THE PROBLEM OF THEOLOGICAL METHOD:

A STUDY OF KIERKEGAARD AND TILLICH.

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PREFACE

This study of the problem of theological method is in fact an investigation of the dichotomy between those who understand the import of theology in terms of 'metaphysics' or 'ontology', and those who understand it 'existentially'.

Our thesis is that this dichotomy is sharper than has been acknowledged by some 'existential' theologians. Thus when it comes to the theological understanding of God for example 'existential' theologians seem commonly to present some kind of answer to, or discussion of, ontological questions, rather than resting in existential formulations.

The line of approach to this problem has been through the thought of Kierkegaard and Tillich. We have looked to Kierkegaard's writings for an exposition of the distinction between metaphysical (objective speculative) understanding and existential(subjective) understanding, and we have looked to Tillich for an actual methodology based on an existential foundation.

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NOTE

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

The Concluding Unscientific Postscript by S. Kierkegaard is cited as 'Postscript'

For Self-examination and Judge for Yourselves by S. Kierkegaard is cited as 'Self-examination'

Philosophical Fragments by S. Kierkegaard is cited as 'Fragments'

Systematic Theology, Vols. I & II by P. Tillich are cited as 'ST I' & 'ST II'

Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality by P. Tillich is cited as 'BR & UR'

PART I

Theologians of the idealist party tried to comprehend God and reality in a metaphysical system, but Kierkegaard denied that this was possible. Firstly reality as a whole cannot be comprehended systematically and secondly faith cannot be comprehended in the abstract categories of objective thought. Both empiricism and idealism fail to discover any absolute truth .... Some fixed point of 'truth' is nevertheless necessary as a basis for living. This truth must be found in subjectivity. How could such truth be discovered? Perhaps there is nothing to be discovered, but only a personal integrity to be established. Yet Kierkegaard thinks the subject must be related to some truth outside himself ... It is not clear whether it matters, or how it matters, what this objective point of reference should be. There seem no clear grounds for discussing where truth should be found, though we may still discuss the need that it should be found.

For Kierkegaard man's existence must be understood in terms of a life to be lived. Hence decision is basic to man's existence. And man must relate his decision to his life seen as a whole. Decision means choosing between possibilities, but to be lost in possibility is not to be free. Freedom is the dialectical element in terms of possibility and necessity. What is this 'necessity'? It is a personal limit which appears to have a moral character. So freedom seems to demand a standard by which to choose .... If we do not accept our own personal limit or standard then we shall reach a point of despair. But even if we accept this limit, accepting ourselves as we are seems to leave no ground for changing what we are, so we may still despair. Thus the need for an Archimedean point beyond the self is discovered.

Chapter III HAS KIERKEGAARD HIS OWN METAPHYSICAL PRE-SUPPOSITIONS? p.47

It has been suggested that Kierkegaard's rejection of metaphysical speculation is to some extent vitiated by his own metaphysical commitments. 1.) Wyschogrod suggests that Kierkegaard effects not a destruction of Hegel's categories, but a new juxtaposition of them. But it is not clear that Kierkegaard used them as ontological categories at all. Kierkegaard did not explicitly develop an ontological system. Wyschogrod's criticism has another side to it, however. There may be ontological implications in what Kierkegaard says, even though he does not develop an explicit ontology. In this case we could discuss ontological issues which are implicit in Kierkegaard's existentialism. But the fact remains that Kierkegaard himself would have remained outside such discussions.... 2.) James Collins, in discussing the same issue, agrees that Kierkegaard tries to reject metaphysical speculation absolutely, but Collins argues that this was because the idealist metaphysic was the only kind of metaphysic he knew. Collins holds that the realist metaphysic of Thomism is able to meet the challenge of Kierkegaard's existential critique. But Collins fails to show how an existentially rooted system can go beyond giving a phenomenological description .... Kierkegaard's rejection of metaphysics seems decisive, and may be compared with certain trends in twentieth century philosophy.

