

## THE FUNCTION OF THE MODEL WITHIN THE PARADIGM: A CASE STUDY FROM RELIGIOUS METAPHYSICS

Joe E. Barnhart  
*North Texas State University*

*Paul's Paradigm and Model.* I will use the terms 'paradigm' and 'model' as they are used in T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second edition. Paul, the zealous participant in the tradition of the Pharisees (who later became Paul the Christian Apostle), focuses much of his thought around the concept of *the law (ho nomos)*, which functions as a central and crucial model within the Pharisaic *paradigm of ethical monotheism*. The role of any model is to apply and extend in concrete detail the program outline of its home paradigm (I. Lakatos and G. Gutting). For Paul the Pharisee, the law is the most critical means by which the primary realities of the paradigm (God and his human creatures) interact. Other paradigms will have different primary realities or elements, but some sort of *interaction* between the elements will still be expected. For the point of a paradigm is to make sense of the presumed interaction, the central model serving to articulate the mode of that interaction in some intelligible or impressive way. For Paul the Pharisee, the law promises a lawful relationship, a predictable and stable interaction pattern, between God and man. It is through the law that monotheism manifests itself as *ethical monotheism*, and it is through the law that finite human creatures become ethical and thereby acceptable before the righteous God.

*A Model Shift.* In studying the Pauline epistles, one learns that a severe disillusionment with the law came about in Paul's thinking and life. Formerly, a Pharisee regarding the law, Paul now writes that "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse" (Phil. 3:5; Gal. 3:10 RSV). Formerly, "blameless" under the law, now he says that whatever gain he had under the law, he now counts as a loss (Phil. 3:6, 7). In order for such a radical shift to have taken place in Paul's thought, something had to have happened to his perception or understanding of the law as the central model of his paradigm. As a Christian apostle, he now speaks of the law as restraint and confinement, a something from which to be liberated (Gal. 3:24). "Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law" (Gal. 3:11 RSV).

If Thomas Kuhn's analysis of paradigm shift is accurate, one might well expect to find that anomalies (contradictions and predictions falsified or unfulfilled) had accumulated to produce paradigm-crisis. But might one expect to find that similar anomalies had accumulated in a major model shift? I suggest that it is through its operating models that the paradigm

generates eventually many of its own anomalies. I will return to this later, after looking at the drastic model shift within Paul's Pharisaic paradigm of ethical monotheism.

*Three Aspects of the Model Shift.* Paul the Christian does not eliminate the concept of the law, but rather revises and reassesses it in three critical respects. First, he removes it from a central place to an auxiliary function. Second, he calls into question its author (*authority*) or source. Third, he replaces the law's centrality with a cosmic being whose relationship with God the Father is unequaled and primary. The eternal Son replaces the eternal law. These three steps deserve to be spelled out.

*An Auxiliary Function.* Far from being the means for obtaining righteousness and therefore justification before God, the law is now seen as functioning only to provide the sinner with consciousness of, or knowledge of, his sin. The enfeebled law is reduced to bearing witness to something beyond itself, to someone who does have the power and authority to bestow righteousness and justification (Rom. 3:20-22).

*Secondary Source.* Paul asserts bluntly—and without argument—that the law was not given directly by God in the first place, but “was ordained indirectly, by angels through an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one” (Gal. 3:19-20). Clearly, the law has been reduced in status and authority.

*Christ Becomes the New Model.* The law is no longer the central model through which God manifests himself in his fullness. It is in a cosmic being that “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things . . .” (Col. 1:19-20 RSV). The law is now seen as only the hired custodian (*paidagoge*) who walks the young believer to the school, where the believer enters, leaving the law outside. This school is Christ (Anointed One, Messiah), a cosmic being who is given various titles: Jesus (Joshua the deliverer), Lord (*kurios*), Son of God, Savior, the Wisdom of God, the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and so on.

I will not in this paper spell out the extended and revolutionary use that Paul makes of his new central model. It is sufficient to say that, in his thinking, the new model purports to solve new and critical problems that developed within his Pharisaic paradigm, new problems that the old law could not, in Paul's mind, even begin to solve. In short, the paradigm gave birth to expectations and promises (predictions) that the law-model simply had no way of handling. Even though the requirement of righteousness remained, the old law could not fulfill it. “But now the righteousness of God has been made manifest apart from law . . .” (Rom. 3:21 RSV).

