

Ori Goldberg¹

Tel Aviv University

MEETING GOD: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Abstract: This paper examines three human encounters with God from Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Such meetings are traditionally viewed as injections of perfect divine truths into an imperfect human reality. Using three states inherent in social transition described by Victor Turner – liminality, outsiderhood and structural inferiority – the paper argues that such meetings with God highlight social and cognitive transitions experienced by their human protagonists. The paper suggests that such meetings thus serve to highlight an understanding of humanity remains markedly separate from the absolute perfection of divine truth.

Key words: Anthropology of religion; Social transition; Religious experience; Victor Turner.

Introduction

"What do you get when you combine an agnostic, an insomniac and a dyslexic? Someone who stays up all night, wondering if there's a dog."

This riddle (could it qualify as a joke? One wonders, indeed) portrays an intimate religious experience. Internal debates regarding the reality of God are not unheard of among those possessing a faithful temperament. Moreover, it often seems like the desire for a "Living God"² is accompanied by a keen awareness of one's faults and failures. Will I be worthy of the moment? Am I not too miserable to receive God's mercy, or grace, or even judgment? If I believe, if I believe enough to wonder about it, is not my faith precisely ensconced in a lack of demonstration, in the absence of an answer?

The experience of seeking God is dualistic. One might say it couldn't be otherwise. "Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs

¹ origoldberg@gmail.com

² Psalms, 42:3 (ESV, 2001)

to God".³ Before the complete whole that is the monotheistic God, man has no option but to be dual, at the very least. God's truth cannot simply be human truth. It must be mediated and contextualized before it is appropriated for human use, for validation and comfort, censure and rectification. In fact, this duality is inherent even in the first paragraph of this essay. Those seeking God undergo a dualistic experience when they don't find him. On the one hand, they are intimately schooled in their own inadequacies. On the other, they are reaffirmed as fulfilling their duty by believing without immediate reward.

This intense experience – seeking, encountering a frightening, unattainable perfection, forcing oneself to create meaning from the shortfall – is integrally religious. It is, perhaps, the foundational experience of religiosity. Rudolph Otto refers to it as the *mysterium tremendum*.⁴ William James speaks of those most possessed by this experience as "heterogeneous personalities".⁵ It is an experience comprehensible in human language and through human logic, particularly the logic of a believer. Failure to grasp is a distinctly human experience. The sense forged from this failure must be wholly human, for the sake of defending itself from the Divine unknown as well as deriving from this defense a semblance of stability and continuity.

The cycle of meaning grounded in seeking and failing is a dramatic one. Still, it offers some continuity, and even some stability. Against the unknown one is required to constantly rethink and remake oneself, having no recourse to a single, unimpeachable truth. Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, defines this process as "Repetition". Within it, an original action or thought, never accessible in its original entirety, is actively created again and again while knowing that the constant creation is not a replication of the original.⁶ For Kierkegaard, this is the model of a life lived in faith. He contrasts this with "Recollection", a life lived in the attempt to recreate a singular moment, action or relationship. In Recollection, one spends one's life attempting to recreate the reality of that original down to its minutest detail. This ensures that the task is never completed, and that the only meaning of a recollected life is the one it seeks to no avail. In Repetition, however, meaning is never whole but it is constantly present. Its quality is never pristine, but its quantity is sufficient to propel onward, in search of more. Action, rather than truth or purity, becomes the defining trait of a meaningful life.

³ Psalms, 62:11 (ESV, 2001)

⁴ Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 12-40

⁵ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Touchstone, 1997), pp. 143-158

⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition/Fear and Trembling* (Princeton University Press, 1983)

What happens when a believer actually meets God? Not just in a dream, but in an actual interaction? In the monotheistic tradition, revelation is a primal experience. It is the origin of law and order. A conversation with God, an intimate encounter with the Divine, is a mark of virtue even when God is angry. However, the qualities of an actual encounter with God are elusive, at best. More precisely, any attempt to reproduce the encounter with God in intelligible form is bound to be a flimsy one. Can language, dual at the outset, reproduce even the physical sensation of God's words in one's ear? Can a person maintain her humanity when she meets God, or did the mystics have it correctly and one is swallowed up in the Godhead? In relation to the stability and continuity of human action, the encounter with God seems like a rupture. Its contents often structure the social and ethical order of religious life. Still, the meeting itself is an anomaly, a statement against the wholesome humanity of seeking and failing. The believer is sheltered within the undeniable structure of ultimate reality. She is also more human, frail and multiple and flexible, than she has ever been. What can we say about the experiential dimension of such a meeting?