Chapter IV KIERKEGAARD AND THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL p.63

Kierkegaard examines the problem of the truth of Christianity under two heads. 1. The problem of establishing the historical truth. 2. The problem of establishing the relation of the historical truth to the eternal truth .... In relation to the historical truth, he suggests that historical knowledge is at best approximation knowledge. But even if this were not so we have the second difficulty that discovering historical facts cannot tell us anything about the 'eternal' significance of these facts. At this point all the difficulties of discovering any eternal truth by the method of speculation appear again .... But apart

from the speculative (objective) method of establishing the truth of Christianity is there an existential (subjective) method? Does Kierkegaard use his existential analysis to demonstrate the inadequacy of all non-christian ways of understanding existence, and does he thus establish the truth of the Christian understanding? This would suggest that his analysis was based not on his own subjective awareness of existence, but upon objective observations .... In any case Kierkegaard holds that something more than analysis is needed. Man stands in need of a divine revelation, and the authority of such a revelation relates not to the truth of a sum of sentences, but to a truth which is a life... There remains the problem of how Kierkegaard understood the task of the dogmatic theologian, but we have little indication of what he thought about this.

PART II

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION p.78

We are left with the problem raised in the first part: does Kierkegaard allow any apologetic function to philosophy and the philosopher? Does he reject all philosophy or only idealist philosophy? Is there another kind of philosophy possible which devotes itself to existential awakening? Such awakening would in any case be an awakening not to the reality of faith, but to the possibility of faith ... Such considerations point us towards the theological method proposed by Paul Tillich. Tillich proposes a correlation between existential questions and the answers of revelation, the question and answer being independent and yet inter-dependent ... The use of the words 'question' and 'answer' seem to contrast with Kierkegaard's way of speaking, and might suggest a metaphysical framework. Yet Tillich speaks explicitly of <u>existential</u> questions, though he remains ready to enter into ontological discussions.

Chapter II TILLICH'S ONTOLOGY p.85

Tillich defines philosophy as the attempt to ask the question of being. He thus takes his stand with the metaphysicians or the ontologists.

A. How does he understand the ontological quest? 1. As a phenomenological analysis of structures? This does not seem to exhaust his understanding. 2. As a unified vision of reality as a whole? This does not seem to define his meaning exactly either. (although if we examine his discussion of the way in which we come to ask the question of being at all, it suggests that it is a kind of 'limit question', which requires something like an imaginative vision in answer.) 3. He sometimes speaks as if the ontologist requires something almost like a mystical experience of reality ... How these three levels are related to each other is not quite clear. Does Tillich start with a phenomenological analysis, and then try to <u>construct</u> a unifying vision? This would ignore the leap that seems to be necessary to pass from an analysis of the facts to a vision of the whole. How then could a unifying vision be developed? At least one critic of Tillich (viz. Zuurdeeg) thinks that it cannot be developed except as an expression of a subjective conviction. But Tillich seems to want to develop his ontology by a process of objective reason.
B. How does he actually pursue the ontological quest? Tillich's actual ontological programme seems to take the form of a derivation of categories, which is closely akin to what we find in Kant's <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u>.
C. How does ontology fit into the method of correlation? Is ontology closely related to the analysis of human existence which is one of the correlates of this method? No it is not. In fact it is not clear that ontology has any place in this method.

Chapter III TILLICH'S EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS p.112

Tillich admits the need to explain what he means by the words 'existential' and 'existentialism'. He first discusses the etymology of the word existence - to exist means to stand out of nothingness, and therefore to be grounded in nothingness.... The existentialist problem arises out of the recognition of the distinction between relative non-being (which is potentiality) and existence (which is actuality). Hence a split is recognized between essence and existence. This split was recognized by Plato and Aristotle and the scholastics, but not by Hegel... Having so described existentialism, we see it as a natural ally of Christianity,

since both existentialism and christianity believe we live in a fallen world... This analysis presents existentialism as an ontological or metaphysical theory. But Tillich distinguishes existentialist thinking from what he calls existential thinking. The word existentialist refers to a philosophical school but the word existential refers to a human attitude. This distinction is important for the understanding of Tillich's conception of existential analysis. Here the comparison with Kierkegaard is interesting. Kierkegaard was an existential thinker rather than an existentialist thinker in Tillich's sense. Awareness of existence, rather than a theory about existence was the goal of Kierkegaard's thought. But how is such existential thought possible? On this issue a comparison with Karl Jaspers is illuminating. For Jaspers there seems to be some possibility of passing from the phenomenology of consciousness to a direct awareness of existence, although the two may not be identified. This view seems closely akin to Kierkegaard.

