

Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language. Langdon Gilkey. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969.

PART TWO: THE RENEWAL OF GOD LANGUAGE

Chapter ONE: Negative Thoughts on Methodology

Task = a *hermeneutic of secular experience*.

To investigate in a broad range of secular experience what function and use, and therefore what meaningfulness and intelligibility, the realm of discourse called 'religious language' may have.

Philosophy of religion as a logical base for Christian theology.

For four reasons we must move beyond ordinary language philosophy (though it does give us clues as to how to proceed; cf. chapter two):

1. Language philosophy *assumes* that a particular language game is in actual practice a way that people talk and communicate with one another.
2. In our secular age, 'religious language' is *not* ordinarily used.
3. In our day, 'religious language' has become 'Church language' and, ergo, analysis of it cannot quell our questions whether or not the whole structure of Church discourse has any use and so meaning in life generally.
4. In our day, religious language does not even communicate within its own community.

Two interrelated elements of 'pure phenomenology' make its application in our case difficult:

1. Nothing outside the direct manifold of experience, no 'transcendent factors,' can be dealt with by 'pure phenomenology'.
2. Phenomenology abstracts from the historical and unique character of the referent of experience, that through which the divine manifests itself.

Chapter TWO: The Possibility of Religious Discourse in a Secular Age

Five 'secular' assumptions (concerning method) which (a) will be useful in establishing the meaningfulness and importance of religious discourse in a secular age, and (b) are not hopelessly out of touch with ordinary experience as to make our project useless:

1. The self-understanding of modern man ("the secular spirit") is separable from and is in visible tension with his actual existence.

Developments of modern life have not made the radical difference on the level of man's existence that the self-understanding of modern man presupposes.

Religious discourse can be defended as meaningful by showing that it provides the only means through which we can thematize and symbolize the felt and lived character of our existence.

- a. Relativity

A non-secular dimension in our experience appears in the lived character of secular life; the *ultimate presupposition* for dealing with the ordinary realities we meet (a final *limit* and a demand).

b. Autonomy

The optimistic vision of 'man come of age' has been disproven in experience.

Our control over both our own actions and the forces that determine us is real but exceedingly fragmentary.

A secular age is prone to a dialectic of great hope and great despair:

- ◆ Optimistic self-confidence;
- ◆ Loss of confidence, with no answers to be found in a world of flux.

We must uncover those aspects of daily experience which the secular mood has overlooked, and consequently has not thematized.

2. Analysis of secular experience can at best be only a prolegomenon to systematic theology as a whole, but not a direct part of systematic theology (concern is for meaning, not validity).

Eradication of a sense of meaninglessness of religious language.

Attempt to exhibit the intelligibility of meaningfulness of the language game of religious discourse by showing its potential usage in certain specific sorts of situations, and so the relevance of its symbolic forms to ranges of common human experience.

3. Affirmation of the *experiential meaning of meaning*.

Words represent the *interaction of symbols* to our *felt experience*, the symbol providing thematic and so communicable form to the stream of experience; they arise in a *community* of discourse.

The analysis of the meaning of ordinary language points in three ways beyond the question of linguistic usage to the question of the relation of linguistic symbols to experience:

- a. A word is used in ordinary language because it is an effective and usable symbol for some aspect of common, shared experiences of our human being in the world and among others.
- b. The meaningfulness assumed in the case of words with 'ordinary' usage consists in the functioning of these symbols in thematizing the shared experiences of the community that uses them.
- c. Even though commonly used, the religious language that is currently used in the Churches is empty and meaningless, for its symbols are symbols of no experience and so of nothing real or relevant.

Meaning is most fundamentally the product of a relation of a symbol to felt or immediate experiencing as a whole, to the *Lebenswelt* in which man finds himself experiencing.

Relation to the felt meanings of experiencing replaces the criteria of objective verification or falsification as the empirical anchor of the meaningfulness of symbolic forms that are in fact in ordinary usage.

Method = a phenomenological hermeneutic of experience.

Ontic rather than ontological analysis.

4. Phenomenological examination of ordinary human life to find those regions of common human experience to which religious discourse is appropriate.

Most significant goal of the phenomenological movement: to provide a method that will (a) eradicate our normal, cultural prejudices in order that (b) new or neglected phenomena, aspects of experience as it actually is, may be seen, appropriated, and comprehended.

Phenomenological analysis is based on the affirmation that an analysis of prelinguistic experience by reflection is possible.