This essay seeks to examine such meetings with God, and to place them, as experiences, within the spectrum of religious experience. We will focus on the dynamics of experience driving such encounters, rather than on their content or implications. William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, examines such moments from a psychological perspective. James rejects dealings with absolute truths at the outset, opting for the very human mechanisms which allow or disrupt meaningful lives. Visions, direct encounter with God or the belief in such an encounter, are thus presented by James as extremes of the religious spectrum. In other words, most of the religious spectrum is, according to James, occupied by people who fully appreciate God's presence yet have never encountered God directly. Those who have serve as a reference for the majority, who has not.

I suggest that meetings with God might be perceived differently within the spectrum of religious experience. More specifically, I would like to argue that meetings with God should be considered a part of religious life, rather than exceptions to the rule. In these meetings one may find a unique articulation of the inexorable bond between gift and loss. I would like to examine three meetings with God, as reported in Jewish, Christian and Islamic scripture. The first two meetings are face to face, while the third is inferred. The three meetings reflect tensions between totality and locality, Divine truth and human truth. All three offer no reconciliation between these elements; yet all three demonstrate coexistence between them, frequently fragile and painful.

In examining these meetings I will make use of a distinction drawn by the prominent anthropologist, Victor Turner. In his article, *Passages, Margins, and*

*Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas*⁷, Turner states as follows: "Implicitly or explicitly, in societies at all levels of complexity, a contrast is posited between the notion of society as a differentiated, segmented system of structural positions (which may or may not be arranged in a hierarchy), and society as a homogenous, undifferentiated *whole*."⁸ In the first vision of society, its structural integrity is guaranteed by its ability to distinguish between "generic" statuses and roles. These are not dependent on the lives and experiences of their human holders. Turner refers to this vision as "social structure". In the second vision of society, which Turner calls "communitas", there is a suspended, timeless present, in which all individual members are recognized as free and equal, each belonging to the other and others. Often, the historical context for this vision is utopian or millenarian. Turner finally suggests that "*Societas*, or "society", as we all experience it, is a process involving both social structure and communitas, separately and united in varying proportions".⁹

I suggest that meetings with God in scripture and within the corps of religious experience are often considered as representations of *either* social structure *or* communitas. That is, the experience of meeting God is utilized as an illustration of two sweeping poles of religious experience – universal order or universal freedom and equality. The notion of synthesis, which Turner ultimately applies to society "as we all experience it", is often missing from analyses of meetings with God. These tend toward the cosmologically impersonal – God is the almighty and humans are but worthless sinners. Such analyses may also tend towards the intimate and the particular – God loves some and hates others, and he shows himself to the ones he loves. I would like to propose that meetings with God can be seen as arenas in which both ends are played against a dynamic middle ground. These meetings are illustrative of religious experience as transitional and dynamic in nature, challenging rigid structure of any sort. Three conditions associated with this transition will assist us in highlighting these elements within the experience of a meeting with God – Liminality, Outsiderhood and Structural Inferiority.

The Covenant between the Pieces

The book of Genesis tells us the following story about one of Abraham's encounters with God:

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram

⁷ *Worship* 46 (August-September 1972), 390-412

⁸ Note 6, p. 398

⁹ Note 7

Meeting God...

said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."¹⁰

At a first glance, we have two meetings with God in this text. The first begins with a vision brought upon Abram unilaterally. Perhaps God expects this vision to be the beginning and end of the story. An angel, or even a disembodied voice, is sent to perform a routine pep talk for Abram, God's number one supporter. However, Abram is not satisfied. He is not content with a static relationship, wherein God serves as his shield, and he is expected to be fruitful and multiply. Abram is in search of interaction. "What will you give me?" he asks. I would suggest that this is a reference not only to the prize at hand, but also to a desire for personal contact. Whatever it might be, says Abram, it should be something that is given, directly by God.

¹⁰ Genesis 15, English Standard Version, available online at: <http://www.esv bible.org/Genesis+15/>

In reply, God takes Abram outside and asks him to look up towards the heavens. Your children will be as numerous as the stars, he tells his devotee. But is this a meeting? I would argue that it is not. This is a demonstration, carried exclusively on God's terms. In fact, God does not give Abram anything, as he was specifically asked to do. He attempts to transpose Abram's particular, human concerns, into a pre-defined, cosmological mode. Anything you ask of me, God seems to say, has always and already been answered in creation at large.