Chapter IV REVELATION IN TILLICH'S METHOD p.141

I. Tillich's discussion of revelation proceeds as follows:
A 1. Firstly some methodological remarks. Our approach to the study of revelation must be phenomenological. But this is only true with reservations. This phenomenological approach would normally start by taking a typical example. In this case we want not a typical but a critical example however.... 2. Tillich now goes on to discuss the marks of revelation: it should reveal what is essentially mysterious, it should be given in a sign-event, or miracle and it should be received in ecstasy. It is not clear that these marks are in fact derived from a critical example, but we shall have to return to that later... 3. The mediums of revelation are then distinguished as nature, groups, individuals and finally the word.... 4. The dynamics of revelation are discussed in terms of original and dependent revelations.
B. Having thus discussed the meaning of revelation he now goes on to discuss Actual Revelation and Reality. The discussion so far is said to have proceeded in the light of actual revelation anyway. (but it is not clear that this is so.) Of actual revelation he says: 1. For Christians

the revelation of Jesus as the Christ is the final revelation. It is final because it has the power of negating itself without losing itself. This criterion of finality is drawn from the final revelation itself.... 3. This event is not isolated but has a preparatory history...4. This revelation is not to be separated from salvation (i.e. making men whole).. 5. This revelation overcomes the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy.. 6. Between absolutism and relativism... 7. Between formalism and emotionalism... 8. The ground of this revelation is the divine life... 9. The logos element in this divine life provides the key to the proper understanding of revelation as the Word of God.

II. Assessment of this understanding of revelation.

Does Tillich really move from the actuality of the final revelation? If this is what he intends, does the form of his system belie his real intentions?... Is final revelation the only original revelation? Is knowing about the event of revelation the same as receiving revelation? Can the question of revelation arise outside a specific reception of revelation?

III. How does this view of revelation compare with the view of Kierkegaard?

Chapter V THE METHOD OF CORRELATION p.179

How can two factors be both independent and inter-dependent (as Tillich says his correlates are)? Perhaps it is a case of partial independence... In any case both the answer and the question are said to be enclosed in the theological circle, although the material out of which the question is formulated is collected independently. How is this material to be discovered then? Here let us compare our earlier discussions of Kierkegaard and indeed our comparison with Jaspers too... Awareness of existence is seen as a preliminary to preaching the gospel in both Tillich and Kierkegaard... Is this 'natural theology'?.. How is this awareness of existence related to correct information about the phenomenon of man?... How are doctrinal formulations related to existential awareness or to knowledge about existence?... Has ontology a place in this whole process? Perhaps the fact that man is confronted with ultimate (ontological?) questions is one of the relevant facts about existence which must become material out of which one of the questions of theology is to be formulated.. The doctrine of creation is seen as such an existential question. (The

question of being as it might arise in theology)... The conversation between the theologian and the scientist or philosopher may still be inevitable, but theology is now seen as concerned essentially with existential questions.

Appendix to Part II. p.200

The present account of Tillich's method is not based on a thorough investigation of his whole system, but rather on an exploration of his methodological proposals. We should perhaps fill out our account, however, with an exposition of Tillich's discussion of the source and norm of systematic theology... The sources he distinguishes are: 1. The New Testament documents 2. The Old Testament documents 3. Church History. The first two of these must be taken up into a Biblical theology, and the third must be taken up into 'dogmatics'. 4. There is yet a fourth source in the material presented by history of religion and culture... These sources are received in the medium of 'experience' and they are submitted to a material norm which is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

Conclusion p.209

Does Kierkegaard's existentialism point towards Tillich's theological method? The problem of subjectivism must be re-examined in this connection. Does Kierkegaard really deny the possibility of proceeding from an existential to an ontological analysis? In the end he does. But does Tillich, on the other hand, expose an existential basis for the ontological quest itself? Perhaps he does, but it remains a question whether such a quest can in fact be undertaken by objective reason... Surely Tillich himself would deny the possibility of finding God by ontological reason. But is the question of God thus reduced to the question of a subjective concern: a concern which is ultimate? Tillich seems uncertain about this.. In any case his method does in the end seem to leave the ontological questions outside the province of theology. The theologian is concerned with the actual possibility, and the significance for the subject, of existence in faith... Such an understanding is not without implications for theological discussion. e.g. discussions of the presence of Christ

in the eucharist, or the discussion of Christ's person and nature.... But can theologians confine discussions of the nature of God to this existential level? Is the theist/atheist discussion a matter of indifference to theological formulation? Perhaps if we took up Tillich's hint that God should be defined in terms of 'ultimate concern' it would suggest that it is. This point seems to be explored even more thoroughly by H. Richard Niebuhr than by Tillich. But when we follow Niebuhr's discussion to its end we find he brings us back to the concept of being (though not perhaps to any clear ontology of transcendence). Nevertheless this passing glance at Niebuhr's argument does seem to help us to understand Tillich's position better..... In the end Tillich's methodology does seem to point towards an existential theology which leaves ontology to the philosophers. And this conclusion may have real significance for the theologians.