Hermeneutical phenomenology seeks to bring to expression the characteristic structures of man's immediate awareness of himself as a concrete, contingent being in interaction with the world.

Hermeneutical process of investigation: our establishment of the presence of a dimension of ultimacy in ordinary experience by means of an analysis of our relevant experiences, moods, and behaviour that make manifest this dimension, rests solely on our 'seeing' for ourselves that we do experience this dimension, that it does in fact appear in its strange way in the experience of all of us.

5. 'Religious discourse' = the religious usage of ordinary language.

As intelligible religious usage of language is an unusual and *strange* use of words.

"If we are to be clear on what differentiates the use of words and symbols in religion from the empirical, mathematical, moral, existential, and aesthetic uses of them, the 'language games' of ordinary experience, and what makes each of these usages slightly different when they appear within the context of religious discourse, we must discover what areas of experience religious language as a whole intends to symbolize and thematize; secondly, we must discover how these characteristic assertions of religious language are related to these other ordinary forms of speech."

- a. The symbols of religious language have a double intentionality:
 - I. An ordinary object, event, or person;
 - II. The dimension of sacrality, infinity, ultimacy, and unconditionedness manifest in and through this finite medium.
- b. Abstractive language is a vehicle of a language full of assertions about a removed, hidden, or different character of reality.
 - Narrative, mythical, philosophical forms.
- c. Religious language involves within its scope the existential language of commitment, with models for our significant behavior.

Religious language is concerned with that which transcends and so undergirds the ordinary sequences and relations of life.

“The meaningfulness of a mode of speech is established so long as we can exhibit by analysis the general rules and patterns of this usage, the ranges of experience which these symbols clarify, and some legitimate and useful means of validating what assertions are made therein.”

All religious discourse has three characteristic features which discriminate it from other types of language:

- a. Double intentionality;
- b. Concerned with ultimate issues of life;
- c. Provides crucial models or norms by which life is directed and judged, and so by which culture as a whole is itself guided and assessed.

The region of experience to which religious language refers is best indicated by four words:

- ◆ Source
- ◆ Ground
- ◆ Horizon
- ◆ Limit

Religious language points to and seeks to symbolically describe the ultimate contours of the ultimate horizon or our common human being in the world.

There are, in general, four ‘situations’ where this dimension of ultimacy appears in ordinary experience:

- i. Where the foundation of our being, or our meanings and our values, appear to us in the ‘given’ which we do not create or control but which creates us and so represents the ground and limits of our powers.
- ii. When these foundational structures are threatened by Fate, and we experience our absolute helplessness.
- iii. In the mystery of ambiguity as it appears within the midst of our own freedom and therefore quite beyond our own deliberate or rational control.
- iv. In man’s confidence and hopes despite these outer and inner threats to the security, meaning, and fulfillment of his life.

This dimension of experience is not easy to scrutinize or conceptualize for two reasons:

- i. In this area there is neither simple verification or falsification, nor precise definition.
- ii. This region of experience necessarily involves us and so it involves and affects our thinking and speaking itself.

Chapter THREE: The Dimension of Ultimacy in Secular Experience: I

Prenotes concerning method:

- a. An ontic search, rather than ontological;
- b. In our secular culture, the 'sacred' will appear covertly as an implication, and thus a hermeneutical analysis is needed;
- c. Evidence of this dimension can be found in each important aspect of human being:
 - Our existence;
 - Our search for meaning;
 - Our knowing;
 - Our valuing;
 - Our search for identity;
 - Community;
 - Hope.
- d. This dimension is confronted explicitly when our consciousness descends to explore the foundations of our being in the world:
 - Who am I?
 - What is it all about?
 - Where am I going and why?
 - How can I become whole again?
 - How can I become whole again?

"Our first certainty of the reality of this dimension of experience comes from our sense of the terribleness of an ultimate emptiness, from the shattering effect of not finding anything sacred as the source and ground of our life."

But then evidence of a positive creative power, resident in this dimension of ultimacy, begin to appear in all facets of our life (the 'given').

Four elements within the appearance of ultimacy/unconditionedness characterize this range of experience:

- a. In the awareness that our being and its meanings are *given* to us (source);
- b. Awareness of *limits*; experience of a fundamental threat and helplessness;
- c. Source and basis of our *values*;
- d. An element of *mystery*, both at the level of experience and language.

Contingency:

Underneath all human joys in the *exultation of being alive*.

This joy in being is *given*.

