a much older heritage; cf. E. L. Miller, "The Fundamental Option in the Thought of St. Augustine," *Downside Review* 95 (1977), 271-283.
33. Rahner, *Grace in Freedom*, 213; cf. Rahner, *Grundintention und sittliches Tun* (Freiburg/Mr., 1966).
34. Stephan P. Leher, "Moraltheologie heute: Verantwortung für Glauben und Gesellschaft," <http://theol.uibk.ac.at/itl/21.html>, verified March 15, 2008.
35. See chap. 5, "Fundamental Option," in Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Leity,* vol. 1: *General Moral Theology* (Middlegreen, Slough, UK: St Paul Publications, 1978), 163-222, 180. The allusion is to Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1973). Häring argues that "the healthy fundamental option is openness to the Other and the others" and that it is an expression of "basic freedom" (167). He adds that "fundamental option is confirmed in its essence only when the person, as a person, commits himself to the Other, to the value person. In the fundamental option, human freedom manifests itself as 'the capacity for the eternal'" (168, quoting Rahner, *Grace in*

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Freedom, 214).
36. I am here indebted to Wolfhart Pannenberg's insightful comments on the quest for personal unity in his *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985).
37. Rahner, *Foundations*, 37.
38. Linnane, 167. Rahner actually should have conceded this point, since he writes at one point that "real transcendence ... can be approached asymptotically at most" (35).
39. Rahner, *Foundations*, 38. Thus Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hinnes write that "Rahner worked with the category of 'fundamental option' to offer a context for understanding moral decision making in light of one's whole disposition before God" ("Introduction," in Marmion and Hines, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 7). Note that this position leads immediately to an ethic. "Rahner characterizes both the transcendental experience of fundamental option and actions of neighbor-love as kenotic or self-emptying experiences.... It is ... a complete self-surrender to the holy mystery of God and God's purposes" (Linnane, in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 161). The essence of a fundamental option is "kenotic self-disposal" (ibid., 164).
40. The fundamental option provides a "more nuanced understanding of the ways in which categorical choices or actions engage transcendental freedom" (ibid., 160). It lies behind Rahner's theological anthropology of humans as "hearers of the Word": "As 'hearer' the subject of transcendental experience is understood to be open to divine self-revelation; a divine self-revelation which always demands a response by means of categorical action" (160).
41. Rahner, *Foundations,* 38.
42. Walter Schaupp, <http://www-theol.uni-graz.at/cms/dokumente/10001105/fc5d8f33/folss04.pdf>, verified May 21, 2006.
43. Bernard Häring, 166. Cf. Häring, *Das Gesetz Christi. Moraltheologie, dargestellt für Priester und Laien* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Erich Wewel Verlag, 1956), 104. Note that Häring distinguishes between "dem guten Willen allein" (Kant) as "Träger des sittlich Guten" and the "höheren" notion of "die Gesamtperson" (ibid., 111).
44. Linnane, 158.
45. What is different about this view is its combination of an emergentist perspective with a theistically based axiology (doctrine of value). Those who accept a theologically based theory of value often do so with a more fixed anthropology. Conversely, those who advocate an emergentist anthropology, such as Samuel Alexander in his Gifford Lectures 1918-1920, make the divine a fully emergent phenomenon in such a way that rules out any grounding function for God. My suggestion is that a combination of the two perspectives of the sort that I have sketched provides a more fruitful compromise. It allows one to draw deeply on the knowledge of human origins and biological functioning that the evolutionary sciences and neurophysiology provide, but it also allows one to retain those Platonic elements (God as ground and examplar of the Good) that have so deeply influenced Christian theology.
46. See *Mind and Emergence*, chap. 4-5.
47. See Pannenenberg, "Nachwort" to *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 2nd edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).
48. Hans Kessler, *Den verborgenen Gott suchen. Gottesglaube in einer von Naturwissenschaften und Religionskonflikten geprägten Welt* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 61.

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