PART I. KIERKEGAARD.

CHAP. I : KIERKEGAARD'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICS.

It seems inevitable that the theologian should make some claim to be engaged in a rational systematic activity. To deny this would be to abandon the very possibility of there being any organized thought of a methodical logical kind within the province of theology, and in this case no theological discussion would be possible. And to accept this necessity of rationality opens the way to defining the purpose of the theologian as being to discover the rational basis of faith, or of belief. Such a definition of theological purpose would itself be open to widely differing interpretations, of course. But it may well lead on to the conviction that the real responsibility of the theologian is to discover a rational systematic comprehension of reality and of God. In other words the theologian is charged with the formulation of a metaphysical system.

It would seem fair to say that this is how many Hegelian idealist theologians would have understood their task. For them it appeared to be in and through the metaphysical system that the faith must be understood. And it was against such metaphysical system-building that Kierkegaard directed his attack upon philosophical theology or philosophical Christianity. We may distinguish two sides to this attack. In the first place Kierkegaard questioned the possibility of formulating any absolutely 'true' metaphysical

system. And secondly he insisted that in any case faith could not, from its very nature, be grasped in the objective categories of abstract speculative thinking.

Kierkegaard saw the metaphysician as engaged in a thought project which aimed at discovering the truth by a process of pure reason. But he immediately saw in this situation a fundamental difficulty which would prevent such a metaphysician from ever finally achieving his object. This difficulty emerges when we ask ourselves how this philosophical 'truth' is to be understood. Is it comparable with the truth of matter of fact statements about the world, or must we say it is in some sense more abstract than that? In either case we run into difficulties, Kierkegaard thinks. 'Whether the truth is defined more empirically as the conformity of thought with being, or more idealistically as the conformity of being with thought, it is, in either case, important carefully to note what is meant by being'. *

Suppose the metaphysician does define the truth for which he is seeking 'more empirically', can he really hope to achieve his final object? Is he not reduced to describing the limitless process of becoming, which constitutes the empirical world?

Postscript

* P.S. P.169

'If being ... is understood as empirical being...everything must be understood in terms of becoming...' *

Of course an empiricist philosopher might not be disturbed by this disclosure of the limits of his work, but this would surely be because he would make no claim finally to discover the truth, anyway. If we define truth empirically as the conformity of thought with being, then presumably truth is expressed in true statements about the world. Here one is reminded of the opening proposition of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: 'The world is everything that is the case.' Our search for truth becomes a matter of making a list of all those things that are the case. But if our description of being is to be complete only when this list of facts is complete, then we can never complete such a description. So long as we are dealing with empirical being 'everything must be understood in terms of becoming.' Since 'everything that is the case' is constantly changing if you could list it all today, then tomorrow your list would be out of date.

To this I suppose a persistent empiricist might say that we need not stop at listing everything that is the case, as if it were all to be described in static propositions. We may indeed go on to develop some kind of logic which will enable us to predict

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* Postscript P. 170

all the future changes in what is the case. In this event we could list everything that is the case today and predict what it will be tomorrow and the day after that and so on. Such a vision would certainly do justice to Kierkegaard's claim that empirical reality is in a state of becoming, but for this very reason it suggests a process to which there is no end. We might feed all our facts into an electronic computer, which might go on describing ever new states of affairs; and if we were asked for the truth about the world we might point to our computer and say: "There it is, but it is not finished yet, and as a matter of fact it never will be finished."

Whether such overall deterministic logic could be discovered is not really in question here. * The point is simply that even if it were discovered it would make no difference to Kierkegaard's claim that the empirical realm is a realm of becoming and therefore not a realm in which absolute truth can be discovered. Of course, as we have already pointed out, the empiricist may well agree with this, for he may well reject any claim to discover truth in any final or absolute sense. Perhaps it is true that this road leads not to an understanding of being but only to an understanding of the pattern of becoming, but is it not the whole point of the

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* Nor is it within the scope of this discussion to consider whether some empirical principle such as the second law of thermodynamics may make it possible to predict an end to the process of becoming itself. For a discussion of this point see Stephen Toulmin's essay 'Contemporary Scientific Mythology' in Metaphysical Beliefs, edited by Alistair McIntyre (SCM Press).

empiricist position, that the attempt to understand <u>being itself</u> is a mistake?

