

The Ascension as Ultimate Transcendence

I. Introduction

1. More philosophical than substantial: aiming at a **philosophical** understanding of **transcendence** in order to get a deeper **theological** understanding of **Ascension**
2. Zooming in on title: from 1) Transcendence via 2) Ultimate to 3) Ascension

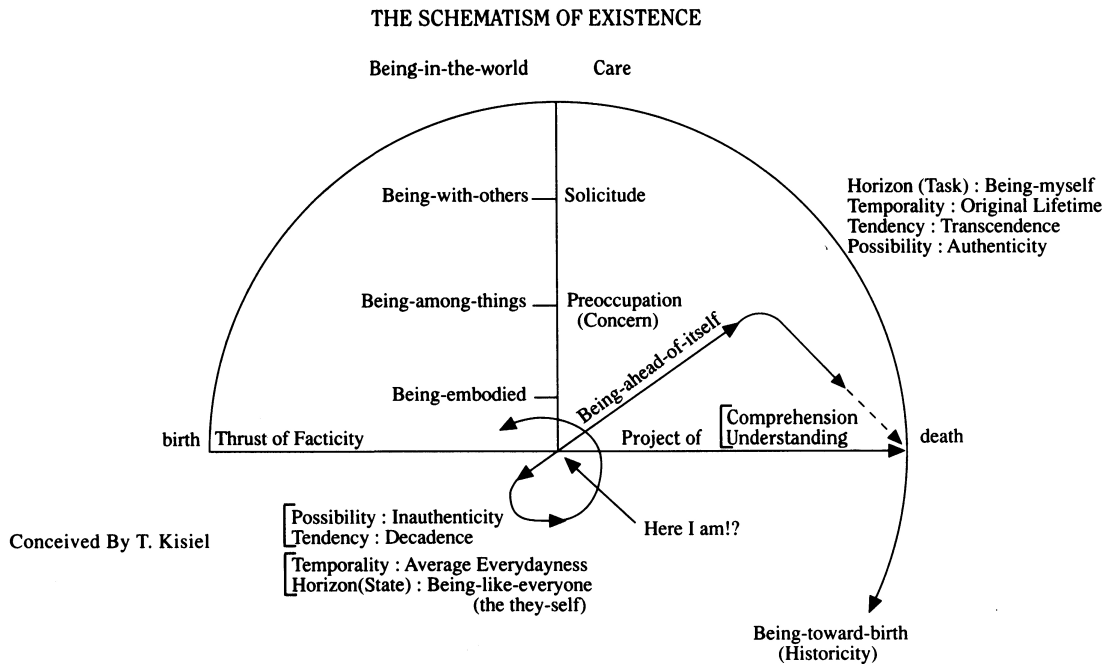
II. Transcendence

1. Transcendence contrasted with decadence on diagonal of basic tension. Direction of decision in moments of crisis or limit situations, when called forth out of 'everydayness' (neutral mode). The 'how' of dealing with non-routine situations, the unknown (health-issues--dysfunctional things--social breakdown--natural disasters).
2. The Act of Transcendence as contrasted with Decadence

Tendency	Decadence	Transcendence
Possibility	In-authenticity	Authenticity
Temporality	Average Everydayness	Original Lifetime
Horizon	Being-like-everyone	Being-myself
Self	Mass consciousness	Individualization
Whole/Part dynamic	Fragmentation	Integration
Mood	Boredom	Anxious concern
Direction	Tranquilization	Intensification
Behavior	Conventional	Post-conventional
Ego	Ego-centered	Ego-watchful/transcending
Language	Public, idle talk	Philosophical, poetic, creative
Being-towards-death	Evasion/denial	Proper anticipation
Metaphysical ultimate (according to one's tradition)	Second Death/Hell/Avici/ Earth/Ignorance	Ascension/Heaven/Moksha/ Nirvana/ Enlightenment

3. Dynamic context or "The (Spatio-Temporal) Schematism of Existence" (from Kisiel 1994)

- a. Spatial Axis: body - things - people - world
Concentric circles of ever more inclusive realms of 'facticities' and their modes of care: body-care--preoccupation--circumspection--care
- b. Time Axis: birth - Here/Now/I (Dasein!?) - death
Contrast between 'thrust of facticity' (past) and 'project of understanding' (future), within the extremes of birth and death.
- c. Diagonal Axis: The Axis of *Decision* – Being-ahead-of-itself.
Moment of *phronetic* insight (present) in the middle, appropriating the past in a moment of decision directed to the future.