To use another of Victor Turner's concepts, this encounter with God has nothing liminal about it. Turner refers to the liminal condition in the following words:

"(T)his condition... elude(s) or slip(s) through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial... Liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness and to an eclipse of the sun and moon."¹¹

God's first encounter with Abraham, simply showing him the stars and asking him to rely on the regularity of the cosmos, carries no liminal elements. It is a demonstration of things as they should be. By inference, they demonstrate a model relationship between God and his faithful. This relationship is, perhaps, best described in the words of Shel Silverstein:

"I know how we can be friends forever. There's really nothing to it. I just tell you what to do, and... You do it!"¹²

One might even say that God not only tells Abraham what to do, but the cosmos at large.

Despite Abram's acceptance of God's demonstration, God is not satisfied. He instigates another exchange, which also begins with a unilateral statement. By testifying to his own unimpeachable status, God reasserts the immovable and all-encompassing nature of his creation (and himself). Abraham remains indignant, however. Where is my self-assertion, he asks. How will I know? God then sets the stage for an actual encounter, a meeting between himself and Abram. First, Abram is removed from his usual state of consciousness. His preparations are carried out when he is awake, but the meeting does not begin until he is deeply asleep. Sleep is not sufficient, and his removal from

¹¹ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Transaction, 1969), p. 95

¹² Available online at: <http://boards.cityofheroes.com/archive/index.php/t-196086.html>

Meeting God...

the world is compounded by darkness. God's message, however, is quite straightforward. Various events will occur, and they will ensure the positive outcome I guaranteed for your descendants. If the temporal account was not clear enough, God continues with a spatial message, specifying the borders of Abram's promised land.

The *mise en scène* is quite mysterious. Various animal pieces placed in a labyrinthine pattern. Their significance, however, is revealed when the divine fire travels between them, and does not burn them. The meeting between their interests and actions is a liminal one. Clear messages are uttered in darkness and under cover of sleep. There is no need for the interpretation of God's message. There is a need to awaken, to sort out for oneself what came from the depth of one's own cognition and what came from on high. God does not simply ask for sacrifice and, once required, does as he's told. Abram's sacrifice charts a path which must be traversed before he is officially proclaimed as the father of a specific nation. The message is so effective, that the narrator sees no need to describe Abram's reaction. It was given and accepted. The reality of the message, I would suggest, has much to do with the liminal experience involved in its delivery. Meeting God does not result in iridescent truth. That came about in the first episode we read, under the cold glow of myriad stars. A real meeting with God has a liminal side, because a proper existence (in human terms) is an existence in transition. Clarity and obfuscation are both legitimate parts of this existence. An experience of God as utter stability would destabilize the array humans deploy for creating meaning. Abram's experience, however, instills in him an understanding of his life as a believer that is complete enough to remain unsaid.

Noli Me Tangere

The 20th chapter of the Gospel of John tells the following story about the meeting between Christ and Mary Magdalene:

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then

the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.¹³

It might be useful to consider this well-known story from the perspective of another category of social transition articulated by Turner. This would be the state of Outsiderhood. Turner defines it as referring to "the condition of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, or being situationally or temporarily set apart, or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behavior of status-occupying, role playing members of (the) system..."¹⁴ The prevalence of outsiderhood begins even before we consider the meeting at hand. Peter is joined by the mysterious "other disciple", the one beloved by Jesus. This other disciple, referred to five times in the Gospel of John, remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of New Testament scholarship.¹⁵ The close-knit group of disciples is haunted by this other, the one loved without being named.¹⁶ While

¹³ John 20: 1-18 (ESV)

¹⁴ Turner, *Worship* 46, p. 394

¹⁵ For one example of such literature see: Frederick Baltz, *The Mystery of the Beloved Disciple: New Evidence, Complete Answer* (Infinity, 2011).

¹⁶ Consider, in comparison, TS Eliot in "The Wasteland":

*Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
But who is that on the other side of you?*

it is Peter who is the first to enter the grave, it is the other's belief which serves to ultimately validate the event. The event, in turn, has been foretold in the future. In the present, near the tomb, the two apostles are unaware of the resurrection. The other's belief sets the event of the resurrection in motion, while the foretold-yet-unknown prophecy remains an anomaly of sorts.