This debate with empiricism is never worked out in all its detail by Kierkegaard, however. He is much more concerned with the critique of the absolute idealism of Hegel. The Hegelian's claim to have comprehended the absolute in his system was a claim which Kierkegaard could not accept. This does not necessarily mean that he rejected the meaningful significance of terms such as 'being' or 'the absolute', but he certainly did think they were being misused and misunderstood by idealist philosophers. The way in which Kierkegaard himself may have been prepared to use such philosophical concepts is something which we may hope will emerge in the course of our discussion of his thought, but for the moment we should rather concentrate on his critique of the claims of idealism.

Whatever the empiricist may achieve in his pursuit of knowledge, he does not in the end comprehend being, but only becoming. We must therefore understand the word 'being' much more abstractly. It is in this abstract sense that the word is used in the idealist formula that truth is to be defined as 'the conformity of being with thought.' But Kierkegaard complains that this formula reduces 'being' to a product of thought : that is a product of the thought with which we say, by definition it must

conform. 'Being' is what thought asserts it to be and the definition of truth says no more than that truth is the conformity of our thought with our thought. And so we are left with a tautology. Hegel's comprehending of reality has thus been achieved by equating reality with thought thus losing all touch with the facts of the world.

To this it might be objected that far from losing touch with the facts of the world, Hegel produced a logic which he applied to all the facts of the world. Hence it may be claimed that for all its abstraction Hegel's system is just as much related to the facts of the world as, for example, any system of geometry. Euclid developed a geometry which could be applied to the spatial relationships of things as they exist in the world: a spatial geometry. Hegel developed a geometry which could be applied to the whole of reality, to being itself. Perhaps an Hegelian might want to call it a geometry of existence: an existential geometry, although in Kierkegaard's terminology this would be a serious misnomer. In Kierkegaard's terminology it should rather be called a geometry of essence: an essential geometry.

Of course we cannot assume that any geometry will have any real application until we have tested it against the realities of the existing world. An <u>a priori</u> assumption that it can be applied can be made neither for the spatial geometry of Euclid

nor for the essential geometry of Hegel. Hence if we are really to understand Hegel's logic as a kind of metaphysical geometry, applicable to all existence, then we must test it to see how it applies and whether it works or not. Furthermore such a geometry will tell us nothing about the actual facts of the world, even if we decide it has a genuine area of application. Euclid's geometry can, within the sphere of its own application, tell us the possible ways in which things may be spatially related to each other, but it cannot tell us the actual things there are in space. Similarly if Hegel's logic is to be understood as being this kind of abstract geometry it will tell us nothing of the facts of reality. It will tell us only of possible patterns of existence. It sets aside the actual facts of the world. This seems to be what Kierkegaard had in mind when he wrote that 'abstract thought considers both possibility and reality, but its concept of reality is a false reflection, since the medium in which the concept is thought is not reality but possibility. Abstract thought can get hold of reality only by nullifying it, and this nullification of reality consists of transforming it into possibility.'* Kierkegaard admits that abstract thought does preserve a relationship to the reality from which it abstracts. But in the end it only describes the patterns - the possible patterns - of existence, or

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* Postscript P.279

the patterns of becoming. Such abstract thinking is really no different from that development of a predictive logic which we suggested the empiricist would be quite prepared to embrace. But at this level we could hardly claim to have dealt with the question of 'being' in any final and absolute sense. The 'abstract problem of reality' is not the problem of grasping the absolute, but merely of understanding the patterns of possibilities. But to raise the abstract problem of reality 'is not nearly so difficult a problem as it is to raise and to answer the question of what it means that this definite something is a reality' for 'this definite something is just what abstract thought abstracts from.' *
Here Kierkegaard is raising a problem which he believes cannot be solved either by statements about what is the case or by logical expositions of 'possibility', for neither of these will really penetrate the inner reality, or the 'meaning', of concrete particular existence.

As to what Kierkegaard really means by the comprehension of the reality of 'this definite something', we may hope that this will emerge from our further analysis of his thought. For the moment we may say that whatever he wanted, he did not find it in the speculative system of Hegel. He admitted that the Hegelians claimed to go beyond the realm of abstract thought as we have considered it so far, for the system must be understood as reaching

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* Postscript P. 267

beyond 'abstract thought' and entering the realm of 'pure thought'. But it is just at this point, Kierkegaard holds, that the Hegelians lose all touch with reality. 'The relation which abstract thought still sustains with that from which it abstracts, is something which pure thought innocently, or thoughtlessly ignores. Here is rest for every doubt, here is the eternal positive truth and whatever else one may be pleased to say. That is, pure thought is a phantom'. *