Being is the ground of all values, not one among the values of our life but their basis; it appears in us as the basis of what we are, and not over against us as other finite objects.

E.g., the experience of birth.

Ergo, fertility has always been one of the primary forms of the sacred in religion.

There is also a negative corollary: the *fear* that we may *lose* our existence, our power to be and to continue in being.

The *contingency* of our finite being is felt from the inside as *anxiety*.

"This infinite horizon of ultimate insecurity has been symbolized in religious history by the blind and yet all-determining figure of Fate."

A threat to our existence comes to us always as an *ultimate* threat.

Infinite search for power over what surrounds and so may threaten him.

"In man the threat to life becomes an ultimate threat, and the will to live is thus translated into the *will to power*."

On the will to power, cf. Reinhold Niebuhr.

Most of the life of our secular world is devoted to the assuagement of this fear of the loss of our existence, and the infinite, frantic, grasping dynamic of that life receives its most fundamental tone from the anxiety that is its motivation.

At certain moments of awareness, an ultimate dimension appears before us and we realize that there is simply no human guard against the infinite power of 'Fate'.

The threat of Fate is *unconditioned*, and an answer to this threat must likewise be *unconditioned*.

Fundamental question: How can we love and affirm our existence creatively in its ultimate contingency and so its ultimate helplessness?

"Once the inability of finitude to generate and maintain out of itself that state of mind (i.e., joy and security) has been deeply felt, only an awareness of an ultimate ground of existence and meaning that is more than finite, and yet not the empty or demonic ultimates of secularism, can cause that innocent sense of joy to return."

"Such an existence in both joy and courage, in ultimate indifference and yet passionate concern for living, is the first intimation of 'grace' in secular life."

Religious faith *answers* the emptiness and alienation resulting from the experienced loss of ultimate security and meaning; it is the new condition, after this awareness of loss, for the return of an original and innocent affirmation of life.

"The presence of God to all his creatures as the creative source and ground of their being and their life is apprehended by them as the source and ground of their being whenever they experience in themselves this joyous and serene affirmation of their own contingency."

Relativity

The existential meanings, on which man's vitality and worth depend, are fragmentary and as such are threatened by the void of meaninglessness, and so they require an ultimate context within which to subsist creatively.

'Existential meaning' = to have the sense that what we do, the life we live, the activities that make up our days, have or will in the future have some sort of value for us, for others, for the community, for the course of history, and so on.

- a. Our activities have value in their present actuality;
- b. Our activities relate us to a meaningful future.

Meaning is immanent in all vital human life, though one need not be explicitly conscious of it.

"Creative, active meanings are dependent on a positive awareness of the present reality of our own contingent being, and the latter is realized as manifested livingly in the usage of our powers and activity directed outward in the world and forward into the future."

Both aspects of our being are essential *social*.

Meaninglessness makes it impossible to use our powers.

Disciplined and controlled use depends on a vivid awareness of the meaning and significance for both the present and future of what we do that can energize and so organize these powers.

The experience of relativity raises the question of *meaninglessness*.

"The infinity of the world, the passage of time, the opaqueness of the future together threaten the meaning of what we are and do, for they prevent the fragmentariness of our lives from finding lodgment in some context of ultimacy that includes the world and spans the passage of time into the future."

Relativity has been one of the main creative elements of modern life for two reasons:

1. Increase of opportunities for economic and social growth;
2. A view of social process as both creative and progressive.

Our time has witnessed and felt the relativism of the meanings of Western culture in two guises:

1. External challenge of Communism;
2. Internal challenge of the 'dropouts'.

When the ultimate context of meaning within which the culture had existed creatively has begun to disintegrate, then within this now dissolving cultural whole even the small, proximate, and relative meanings that make up its concrete life themselves disintegrate and vanish.

The loss of belief in Progress has removed from the secular its former foundation for the meaning of our works in a context of ultimacy.

When there is nothing significant in our lives, existence becomes a treadmill leading nowhere.

“Our self takes on substance and strength from our intense intentionality in relation to the world around us and the future ahead of us, the eros (care) with which we do what we do in that world and for that future.”

“This essential relation between the activity of the self in its social context and for its future, on the one hand, and its sense of reality, on the other, both of itself and of its world is the existential and psychological reflection of the fundamental ontological doctrines of internal relations and of passage into the future, so significant in modern thought.”

Possible responses to loss of meaning:

- ◆ Personal despair;
- ◆ Boredom;
- ◆ Social anger.