*Origin of the Anomalies.* The contradictions and unfulfilled expectations that the model of the law could not overcome originated both internal to the law itself and through sources external to the law. I will consider first

the most critical internal anomaly. The *locus classicus* of Paul's sense of personal moral failure under the old model is the famous digression of Romans 7:7-25. As Paul Ricoeur notes, through Pharisaism's intensification of conscience that reaches for the “summit of perfection,” the finite self-perception of Paul understandably collapsed in self-defeat.<sup>1</sup> In post-Kantian language, Nicolai Hartmann expresses this phenomenon:

The ego finds itself split into an empirical and a moral, an aprioristic ego. And the empirical bows down before the aprioristic, acknowledges its right to rule and bears the guilt which the other imputes, as an oppressive consciousness. The empirical ego takes upon itself the responsibility which the other lays upon it, and whatever in itself does not agree with the other it charges against itself as a failure.<sup>2</sup>

The fatal gap between Paul's “inmost self” and “the flesh” of “sinful passions” cannot be closed by the law. The law has not only failed Paul, but “deceived” him; for “the very commandment [of the law] which promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10, 11 RSV). It is no wonder that Paul bemoans, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death” (Rom. 7:24 RSV). Then he exclaims that he has been set free from sin and death through Christ (his new model). “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son . . . in order that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us . . .” (Rom. 8:3-4 RSV).

The metaphysical shift in either the model or the paradigm is often followed by a psychological shift (conversion) in the life of the participant in the old model or paradigm. Kuhn explains:

Wolfgang Pauli, in the months before Heisenberg's paper on matrix mechanics pointed the way to a new quantum theory, wrote to a friend, “At the moment physics is again terribly confused. In any case, it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had . . . never heard of physics.” That testimony is particularly impressive if contrasted with [Wolfgang] Pauli's words less than five months later: “Heisenberg's type of mechanics has again given me hope and joy in life. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

*Internal and External to the Law.* Earlier I stated that anomalies developed in Paul's Pharisaic model of the law because of internal and external forces. I have hinted that internally Paul's preoccupation with the law is the universal experience of human insufficiency when one is faced with a necessarily expanding and imperialistic law imposed and imputed by the socialization process. Here I reveal, of course, my own naturalistic and secular paradigm, substituting social contingencies and exigencies in the

place of God and Christ. The law, in short, is neither from God nor mediated by angels, but emerges by necessity of human social existence.

External to the law, Paul's rabbinic paradigm suffered encroachment and invasion from the so-called pagan world of the first and second centuries B.C.E. Indeed, unlike the Sadducees (who steadfastly rejected such new "realities" as angels, resurrection, malevolent cosmic beings, and cosmic battles), the Pharisees had already, before Paul's birth, begun to yield to external cognitive influences. As a Pharisee, Paul was simply heir of the newly emerged metaphysical expectations within the Pharisaic paradigm.<sup>4</sup> My own interpretation of the process of Paul's model shift is that the Pharisees, by accommodating the pagan influence (regarding belief in resurrection, powerful cosmic evil beings, and angels), allowed into their paradigm certain new elements or "realities" that the law simply was not originally designed or equipped to handle. The Sadducees understood this and in effect cut off the possibility of anomalies by flatly denying the new "realities" a place in their paradigm. The Pharisees, by admitting that there were cosmic personal beings of a malevolent nature, created the *need* to find some way to solve the *problems* created by such repressive and aggressive cosmic beings. Paul's solution was simply to proclaim that his new model—the cosmic personal being of the superior benevolent nature—had effectively and irrevocably defeated the evil powers and principalities (Rom. 8:38-39; I Cor. 15:27-28; Phil. 2:10). In addition, through the new model, the paradigm problems of death and guilt are resolved permanently (I Cor. 15:24-26; Rom. 5:1-2), and even the environmental problem of the imperfections of nature and creation itself will eventually be solved (Rom. 8:22-23).

*Simulated Falsificationism.* It could be objected that my analysis of the above model shift fails because I have shown no empirical way in which the theological and metaphysical claims of the Pharisaic paradigm may be tested. The claims are therefore unfalsifiable. My reply is that a shift in a model, or more sweepingly in a paradigm, may take place at the *metaphysical* level (where there are no strict empirical falsifiable statements and observations as required in science). Anomalies may develop at the strictly metaphysical level if there emerges a process which I have christened as *simulated falsificationism*. This process distinguishes metaphysics from ineffable mysticism, which means that the former may be rationally debated and made sensitive to the charge that certain of its key statements stand in *contradiction* with one another and therefore in need of possible revision.