Whatever account the Hegelian may give of his system, Kierkegaard denies that he has succeeded in grasping, or fully understanding, the contingent unique reality of particular existence. Indeed, since the Hegelian is moving in the realm of the eternally necessary truths of pure reason, he cannot account for the contingent becoming of the empirical world. The movement from premise to conclusion within a logical system is no real movement in the sense in which we understand movement in the realm of contingent events, for in the logical system the conclusion is already implied in the premises. 'In the construction of a logical system it is necessary first and foremost to take care not to include in it anything which is subject to an existential dialectic, anything which is only because it exists, or has existed, and not simply because it is. From this it follows quite simply that

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* Postscript P.278-279.

Hegel's unparalleled discovery, the subject of so unparalleled an admiration, namely the introduction of movement into logic, is a sheer confusion of logical science ... it is surely strange to make movement fundamental in a sphere where movement is unthinkable.' * Thus the claim of a logical system (any logical system) to incorporate into itself the category of 'movement', in order that it might account for contingent existence, must be rejected.

We may by now be ready to conclude, despite anything that has been said to the contrary, that Kierkegaard's thought leads inevitably, and perhaps in spite of his own intention, to a rejection of every attempt to know the Truth in any final sense of the word. When a man asks the question of truth in an ultimate sense he does not know what he is asking. If he turns towards abstract truth then the most he can hope for is to develop a complete logical pattern, revealing all the possible modes of existence. If he turns toward concrete reality he may set out to list everything that is the case in all its particularity. If this is 'metaphysics' then it turns out to be no more than the kind of thing which is systematically undertaken by the empirical scientist: the developing of structural geometries and the cataloguing of true propositions. Such metaphysics could certainly discover endless facts and could discover patterns of relations between facts; thus the metaphysician could make endless judgments which were true, but this would never

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* Postscript PP.99-100.

seem to add up to anything which could be called 'Reality.'

This kind of analysis of metaphysics might well point towards a radical empiricist, or even a positivist conclusion, but we must still insist that Kierkegaard does not draw such conclusions from his argument. He certainly rejected the possibility of finally penetrating to an understanding of 'being' by way of speculative reason, but for all that he did not conclude that the desire to comprehend reality was of no importance. The quest for some kind of ultimate truth was for Kierkegaard a matter of the greatest importance, for he held that we need such truth as a basis for our living. Thus the question of truth is seen as the question of 'the truth upon which I can base my eternal happiness.' But such truth can be found neither in collecting true propositions nor by completing a speculative system. In the most general sense we might say that Kierkegaard's question is the question "How should I live?", and it is in the end because the Hegelians claimed that their system contained the answer to this question too, that Kierkegaard launched his polemic against them. One can readily see how this concern to find a basis for living dominates all his writings. He analyses different levels of living - the 'Stages on Life's Way' - in order that he may penetrate further into this problem; he criticizes the lack of seriousness of the scholar who can pursue his researches in the indifference of objectivity, because the conclusions reached by such scholarship are of no vital

significance for how the scholar should live now. And in the same spirit he launches an attack upon the very erudition of the biblical scholar, who defends himself against God's Word by his scholarship: by concentrating on the variant readings and the views of all the different commentators, so that he never faces the real question 'Have I done this? do I act accordingly?' * And it is as part of this same quest that we must understand his critique of metaphysics. The speculative philosopher at best offered an objective system, which in all its objectivity and completeness (if it ever really could be complete) failed to concern the individual person with this immediate and passionate question: 'How shall I live now? On what can I base my eternal happiness?'

Having recognized this background to Kierkegaard's attack upon Hegel, we may now understand better his refusal to rest in a relativistic empiricism. For if the empiricist claims that there is no way of going beyond a final relativism this still leaves Kierkegaard's question untouched. If we can know nothing beyond an indifferent collection of empirical facts, then we still lack that 'Archimedean point' which Kierkegaard maintained was necessary as a basis for life. **

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* See For Self Examination pp.56-57.