4. The diagram is “to display the basic outlines and inner articulation of the conceptual scaffolding of *Being and Time*” (Kisiel, 1984). It is a radical attempt to rethink traditional philosophical approaches to Human beings (*Dasein*), Being (*Sein*), time and history and the history of philosophy. The aims: An *a priori* transcendental phenomenological description of the essential structure of human beings.
5. Comprehensive context:
 - a. Care (for body, things, people, world)
 - b. Meaningfulness (as the way we experience the world)
 - c. **Fundamental and leading question:** what is the ontological status of personhood: What is a person? What is the self? What kind of being is that being that says "Here I am"?
6. **Ontology:** a **doctrine of being** which gives a framework of interpretation with profound and far-reaching consequences for the way we see 1) the universe, 2) ourselves and 3) the way we think we obtain knowledge about both. Mostly **derived** from our understanding of **non-human** beings/things/products that we are familiar with:
 - a. Aristotle: the universe is one great **living organism of forming matter** (recently revived by Rupert Sheldrake in his thesis of **morphic resonance** within a **morphogenetic field**)
 - b. Descartes: one giant **mechanical clockwork**
 - c. Leibniz: **Conglomeration of Monads** that reflect in different ways the rest of the universe (recently revived by the scientific understanding of holographic photography. See Bohm's thought on the **holographic universe** and mind)
 - d. Newton: giant causal system of **interacting gravitating corpuscular entities**
 - e. Computer-age: the universe and the mind as one **data-processing machine**

All these ontologies are **inadequate** to understand the **human** being. And psychology and theology will not do either, because those are also profoundly affected/infected with '**alien**' ontological notions.

Phenomenology tries to arrive at an understanding of the "issue itself" without help of **imported concepts** from realms that are **different** from the human. The two big philosophers blazing the trail in this direction were Edmund Husserl and his erstwhile student Martin Heidegger.

These ontologies, which are in fact **pre-judgments**, therefore have to be **suspended**, **bracketed**, or more violently, **destroyed**, in order to open up the possibility for a more adequate, originary interpretation of our own being.

Key methodological issues and terms will be left open, like bracketing, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, categorical intuition, and formal indication. Presenting only some of the results of these investigations.

8. The Realm of the Transcendental as contrasted with the Metaphysical

Concept	Transcendental	Metaphysical
Discipline	Philosophy	Theology
Preference	Phenomenology	Theosophy
Ontology	Fundamental	Founded
Relation	Metaphysically neutral	Transcendentally clarified
Subject:	Origins	Ultimates
	Foundations	Super-structure
	A priori possibility conditions	Ways of actualization
Access	Insight	Faith
Examples:	Decadence	Second Death/Hell/Avici
	Transcendence	Ascension/Heaven/Nirvana
	Being-towards-death	Demise/portal to heaven or hell/reincarnation/
	Deficiency of Being	Sin/Karma/Maya/Desire
	Call of conscience	Soul/conditioning/Higher Self/Guru/God/Being
Some representatives	Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, Krishnamurti	Plato, Hegel, Blavatsky, Leadbeater

9. The Property of Being Transcendent as contrasted to Immanent in Relation to Consciousness.

- a. To complete the trio of terms, which have their root in the term *transcend* (i.e. **transcendence**, **transcendental** and **transcendent**), the last one, **transcendent**, here presented in contrast to *immanent*.
- b. Transcend (from Latin *trans scando*: climbing beyond): To rise above or beyond; to be or go beyond the grasp of comprehension of; to surpass, outgo, excel, exceed. (Webster)
- c. Point 9 not essential here.

	Transcendent	Immanent
Property of:	Counterstances	Phenomena
	Objects, Things	Structures of consciousness
Acts	The 'what' of acts	The 'how' of acts
Access	Experience, experiment	Reflection/formal indication
Discipline	Science, Theology	Transcendental Philosophy
Examples:	The experienced	The experiencing
	The seen	The seeing
	The sacred	Faith

III. The Ultimate

1. The concept of the ultimate will be introduced here in connection with **faith** and **concern** by way of the definition given by the theologian Paul Tillich, who read quite some Heidegger:

"Faith as ultimate concern"

2. He opened his classic "The Dynamics of Faith" with the following:

"Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern."

3. Tillich is not so much concerned with the **content** of faith, but more with the **act**. It's about the **'how,'** not the **'what.'** The what could be anything: one's family, one's country, one's holy book, one's spiritual teacher, personal salvation, etc., though he would say sometimes that faith is being concerned with **ultimate reality**.

His study is therefore more a **phenomenology** of faith than a **theological explication** or defense of a specific faith. You could say Tillich deals with the a priori transcendental possibility conditions of faith, or the essential structure of the conscious act of faith, which necessarily underlies any faith whatsoever.

