

Essay

## Can Four Questions Define the Transcendental?

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### Abstract

Usual definitions of the *transcendental* are given by *ontological assumptions*. Typical in this regard are those in various theologies or philosophies. And needless to say, such ontological assumptions can easily be challenged, if not in fact, they actually do invite such challenges. Plato's Cave Allegory in his book "Republic" is an exception, since it can be seen as a definition of the transcendental, albeit rather indirectly and through a quite involved story. And as such, it is not at all about any ontological assumption, but only about gnoseology, epistemology and pragmatics. Here, a similar definition of the transcendental is suggested, namely, a definition which does not use any ontological assumption, and instead, it only refers to gnoseology, epistemology and pragmatics. The novelty is in the fact that the mentioned definition consists of nothing more than four successive *questions*. After the foregoing non-ontological definition of ontology was suggested with the help of four questions, several immediate developments are presented.

### Four Questions $\equiv$ A definition of the Transcendental ?

Here are the Four Questions :

1. Do you believe that whatever in Creation which may be relevant to your life is already accessible to your awareness ?
2. And if not - which is most likely the case - then do you believe that it may become accessible during the rest of your life ?
3. And if not - which again is most likely the case - then do you believe that you should nevertheless try some sort of two way interactions with all that which may never ever become accessible to your awareness, yet may nevertheless be relevant to your life ?
4. And if yes - which most likely is the minimally wise approach - then how do you intend to get into a two way interaction with all those realms which may be relevant to your life, yet about which your only awareness can be that they shall never ever be within your awareness, no matter how long you may live ?

Now, these four questions can be seen as a definition of the *transcendental*. Namely, the transcendental is precisely that realm which, as long as we humans may exist, shall never ever come into the awareness of any individual human. More precisely, that transcendental will for ever be in our awareness merely by our awareness of not being able to have it in our awareness.

And quite clearly, such a realm clearly exists, since time and again and incrementally, we become aware of certain of its aspects ...

Furthermore, as a definition of the transcendental, those four questions have the important feature of not being a mere ontological assumption which, as usual, it is so easy to challenge.

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No, these four questions are, instead of ontology, formulated in terms of gnoseology, epistemology and pragmatics. And as such, they are so clearly obvious, as not to need any testing or supporting argument. In fact, they hardly allow an opposing argument either ...

Last and not least, these four questions do clearly bring into play the self-referential ability of human awareness, namely, our awareness has the ability to be aware of what can never be aware of ...

### **UNUS MUNDUS = IMMANENT + TRANSCENDENT ?**

The way ontology is defined above, namely, without any ontological type assumption, and rather through four questions, appears to be of a less familiar nature. Let us therefore look at some of the more immediate developments which may follow from such a non-ontological definition of ontology, given by the respective Four Questions.

Clearly, one of its features is that the mentioned definition sets up the duality "IMMANENT versus TRANSCENDENT".

Namely, "IMMANENT" are the realms which may at a given time be within the awareness of a given human, or of humanity as such. On the other hand, "TRANSCENDENT" are those realms about which a certain human, or in fact that whole of humanity, can only have the awareness of not being aware of.

This duality, therefore, is in its essence relative, since it depends on the presently given content of our awareness, be that of an individual human, or of the whole of humankind as such. Thus it is a duality that happens in the realms of gnoseology, epistemology and pragmatics, and not so much of ontology. Indeed, this duality is not a consequence of any ontological assumption. Rather, it is of a direct and unmediated, permanent, moment by moment experience of every human whose awareness is functioning within what may be considered as normal ranges.

Otherwise, for instance, in absolute terms, this duality need not at all exist. Indeed, it is perfectly compatible with "unus mundus".

In this way, the duality "IMMANENT versus TRANSCENDENT" exists as a reflection of the fact that none of us humans, nor the whole of our species, is supposed to be omniscient

Furthermore, our modern times, and above all, modern science and technology, have clearly shown that whatever boundaries may be between the "IMMANENT" and the "TRANSCENDENT", those boundaries can - and do - move rather fast, even during the lifetime of one single human generation.

Now the way those boundaries move is actually not so simple. Indeed, it is certainly not merely about a glorious ever ongoing march in which the "IMMANENT" is, so to say, encroaching upon more and more of the earlier realms of the "TRANSCENDENT". No, it is not merely so, since not a few realms earlier in the "IMMANENT", may end up for a while, or for much longer, back in the realms of the "TRANSCENDENT" ...

However, what is worth pointing out, and in fact, it is of outmost importance, is as follows :

As far as we can best understand, there is not absolutely any danger, let alone an imminent one, that, one nice day, the "TRANSCENDENT" may suddenly be completely gobbled up by the "IMMANENT"

So that, being relative or not, this duality of the "IMMANENT versus TRANSCENDENT" is here to stay for longer, for much much longer, in fact ...

And the only way out of it, at least as known so far, is to fall into a dreamless sleep, or who knows, to pass away ...

Now, the amusing thing is that, as it appears, inert objects, plants and animals do not much seem to function according to this duality.

As for us humans, at least in modern times, we do appear to manifest a most strong tendency which, in some ways, recalls that of inert objects, plants and animals ...  
Indeed, we tend to consider that duality as simply nonexistent. And here we mean by that the following. The ever ongoing massive enlargements of the "IMMANENT" realms, by their encroachments upon the "TRANSCENDENT" ones make us see no relevance at all in the latter ...

And so it comes to pass that, not such a long time ago in our modern times, we entered the peculiar world in which, as we best see it, and actually are quite proud of it, the formula rules :

UNUS MUNDUS = IMMANENT

Well, and then, what is the problem ?

The problem, of course, is quite obvious, and as such, it is in fact courting the catastrophic :

Even today, we still have in fact nothing short of :

UNUS MUNDUS = IMMANENT + TRANSCENDENT

and this is not a mere ... ontological assumption ..., but an empirically most obvious fact ...

And then, all that means that we are simply LYING to ourselves !!!

Indeed, please remember the formula for taking the oath in a court of law, according to which one is obliging oneself : "... to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ..."

Well, as long as one does not tell the WHOLE truth, one is in fact LYING, according to that formula, even if whatever one says is true.

But now, how on Earth could we ever be in the possession of the WHOLE TRUTH ?

How indeed, no matter what spectacular new successes we have managed to achieve in enlarging the "IMMANENT" ?!?!??

After all, the remaining "TRANSCENDENT" is - by its very definition - that which is not in our awareness, except by our awareness of not being in our awareness ...

## References

- [1] Plato : Republic
- [2] Rosinger E E : In Support of Comte-Sponville (pp. 18-23) <http://vixra.org/1011.0016v2.pdf>
- [3] Rosinger E E : Four Questions can define the Transcendental ? <http://vixra.org/1208.0047v1.pdf>
- [4] Unus Mundus : Gerhard Dorn, Carl Jung, see Wikipedia