** James Collins in his book The Mind of Kierkegaard notes that in his early notebooks Kierkegaard groups his reflections around certain striking images and key notions, outstanding among which is the symbol of the Archimedean point, which recurs in the early entries in the Journal (cf. entries 4,16,335 and 784 in Lowrie's selections from Kierkegaard's Journal)

Hence Kierkegaard wishes to change the direction of the philosophical quest. We may question whether he finally rejects the endeavour to understand 'being' or 'reality' in what he might himself have called an 'eternal' sense, but we should certainly have to admit that if he does accept such an endeavour he re-orientates it completely. To develop a complete speculative system is to lose touch with existence. But the only reality to which man sustains a real relationship is his own existence and it is in discovering a basis for this reality that we shall have discovered the 'truth' about 'being'. * Hence Kierkegaard's aim is quite different from the aim of the metaphysician. He starts with the need to discover a fixed Archimedean point which may form a basis for his life, or his personal existence; a point which is not only the truth, but the way the truth and the life. But this means that he must start from the very point at which he knows existence: in his own existence as a subject. And so he enunciates his principle that subjectivity is truth.

But how is the discovery of this truth which is known in subjectivity possible? Are we to investigate the life of the subject according to the methods of the anthropological sciences and perhaps especially according to the method of psychology?

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* In the Postscript he argues:

"If thought could give reality in the sense of actuality and not merely validity in the sense of possibility it would also have the power to take away existence and so take away from the existing individual the only reality to which he sustains a real relationship namely his own." (op.cit. P.295)

Clearly this would be to miss the point. Such psychological truth is still within the realm of objective knowledge and to know all the facts relating to psychological and physiological mechanisms is not to come to terms with the subjectivity of our own personal existence.* Yet if we are not to discover this 'subjective' truth by means of an anthropological investigation how shall we discover it? Can there be some new kind of philosophy, for example, which will replace the speculative metaphysics of idealism and will lead us to the subjective awareness of existence? Perhaps we might suggest that the discovery of the 'Archimedean point' will itself emerge from this subjective awareness, or on the other hand that a genuine subjective awareness will emerge from the discovery of an 'Archimedean point', but in any case we seem to be concerned with an awareness of existence which is more fundamental than the discoveries of 'objective knowledge.' But might this not mean that it is more fundamental, or perhaps more primitive, than any conceptual knowledge whatever? It could be suggested that this is why Kierkegaard so often speaks of 'being in the truth' rather than using the more usual phrase 'knowing the truth'.

Kierkegaard is not himself unaware of this difficulty, but he does not in the end reject thought, as if we must be left to base

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* Dr. Eysenk in his book Uses and Abuses of Psychology speaks of psycho-analysts who 'consciously reject scientific methodology in favour of subjectivity', and it may be claimed that such analysts are moving in the same area as Kierkegaard in his aim to establish the truth which is subjectivity. In the present context I refer only to psychologists who would claim that their work is based on the objective methods of the natural sciences however.

our lives on a kind of unexpressed style, which finds no expression in our thought forms at all. He rather suggests that if one would grasp the truth, in his sense of truth, then one's thinking must have that character about it which will unite it with the real basis of personal existence. It is indeed precisely in this sense that truth is subjectivity. Subjective reflection is a reflection which is united with, or which, we might say, arises out of the most passionate personal concern of the thinker; and it is just this relationship between reflection and the basic passion of the thinker's existence which places such a thinker in the truth. Kierkegaard puts this point at its strongest when he writes: 'when the question of truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth, even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.' *

We have suggested that Kierkegaard's conception of truth here is not something quite independent of, or more primitive than, our thought, since to be in the truth requires that one's thinking has a certain character about it which will unite it with the basis of subjective existence. But can we really speak of truth as something relating to the <u>character</u> of a person's thinking

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* Postscript P.178.

(In a footnote he reminds us that what is at issue here is essential truth : the truth which is essentially related to existence.)

without any reference to the content of what is thought? Kierkegaard seems to think we can, if we are to accept the above quotation from the Postscript. But in this case we might think it more honest and less confusing to stop using the word 'truth' altogether. If to hold a conviction with sufficient passion is in itself sufficient to be 'in the truth' then the question whether the passionately held conviction is in fact true no longer seems to arise. Here the idea of truth seems to have been abandoned altogether.

At this point we may want to re-state our suggestion that the truth Kierkegaard speaks of is more primitive than thought. What we might say now is that it is more primitive than any content of thought. It is more primitive than any conceptual formulation of belief. Hence we may in the end describe the truth which is subjectivity as a kind of passionate personal integrity, which informs our living as we grapple with the concrete complexity of existence, but which has nothing whatever to do with any objective question of truth.

For Kierkegaard, however, the matter does not end with personal integrity, as if he had no interest in the object of truth, that is the object in which the passionate believer actually believes. After all his problem in the end is the problem of becoming a christian and in his journal we find him writing that 'truth from the christian point of view does not lie in the subject (as Socrates

understood it) but in a revelation which must be proclaimed.' * How then is this account of Christian truth to be reconciled with the principle that subjectivity is truth? If truth does not lie in the subject, how can we speak of raising the question of truth subjectively in such a way that 'if only the mode of the individual's relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth?'