*Répercussions in the Paradigm.* When a model within the paradigm proves unfruitful, the paradigm need not suffer severe cognitive defeat if there are other dynamic models both to develop it and to test it (by either direct observation statements or simulated observation statements). Even if the *central* model proves unfruitful or riddled with contradictory statements

generated by the use of the model, the paradigm will not necessarily collapse. But it may collapse cognitively if the central model is not revised or replaced by a similar one more functional than its predecessor.

But this is a very tricky business, sometimes the model itself expands and develops to the point of threatening to replace or severely remake its home paradigm. It is noteworthy that Paul, apparently striving to avoid overthrowing his inherited paradigm of ethical monotheism, is careful never to refer to his new central model as God (*theos*). To be sure, he comes close when he designates Christ as Lord (*kurios*). But this notoriously loose and adaptable term gives Paul sufficient flexibility to develop and expand his major model shift without being charged at once with having completely forsaken his inherited ethical monotheism. (Kuhn's term, 'paradigm', is itself quite ambiguous and loose, especially in the first edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.)

I wish to comment further on Paul's selection of *kurios* (Lord) instead of *theos* (God). Paul Feyerabend notes that in building a new scientific worldview, "one must learn to argue with unexplained terms and to use sentences for which no clear rules of usage are as yet available."<sup>5</sup> Without subscribing to Feyerabend's many philosophical excesses, I think his point here is well taken. Science and religion are alike in that they tend to spawn new metaphysical claims and new metaphysical problems. Paul's metaphysics of the cosmic *kurios* is sufficiently flexible to allow him to articulate his new model while escaping the charge that he has undermined strict Pharisaic monotheism, since *kurios* ranges in meaning from merely 'Sir' to being the Greek translation of 'Yahweh.'

In later centuries, when the *interaction* between *kurios* and *theos* (God the Father) is raised by systematic theologians, the impact of Paul's drastic model shift is seen by some as a threat to the entire monotheistic paradigm. (Compare Plato's own question of the *koinonia* between the Forms themselves.) Only with considerable linguistic skill and subtle debates (to say nothing of political intrigue) did the Christians convince themselves that they were *fulfilling* the ancient paradigm of the Hebrew faith instead of *overthrowing* it.

Eventually, it became the judgment of the Islamic critique of Christian trinitarianism that the Christians had in effect shattered the original monotheistic paradigm of the Hebrews. The Quran is regarded as the final and completed "revelation." In effect, it attempts to offer a radical solution to the proliferation of anomalies caused by the "model shift" that early Christianity introduced to solve what it took to be the anomalies produced by the central model of "the law."

*On Paradigm Survival.* Since the days of the Pharisaic revolution around 165 B.C.E., Judaism has spawned numerous variations and mutations within its paradigm. Some of these variations have agreed with the Chris-

tians that the law is *not* the central model. But if neither the law nor the cosmic Savior-Messiah is their central model, what is? I suggest that a metaphysical paradigm may survive even when its bearers are unclear as to what its central model is. Indeed, taking a cue from Ernest Gellner and revising it, I will argue in another paper the thesis that often a paradigm survives longer if its central cognitive model is not coherently and clearly formulated.<sup>6</sup> But the survival of a paradigm should not be seen as a mark of great cognitive worth. Paradigms often survive despite their mendicant cognitive status, for institutional bearers may have extracognitive interest which the paradigms serve well. The relatively recent discipline of sociology of knowledge developed as the cognitive interest itself generated a greater awareness of the extracognitive interests contributing to paradigm survival and even paradigm imperialism.

#### NOTES

1. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanon (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 118.
2. Nicolai Hartman, *Ethics*, trans. Stanton Coit (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932).
3. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 84.
4. See Ellis Rivkin, "A Jew Looks At The New Testament." Presented at the Evangelical-Jewish National Conference, Dec. 10, 1980. Rivkin's paper has not yet been published.
5. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of An Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1978), p. 256.
6. See "Concepts and Society," in Bryan Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 46.