Various possible answers:

- ◆ Alcohol;
- ◆ Sex;
- ◆ Success.

Bergmann’s earlier films examined the desperate (and unsuccessful) search for meaning in pleasure and success.

The power to experience and actualize meaning is one of the main elements of grace in natural life.

Idolatry = making the relative ultimate.

The gift of a sense of significance of what we do comes unearned, quietly, and without our bidding, for we cannot establish it.

“Only when we are given a context of meaning greater than ourselves, when we lose ourselves in activities which embody a significance that reaches beyond us and takes its place in some horizon of ultimacy, can we know what the secular world seeks – the meaningfulness and zest of life.”

“Eschatological judgment” / Providence

“It is in terms of this faith in the ultimate context or ground of life’s ordinary meanings, supporting and yet transcending each of them, that whatever Christian theology wishes to say about God’s Providence and about eschatology is going to have relevance to our secular age.”

Temporality

Every age feels the ambiguity of time in its own way:

- (+) The future is the arena of possibility;
- (-) The future is unknown and quite beyond our control.

This ambiguity raises ‘religious questions’ :

1. Of our mortality as individuals;
2. Of the direction of temporal passage in social history.

Individually, we realize our essential insignificance.

There appears a negative ‘hierophany’ of the dimension of the unconditioned in the Void of mortality which nothing finite can overcome.

Man searches for an ‘eternity’ transcendent to passage; this eternity is found only in radical faith, founded on those aspects of grace that may be known here and now, namely the power and love of God evident in the course of our mortal life and believed to provide both direction and permanence to value within the passage of time.

“Secular experience contradicts secular self-understanding in the precise sense that the anxieties, the joys, and the tone of ordinary life reflect the context of framework of ultimacy.”

Every significant joy and every compelling anxiety reflect an apprehension of the dimension of this unconditioned, and the awareness of God’s presence or his absence.

Chapter FOUR: The Dimension of Ultimacy in Secular Experience: II

No man can be creative of a meaningful existence unless there be in him facets of genuine inward *freedom*, unless what he is and does springs from himself, from the use of his own powers, evaluations, and decisions.

Freedom and community are in tension but also inseparable.

Implications of modern emphasis on freedom and personal decision:

1. There are for us no norms which are given an absolute authority over our decisions by social or religious tradition.
2. In a pluralistic society we are involved in the task of self-determination through our own choice of norms.

Freedom to be creative of his own ultimate values, convictions, and style of life and so ultimately of the social matrix within which he lives.

But man is *not* free to escape the problem of norms and values entirely; he can guide his own life in freedom only in relation to some view of human excellence which grasps him as an embodiment of authentic existence and in relation to some form of community which he finds creative of this style of life.

For there to be the actuality of free existence, there must be relevant possibilities that provide the norms or models by which a life is guided.

The norm has for the freedom it shapes the character of ultimacy and sacrality.

The notion of intentionality or freedom must point to *deeper levels* than merely those of conscious choice or intellectual assent if it is to express the phenomenological reality of significant choices and activities; but the basic direction of one's life must 'surface' into deliberation and so conscious decision.

On the deepest level, each person is faced with the question: what *kind* of person do I want to become?

The gift of freedom requires a standard, a relevant possibility for my freedom, a project.

Sacrality of the standard:

- a. It functions as an ultimate (the one life I live will be determined ultimately by this standard; this is an ultimate concern).
- b. Adoption and active embodiment of this model requires a sense of the relation of this chosen self to the community, to the immediate historical context, and to the ultimate framework of history.

Most common answer as model of human excellence = a form of self-determination from within, motivated and shaped by love for those around us.

The gospel picture of Jesus has been historically operative in shaping this Western vision:

- ◆ Inner integrity;
- ◆ Outgoing love.

The norm of freedom becomes the norms of love and justice.

"Strangely, it is the Lord on the cross who gives to the world which put him there the only model for its own fulfillment."

Our central relation to the sacred is in the call of *moral responsibility* to others (Kant).

To ask 'Who am I?' is to search for an ultimate model by which our freedom is to shape itself.

The sacred now *obliges* and *judgets* us, as well as empowers and threatens us. Even after having embraced the ideal we do not fully incorporate it, it remains other.

Often our action flows from self-interest rather than from moral conviction (cf. Romans 7).

We recognize this in others much easier than in ourselves.

The *demonic* is making oneself ultimate, giving unconditional commitment to oneself (and/of one's group).

Whenever the self is threatened, as it continually is in the jostling and interaction of life, it defends itself and its own with all its faculties and powers.