Of course, it is Mary Magdalene who is, powerfully, an outsider. She is, in this sense, a disciple's disciple.¹⁷ It is she, and the other (generally thought to be John the Evangelist), who remain near the cross when all the other male disciples have left. Even when she stoops to look into the tomb she remains outside, outdoing even the outsider other. She remains defiant even after she is questioned by two angels. So far has she removed herself from the society of her peers, from what must be an emerging hierarchy of men following the crucifixion, that even when Jesus himself hails her she does not recognize him. She is occupied with her task, recognizing no authority but that of her divinely-inspired mission. The two men who preceded her went home, despite their belief, because they had not been told that Christ would rise from the dead. Mary Magdalene, however, did not care for rewards such as the resurrection. She wanted a body for which she could care. Most of all, she wanted to seal the breach created by Christ's death

The initial interaction with Christ introduces a liminal dimension to their meeting. The moment of naming establishes a hierarchy between them but also enables Mary to be set apart. She, in further compliance with her duties as a disciple, is witness to Christ's ascent. She does not see him in full glory, at the side of his father. Rather, her persistence and outsiderhood allow her entry into the becoming of the resurrection. Christ dispatches her to the other disciples, to tell them that he is ascending. The end of his ascent is shared – his father and their father, his God and their God. The ascent, however, is itself a paragon of difference – the difference between Christ and Mary. She is charged with bridging the gap between Christ and the disciples and yet, the God which unites them with him is, according to the simple grammar of the passage, their God and not her God. The ascent is, almost literally, Christ's rite of passage. He is neither dead nor alive, and is not subject to the rules dictating behavior toward each of these positions. Mary is both witness and servant to this ascent. Yet, this close and selfless devotion to the ascent ensures that she remain wholly human, unable to share the joy in God the Father. She is directly instructed not to cling (*Noli me tangere*), so as not to interfere with the motion of the ascent. Mary is cast out, and not in a dream or a vision but in the flesh, the site of the miraculous resurrection. The middle

¹⁷ Consider Karl Barth's interpretation of "Apostle" in his *Romans* (Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 27-28

ground, its liminality and outsiderhood may inspire loss and pain, rather than promise and fulfillment as it did with Abram.

The Affliction that Spreads like the Waves of the Sea

A hadith from the Sakhikh Al-Bukhari, one of the sacred Islamic anthologies of traditions collected from the prophet and his household, tells the following tale:

Narrated Shaqiq:

I heard Hudhaifa saying, "While we were sitting with 'Umar, he said, 'Who among you remembers the statement of the Prophet about the afflictions?' Hudhaifa said, "The affliction of a man in his family, his property, his children and his neighbors are expiated by his prayers, Zakat (and alms) and enjoining good and forbidding evil." 'Umar said, "I do not ask you about these afflictions, but about those afflictions which will move like the waves of the sea." Hudhaifa said, "Don't worry about it, O chief of the believers, for there is a closed door between you and them." 'Umar said, "Will that door be broken or opened?" I said, "No. it will be broken." 'Umar said, "Then it will never be closed," I said, "Yes." We asked Hudhaifa, "Did 'Umar know what that door meant?" He replied, "Yes, as I know that there will be night before tomorrow morning, that is because I narrated to him a true narration free from errors." We dared not ask Hudhaifa as to whom the door represented so we ordered Masruq to ask him what does the door stand for? He replied, "'Umar."¹⁸

This meeting with God does not take place overtly in the text before us. The prospect of such a meeting, however, does seem to be weighing heavily on the mind of Umar, the second to rule the Islamic community after the death of the prophet Muhammad. He is the one who initiates a communal discussion. He does not ask about afflictions, but about the prophet's saying with regard to them. His disciples are quick to provide him with an answer that closes the loop he nearly opened. When a man is afflicted in his life, he turns to things outside his immediate circle for redemption. Giving to those less fortunate, as well as setting his sights toward God in every aspect of his being, these will restore him to the narrow path sought by all believers.¹⁹

¹⁸ Al-Bukhari, 9:88:216, translation available online at: <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/sunnah/bukhari/088.sbt.html>

¹⁹ The first Surah of the Quran seeks for Muslims the path of those who do not stray, those who enjoy God's favor (online at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Fatiha>). Compare, once again, with TS Eliot and his Ash Wednesday cycle: "Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee, Those who are torn on the horn between season and season, time and time, between Hour and hour, word and word, power and

