

## Transcendental Anglerism

The philosophy of Transcendental Anglerism was originated by the brilliant thinker and fly caster Ichthymanuel Klops. While Klops is best known for this system of philosophy, he also achieved considerable renown for his nebulous hypothesis. According to Klops the solar system began as a whirling nebulous mass of gas. As time went on, under the influence of gravitation, the gas began to congeal into larger pieces until, when a critical density was reached, the whole thing instantaneously klopsed into the form we are now familiar with. The theory was later cast into mathematical form by a certain foreign mathematician who showed that the klops would never have occurred if the nebula had had a lap. By the use, no doubt, of nefarious techniques, the mathematician managed to get his minor corollary coupled with the seminal work of Klops in the textbooks, which now refer to the Lapless Klops hypothesis. Transcendental Anglerism, however, belongs to Klops alone.

The sequence of ideas which led to the discovery of Transcendental Anglerism began when Klops realized the profundity of the question, "How is fishing possible?" The mere empirical anglerologist would respond that the question is trivial: fishing is possible because fish swim in the streams, the rivers, the lakes and the seas, and because people have invented hooks, lines and sinkers. But a moment's reflection by even the novice angler will reveal that this mere empirical response is truly uninspired. Consider the angler in two different but typical situations. In the first situation he has opened his cooler to retrieve a beer when, after looking, rummaging, cursing and stamping, it becomes clear that there is no beer in the cooler. What will our angler do? There are many options: he can continue cursing and stamping, he can vary his performance with periods of

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swearing and pounding on the ground. If he is lucky he can swipe a beer from another angler. But there is one thing that he certainly will not do--he will not continue searching in the cooler with the absolute certainty there must be beer even though he hasn't found it yet.

Now consider this same angler, having dropped his line into the water several hours ago. He has waited and reflected, endured sunburn and mosquitoes, and opened many a can of worms, but he hasn't caught a single fish. Does this lead him to reflect that there may be no fish present after all? OF COURSE NOT. He will wait and suffer, and return tomorrow if he possibly can. No mere experience, no matter how often repeated, could possibly convince him that there are no fish. Fish are there. This is not a mere belief, a hope, a faith, it is a matter of certain knowledge prior to and independent of any experience. Unlike the existence of beer, which can only be known empirically, our knowledge of the existence of fish is a priori. It is exactly here that the profound problem lies. Fish, it seems, exist out there in the world. Our a priori knowledge that there are fish is knowledge of something completely independent of our will--just ask any fisherman. The deep significance of Klops' problem is now clear: how is such a priori knowledge possible?

What Klops realized at this crucial point is that the central idea of the Carpinican Revolution provides the key to solving this problem too. Carpinicus, you recall, solved the ancient fishodor problem by introducing a fundamental transformation in our point of view. For centuries fishonomy had operated under the central dogma that the way to stop a fish from smelling is to cut off its nose, and researchers had sought untiringly but alas unsuccessfully for the proper way to perform this operation. Carpinicus totally transformed the field by realizing that the fishodor exists not in the fish, but in the fisherman, and demonstrated that the

way to stop a fish from smelling is to cut off the fisherman's nose. And thus, Klops reasoned, if the fishodor exists only in the angler, why not the fish as well. So was Transcendental Anglerism born.

Consider once again. We know that there are fish in every stream, and we know this a priori with the same certainty that assures us that fish left in the sun will smell. Now if fish were things-in-themselves, things which existed independently of us, we could not know of their existence a priori. But we must distinguish between fish and the different kinds of fish: we know that there are fish in the stream, we do not know what kind or size or shape until we have caught one. This is the familiar distinction between form and content. Walk into any office, and although you cannot know a priori what content must be inscribed on their forms, you know with absolute certainty that there will be forms. In precisely the same way, fish are the form of angling, the different sort of fish its content, and just as in the office, so in the water, the form is a feature of the human mind; it is not an aspect of the world as it is in-itself, but rather of the way we organize that world.

Here we have the fundamental mystery solved. We can know a priori just those features of experience that we put into it, and fish, being the form of the angler's thought, are a necessary feature of all experience. True, this means that there are no fish to be found among things-in-themselves, but this is no great loss. For if there are no fish among the things-themselves, no sane angler will be going there.