Only in terms of religious symbols and myths can the *concrete*, actual character of man's being be thematized, as opposed to his essential potentialities which are available to rational metaphysical or eidetic analysis.

The *total self* exists as a unity in terms of its own ultimate commitment.

"Centers of human concern":

- ◆ To them is given an unconditioned loyalty, transcending every other loyalty as the foundation of all others.
- ◆ These are *hidden* 'gods' for most of us.
- ◆ The ethical issues of secular social living and so of the wider patterns of history are the outward expression in action of these deeper, more inward ultimate commitments.

"The secular moral problems of selfishness, greed, and dishonesty, the intellectual problems of bias and of ruthless competition, and the social problems of racial prejudice, inordinate private tyranny, and aggression are altogether the result of the deeper religious problem of finding in some partial creature or group the ultimate security and meaning which only the creator can give."

The innate goals of freedom and autonomy need to be balanced by the moral requirement of justice.

Historical hopes call for an eschatological dimension in order that there be any hope at all in history.

The inner experience of culpability and fault and the outer experience of injustice, oppression, and conflict lead men to search outwardly for an authentic world and social order, and inwardly for the

ability to accept themselves, to feel solid and real and creative again, for the power to become community, to love, and to hope for a better world.

The search for self-acceptance and reconciliation is spurred by two universal distinctive tonalities of life:

1. Sense of *alienation*;
2. Sense of *guilt*.

Two frequent resolutions:

1. Understanding the self in terms of neurotic idealized images of the self (cf. Karen Horney).
2. Participation in the destructive idolatries of the community.

Two most fundamental searches:

1. An ultimate commitment in terms of which our contingency may be anchored against disintegration and unreality.
2. An ultimate acceptance and reconciling power through which the inevitable process of self-rejection and inner disunity can be stopped and reversed into creative community with others.

An authentic self must know itself as ultimately *innocent* and so as *acceptable*, despite its very evident lack of both.

We seek for an ultimate acceptance by which we can live, yet one which neither we nor the humans around us can b\generate.

“Ultimate” because:

- a. The need for acceptance is unconditioned if the self is to be at all.
- b. This acceptance constitutes and recreates the self from beyond itself.
- c. The acceptance that is sought has in two senses an unconditioned character:
 - i. Unconditioned in its knowledge of what we really are – only an acceptance that knows us through and through and yet loves us is worth anything.
 - ii. Unconditioned in its acceptance of us: whatever you are or have done, you are loved.

For us to accept and love ourselves unqualifiedly and so creatively, we must be loved and accepted unqualifiedly, by an acceptance that both knows our guilt and yet still loves us.

Jesus communicates to us in the alienated present the healing self-acceptance and the power to affirm and realize our own freedom.

Some power that underlies him and did not die with him and now works anew through the present community in us, some power that transcends his passing and continues as the ground of our fleeting present, must come to us through this lordly figure of the past.

Chapter FIVE: Christian Discourse About God

“In man’s being in the world, he finds himself in an essential, creative, but also potentially threatening relation beyond himself and his world, a relation that manifests the qualities of ultimacy and unconditionedness, but which from the point of view of general secular experience can reveal as much a Void, a final meaninglessness, and the possibility of false ultimates as it does an almighty power, meaning, and love.”

Reception of a manifestation of the sacred partakes of two different levels of apprehension:

1. ‘Existential level’ – dimension of emotional awareness of the self in its world.
2. ‘Symbolic thematization’ – the mythical language of a community discloses to us the structure of ultimacy in which our community lives, and through these symbols the face of ultimacy manifests itself to us.

Men must think and conceive what they feel if they are vividly to apprehend it, fully to appropriate it, and especially if they are communally to share and perpetuate it.

The appearance of an *experienced answer* and its symbolic forms gives rise to *theology* as the systematic reflection on the meaning and validity of the symbolic forms of a given religious community, from the point of view of one who shares that community’s faith and life and so seeks responsibly to express its religious ethos.

Implications for theological discourse of the foregoing discussion:

1. It is meaningful only insofar as it is explicative of man’s experience of ultimacy, in relation to which he finds himself in all facets of his being.

Ergo, all religious myths and symbols must be understood as ‘broken’.

2. This language must be multivalent in form.
3. The question of the validity of religious statements arises.

This question rises only in relation to a particular tradition of symbolic forms.

