

TA 51, Response 11 (to C10 by Müller)

MORE ABOUT APEIRON AS THE UNEXPERIENCED (Ed. Note) by Glenn C. Wood  
12 September 2002, posted 24 September 2002

<1> Mr. Muller appears to have found something prior to God in Pivnicki's "godly" reference to Karl Jaspers' treatment of Anaximander. Muller [Jaspers was meant here not Muller] says of Anaximander that "he was the first thinker to develop, in concepts, a metaphysical vision transcending all sense perception; the first to give the name of the Divine to what is achieved in the fundamental thing that transcends all that exists, or, in other words, to find the divine with the help of thought, instead of accepting it as given in traditional religious conceptions."

<2> I think Jaspers' is being consistent with his view that it's the easy tendency of thinkers to hallo ground wherever they stand if it supports their situation. He sees in Anaximander's quotation and successors' reports about him that he applied the category of divine to what cannot be experienced in the normal sense. (It seems a bit much to suppose that Anaximander had no contact with such influences as the Pentateuch.)

<3> Jaspers is not confirming that one reaches a godly or divine state through thought nor by their efforts penetrate thought to a sleep-like state and thereby get closer to being as such. Anaximander's words are a good example of how a divine inference can easily slip into a rational system if there's no standard. One can think the ground of Being, the unexperienced, is either good or bad, and if good then divine. To see man as originating as a fish or even having an absolute beginning is not infinitely divine. If I recall correctly even Darwin considered man's descension as something negative for he had simultaneously with the idea witnessed on some remote island shore something as depraved as the Howard Stern show.

<4> The probable reason for reliance on this Greek's ground of Being is that one feels in touch with something mysteriously supportive of heretofore published words about mankind's evolvment or ascendancy from animals. It's said of Anaximander that he held that man developed from animals of another species and that man was like a fish originally. That sounds more like the limitations of peras than unlimited apeiron. It says something about the apeiron doesn't it?

<5> It's not surprising then that absolutists regarding man's origin find for the priority of the unexperienced, that is, apeiron. We can conveniently jump immediately from this mysterious ground to a conjured God as a product of an evolved mind. Then of course the system, theism's constructions, becomes a line in development, the line being the church as a distinctive organism with a

hierarchy of prelates.

<6> But the major premise is flawed if one thinks that Jaspers' view is that Anaximander originates monotheistics out of the apeiron. Jaspers is alert to potential dogmas, absolutizations, creeping into Anaximander's science as interpreted by others.

<7> Muller's paragraphs {8,9,and some of 10} are the area where he excels but when it comes to biblical absolutes he seems to see only the congealing rather than the dissolving of reflection. In {10} it might be more apparent than real that he cannot think of absolutes as being of similar spirit as the Invisible God. If he were talking about the imageless God of the Bible, there would be something agreeable in his statement that "... there is a strong tendency to forget that [imageless God -- my interpolation] in favor of (mind-independent) absolutes of one kind or another."

<8> He is quite correct in the need for dealing directly with the uncertainties of the vaguely experienced (It remains a mystery to me why there's more comfort using the Greek word apeiron). He is also quite correct in seeing the dangers of conjuring gods, a god, and then the God, for it has generally some effects on behavior. However I'm still wondering about his classifying Tertullian with Galileo and Darwin, but take it as a sign that there's a recognition that consciousness or experience has such a vague side, it could almost be called mind-independent and still be no less but even more real -- and that's why Tertullian is called as a witness. Assenting to the impossibility of proving the existence of God is the first sign of assent to God's being.

<9> Muller's resort to seeing something good in Roman history's creation of gods and something bad in the transfer of Greek divinities is perplexing to me. It can be made sense of if what is being sought for is temporary support in the KJF dialogue from polytheistic-trinitarianistic current contributors. I do apologize for making the editor the focal point, but it's less confusing than wandering about the tower of Babel and I'm not into digs in the valley of Gehenna.

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NOTATION: It is not unusual for H. Muller to reply as an editorial comment as he does below. When this is done it means the Editor is taking advantage of privileges none others have. In this case he cannot wait for to make a normal Comment because I made an inadvertent mistake using the name Muller instead of Jaspers. It also places me in a position to reply by Response and others may not have a clue as to what is being responded to.

REPLY

I find myself in agreement with some of GW's statements, and can empathize with some others, such as his desire to find what he calls "being as such" <3>. But his text also prompts some corrections and questions :

The quotation in <1> is not from what I wrote in C10, but from somewhere else, presumably from Jaspers. I also did not say that I see something good in the Roman history's creation of gods and something bad in the transfer of Greek divinities <9>.

The reference to a sleep-like state in <3> is unclear to me. In case this is meant to refer to meditation this would appear to be a mis-understanding, because meditation is said to be heightened awareness.

In <6> "Anaximander originates monotheistics out of the apeiron" : this strikes me as unlikely. What I wrote is my view of the relation between apeiron and theism, not Anaximander's (nor Jaspers'). On Anaximander's knowledge of the old testament <2>: I would be interested in evidence for this, and also in his reaction.

Re <4,8> : In my opinion the apeiron is more or less identical with what I call the unstructured origin or matrix of ongoing subjective mind-and-nature experience. This is required for dealing with the mind-brain question (see TA45 [2ff]).

My reference to Tertullian <8> concerns his insight that belief in an assumed absolute becoming human is self-contradictory ("credo quia absurdum"), and this clash of religious belief with experience is similar to the one faced by scientists.