4. Faith is a centered **act** of the total **personality**

5. There is also a **passive** element in this dynamics: faith is "the experience of **being grasped** by the power of an ultimate concern."

6. Ultimate concern can, when strong enough, **subsume** and **integrate** any and all other cares under its wing. (See diagram)

7. With a little goodwill we can arrive at the following statement: Faith is a centered **act** of the total **personality**, of **being grasped** by the power of **ultimate concern** with **ultimate reality**.

8. How the 'what' of faith is filled in is dependent on one's native or adopted metaphysical/theological tradition, which we touched upon previously as "the metaphysical ultimate according to one's tradition," which might be Ascension/Heaven/Moksha/ Nirvana/ Enlightenment, which have to be understood with their polar opposites of Second Death/Hell/Avici/ Earth/Ignorance.

Tradition	Positive ultimate	Negative ultimate	Realized person
Christianity	Heaven	Hell	Saint (Cathol.)
Theosophy	Enlightenment	Disconnection	Mahatma
I AM Faith	Ascension	Second death	Ascended Master
Hinduism	Moksha	Avici	Jivanmukti
Buddhism	Nirvana	Wheel of birth & death	Nirvani

9. And here we make the transition to the **last** term in the title: **Ascension**

IV. Ascension

1. Will skip the Biblical origins of the term, except to note that according to Elizabeth Clare Prophet Enoch, Elijah and Jesus experienced the ascension.
2. In Blavatskyan Theosophy the idea is there in germination, though hard to find. I found her referring to certain saints, that, when "unburdened of their **terrestrial** tabernacles, their freed souls, henceforth **united** forever with their spirits, rejoin the **whole shining host**, which is bound together in one spiritual solidarity of thought and deed, and called the '**anointed.**'" (IU II, p. 159).

3. Translated into more modern terms:

The whole shining host	The Great White Brotherhood
Terrestrial tabernacles	The lower bodies
The 'anointed'	The ascended ones or the Ascended Masters

4. There exists some **confusion** about the idea whether the Theosophical Masters can only be **flesh-and-blood** Masters or can also be in a **non-physical** state. I think the previous quote makes clear that Blavatsky herself believed the latter.
5. Regarding the **difference** I wrote in a pamphlet titled "The Masters and Their Emissaries" the following: "For practical purposes the difference between an Unascended Master and an Ascended one is not very great. Both can work in the physical as well as in the spiritual realm and both have a wide array of occult powers at their command to guide Their pupils and help mankind. The difference is that an Unascended Master has its base of operations in a physical body and an Ascended Master in a spiritual body."
6. From the Theosophist Leadbeater we receive a quite worked out presentation on the Path towards liberation in his *The Masters and the Path*. He identifies five major initiations, of which the last one is the Ascension, and lines them all up with the major tests undergone by Jesus in quite public way.
 1. 1st Initiation: Birth
 2. 2nd initiation: Baptism
 3. 3rd initiation: Transfiguration
 4. 4th initiation: Crucifixion and Resurrection
 5. 5th initiation: **Ascension**
7. Definition from *Foundations of the Path* by Elizabeth Clare Prophet: "Ascension: The ritual whereby the soul **reunites** with the spirit of the living God, the I AM Presence. The ascension is the **culmination** of the soul's God-victorious sojourn in time and space. ... The reunion with God in the ascension, signifying the ends of the rounds of karma and rebirth and the return to the Lord's glory, is the goal of life for the sons and daughters of God."

In this tradition, also called "The Ascended Master Groups," the concentration is on leading a life such that one becomes a '**candidate** for the Ascension' by **shedding** all kinds of bad habits and **tuning** into one's Higher Self

V. Concluding remarks

1. I referred to phenomenology--being transcendental philosophy--that its **role** in connection to metaphysics is of possible **clarification** and **correction**. To be clear, philosophy can **not** correct one's faith **content-wise**. It is--as stated--metaphysically **neutral**. The correction it can deliver is about the **way** one's faith is **grounded** in one's own life, whether it is **authentically lived** and understood or **used** instrumentally as a **prop** of some sorts. At the same time philosophy has to **correct itself** and be ever **watchful** that its own endeavor doesn't fall victim to the same tendency of decadence and starts **meddling** where it can and may not do so.

2. To tie it all together in a last convoluted and long sentence:

By a) **understanding** and **intensification** of the always already inherent possibility of transcendence within one's life; b) by **appropriating** the Theosophical/I AM Faith tradition in an authentic **enduring** insight; and c) by being **grasped** by its **ultimate** concern for one's own and humanity's possible Ascension, one can become a **candidate** for the Ascension, and, after death, possibly going through the **irreversible** initiation of the Ascension.

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