“*Revelation*” = that definite mode of experience in which a particular answer to the ultimate questions that arise in relation to all secular life manifests itself, is received, and so ‘known’.

Though received in a *particular* context, these symbolic answers are *universally* symbolized and thematized.

Emphasis is on the *given* character of the experience of an answer and its symbolic explication.

This knowledge comes into experience from beyond the usual range.

“The symbols of religious discourse express that which eludes discursive thought both because it is too concrete, too close to the actual in all its paradoxical and fluid mystery, and because it *founds* our relations of inquiry into the actual.”

Ricoeur: a level of symbols precedes and lies back of all forms of gnosis.

All thinking is founded on ultimate principles:

- ◆ In most men these ultimate principles arise directly out of the cultural *Geist*.
- ◆ In exceptionally creative individuals new attitudes do appear, and in such persons these attitudes are generated on that relatively inchoate but weightier level of experience where the creative self as contingent and fragmentary confronts the existential problems of its being in the world, and seeks to make sense, order, and meaning out of its position there.

The basis for any specific ontology is the reception in experience of a ‘revelation’ of the ultimate order of things, a ‘revelation’ which is not so much the result of speculative thought as its ground.

“It is, then, in direct and quite special experience of illumination, clarification, and release, received in and interpreted through some important communal tradition in which the recipient participates, that the fundamental principles, convictions, or presuppositions of each particular type or brand of thought take their rise.”

Methodical implications:

- Essential *formal* identity of theology and metaphysics.
- Proof is secondary.
- In philosophical theology, the ultimate and sacred cannot be proved, lest this symbol contradict its own intention, its own meaning and function in the language game of religious discourse.

“Religious symbols, and preeminently that of ‘God’, are meaningful as thematizing answers to our ultimate questions; in symbolic form, they thus express, if they express anything at all, that unconditional answer which is essential if we are to live with serenity, intelligibility, meaning, courage, and love in the face of our contingency, relativity, temporality, and the ambiguities of our freedom.”

Faith is the presupposition of philosophy; revelation is the ultimate ground for thought.

There is a 'given' character to this experience; the answers come from 'beyond' the area where experiment and argument by rational implication are possible, they are less discovered by us than given (revealed) to us.

Theological foundations:

1. Any positive answer to an ultimate question is always correlated with and so can be balanced by a corresponding 'No' as another possibility, and so, consequently
2. The affirmation of the answer always depends on the particularity of concrete special experience where something has *entered* the ambiguity of life to clarify, re-create, and redeem it, and not on the general character of universal experience.

The claim of the *validity* of any particular form of God-language rests in the first instance upon the assumption that an 'answer' has been given and experienced.

To the gaze of faith, our existence reveals itself as grounded in the divine reality, coherence, meaning and love.

Special revelation provides particular, unique, and normative form to what is known in general revelation.

Verification of Christian God-language:

1. Occurs first in the life of faith lived by the community.
2. Supplemented by the revealed Christian symbols which interpret and illumine every facet of our widest experience.
3. This language is not restricted to the bounds of the Christian community.

Two factors are significant in a 'secular Christian theology':

1. Ultimate questions inevitably arise from our situation as human creatures.

"Secular question."

2. The historical Christian community where answers to these ultimate questions have been known or received through the symbolic forms of that community.

The attitude which we call 'the Christian faith' receives its basic imprint from Jesus Christ.

"Christian theology speaks in the world's language, as an answer to the questions that the world's life raises; but it is a speech shaped fundamentally by the symbolic answers found in the historical community of faith where the nature of the reality with which we must ultimately deal is known."

Theology must elucidate the structural meanings of its own traditional symbols and myths.

The eidetic phenomenology of historical symbols in Biblical and historical theology must be complemented by a hermeneutical phenomenology of

contemporary secular experience (this combination is the first achievement of a constructive/systematic theology).

There are three kinds of arguments (warrants) relevant to criteria of validity for theological reasoning:

1. The *fidelity* of the symbols and their interpretation proposed to the symbolic forms of the community and the tradition out of which the theological proposal emanates, and whose spiritual life it seeks to express symbolically.
2. The *relation* of the religious symbols proposed, and the interpretation offered of them, *to concrete common secular experience*, especially those positive and negative experiences that lead to ultimate questions, and the scope of such existential issues that this interpretation illumines and clarifies.
3. The *intelligibility* it provides as a basic and fundamental point of view in relation to other issues of human being and culture.

Each of these three functions presupposes our *participation* in the symbol as a vehicle of the ultimate and the sacred.