Umar, however, is not appeased. He knows all about this circle and about the narrow path. He wants to know about the affliction that spreads like the waves of the sea. The imagery of water spreading is not simply instrumental. Talmudic Legend has it that King David sang his songs to the steps (in the book of Psalms) in an attempt to stop the primeval water beneath the temple mount in Jerusalem. This water, the initial force of creation in the world (a myth the origins of which may be traced to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations), could not stay still. When King David began excavations for the temple, an unprecedented act of establishing a permanent home for God, the waters raged and threatened to flood the world. King David descended the steps to the abyss and lulled them with his psalms.²⁰

Umar's affliction that spreads, I would suggest, is a reference to this lethal dimension of totality. I don't think he is referring to God, or to faith in God. Umar's faith sustains him and the order he must protect and empower. Still, Umar is concerned about totality's basic incompatibility with the human world. The Muslim community, as represented by the answer he receives from Hudhaifah, is quite adept at resolutions. It is capable of identifying a problem and applying to it the proper solution. The total nature of the affliction which spreads like the waves is not, *per se*, a problem. It is a presence, a force which precedes value judgments. It encapsulates everything within itself, rather than perform distinctions and reconciliations, like the members of the Muslim community.

The third condition of transition articulated by Turner is "structural inferiority".²¹ He refers to African societies formed by militarily advanced societies conquering the land of weaker indigenous peoples. In such cases, the powerful newcomers occupy positions of formal and official power. "... the indigenous people, through their leaders, frequently are held to have a mystical power over the fertility of the earth and of all upon it".²² The infrastructure of formal society, the underlying foundation of myth and timelessness, is inferior with regard to the established structure, yet essential to the latter's existence. Umar's encounter with God seems to include an awareness of the symbiotic link between superior and inferior structure.

Umar's presence, his existence, is a buffer between the two structures. Nonetheless, Hudhaifa, the narrator, has no interest in the identity of the door. It is simply a function (as in the notion of "social structure" with which we began our examination of Turner) of a proper recounting and a stable

power, those who wait In darkness?" (online at: http://www.msgr.ca/msgr-7/ash_wednesday_t_s_eliot.htm)

²⁰ Yerushalmi Talmud, (tractate) Sanhedrin, Chapter 10

²¹ Turner, *Worship 46*, pp. 395-396

²² Note 20, p. 395

acquaintance with the elements comprising all knowledge, all worlds. The identity of the door is a matter of mediated truth, exactly because it is so clear, so timeless. The door occupies a liminal state, betwixt and between yet constantly challenging all established orders. It is bound to be broken in, and once it is broken in it will be the downfall of established order. Nothing survives the waves of the sea. The door is forever outside, willingly so, Umar protecting his congregation. Still a door remains the epitome of transition, blurring distinctions of essence between inside and outside as it is enforcing such distinctions by its very presence.

Concluding Thought

What happens when a believer meets God? Something that engenders order and meaning, yet does so in a non-structural way. Or rather, something that underpins social structures by challenging their essential truths. Victor Turner wrote about the conditions of this underpinning transition. When he identified them, he saw them within the framework of society. This was his whole, to be pursued through allusion and metaphor when the quantifications and facts of social science failed. Turner did not consider the wholeness of God or of creation at large to be a suitable frame of reference. This article suggested that they should be seen as suitable frames within an attempt to broaden the scope of scholarship engaging with religious experience. Turner's conceptualizations are suitable for the purposes of studying religious phenomena, precisely because of his ability to entertain the notion of the whole, even if he does so with regard to society. The leap towards the divine is not far-fetched. Turner's concepts, in turn, may allow us to consider a conversation among religious traditions which will demand, for themselves and their adherents, a role significantly more constitutive and formative than they now occupy.

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Ori Goldberg

SUSRET S BOGOM: ANTROPOLOŠKI OKVIR ZA POSEBNO RELIGIJSKO ISKUSTVO

Ovaj rad istražuje tri ljudska susreta sa Bogom, kroz jevrejsku, hrišćansku i islamsku tradiciju. Takvi susreti se tradicionalno doživljavaju kao injekcije

savršene božanske istine u nesavršenu ljudsku realnost. Koristeći tri stanja svojstvena društvenoj tranziciji, opisanih od strane Viktora Turnera liminalnost, autsajderizam i strukturalna inferiornost – ovaj rad ističe da ovakvi susreti sa Bogom naglašavaju društvene i kognitivne tranzicije doživljene od strane njihovih ljudskih protagonista. Rad ukazuje da ovakvi susreti stoga služe da naglase da shvatanje čovečanstva ostaje upadljivo odvojeno od apsolutne savršenosti božanske istine.

Ključne reči: antropologija religije, društvene tranzicije, religiozno iskustvo, Viktor Turner