Perhaps we might try to solve this dilemma by suggesting that while Kierkegaard himself, from the maturity of his faith, realized that 'truth from the Christian point of view does not lie in the subject,' Johannes Climacus, the imaginary author of the Postscript did not share this maturity of faith, and was opposing objectivity on philosophical grounds, which were independent of the Christian viewpoint. We might even suggest that Kierkegaard used the person of Johannes Climacus deliberately to overstate his case. It is doubtful whether such explanations are acceptable, however, since he records in his journal that Climacus himself saw the need for an object of faith. 'In all that is usually said about Johannes Climacus being purely subjective and so on', he writes, 'people have forgotten, in addition to everything else concrete about him, that in one of the last sections he shows that the curious thing is: that there is a 'how' which has this quality, that if it is truly given, then the 'what' is also given; and that it is the 'how' of 'faith.' Here quite certainly we have inwardness at its maximum

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* Journals IX A 221 (Lowrie No. 809)

proving to be objectivity once again. And this is an aspect of the principle of subjectivity which, so far as I know, has never before been presented or worked out.' *

Thus we can certainly say that for Kierkegaard, and also it seems for his pseudonym Johannes Climacus, the object of faith is not dismissed as a matter of indifference. If we merely asserted that for Kierkegaard there has to be some object of faith, this would not in itself be enough to defend him from the charge of pure subjectivism, for it may be a matter of complete indifference what the object should be. So long as the 'how' of my faith had the right quality the question of the 'what' of my faith would be unimportant and any choice of a particular object of faith would be an entirely subjective matter. Yet the extract we have just quoted from the Journal at least suggests that faith cannot begin with an entirely arbitrary choice, for Kierkegaard speaks here of the 'what' of faith as being something given: and it is given together with the passion of subjectivity. This might suggest that the passion is, as it were, generated by the true object of faith. Kierkegaard's view is not as simple as that, however, or he could hardly contemplate the possibility of the subjective thinker being related, in this subjective mode, to what is not true. Yet he does explicitly entertain this possibility (i.e. through the thought of Climacus). He not only refers to the possibility

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* Journals X 2 A (Lowrie No. 1021)

of a man being in the truth, even though he is related to what is not true, but he goes on to illustrate this possibility by considering the Christian and the idolater at prayer. 'If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol : where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God, though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.' * It is quite clearly suggested here that the true passion of subjectivity may in fact arise in the presence of an untrue idol; not in the absence of any object at all to be sure, but in the presence of an object which is inappropriate.

It is hard to know what is Kierkegaard's final solution to this dilemma. We have already seen that although he speaks in his Journal of inwardness at its maximum proving to be objectivity again, he nevertheless regards this as 'an aspect of the principle of subjectivity which so far as I know has never been worked out,' ** and we may well feel that it is an aspect which Kierkegaard himself never fully worked out. We may have one further indication of the

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* Postscript P.179-180.

** Ibid.

direction of his own thinking about this matter in the second volume of Either/Or where he writes 'therefore, even if a man were to choose the wrong he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he had chosen the wrong. For the choice being made with the whole inwardness of his personality, his nature is purified and he himself brought into immediate relation to the eternal Power whose omnipresence interpenetrates the whole of existence.' * This passage certainly seems to bear on the case of the man who, though he is 'in the truth' by virtue of the mode of his relationship, is nevertheless related to what is untrue. It seems to suggest that he will come to recognize the untruth of what he believes in, or perhaps will even begin to see beyond his limited object of faith towards that which is indeed the truth. Does this mean Kierkegaard, looking from his Christian viewpoint, would have held that a Buddhist, who related himself to the Buddha in all the passion of subjectivity, would inevitably recognize that the way of the Buddha is untrue? It is by no means clear that this is his view and one would hardly be justified in ascribing such a belief to him on the basis of this quotation from Either/Or. In the end we must conclude that this is something that he never worked out with sufficient care himself.

Although Kierkegaard may never give a final and clear reply to those who accuse him of sheer subjectivism, however, certain

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* Either/Or, Vol. II. P.141

facts about his position have emerged from this discussion which we might now attempt to summarize.

First of all the subjective believer is certainly represented as believing in something. His passion is not to be understood merely as an enthusiasm for life. It relates him to a particular object of belief. At the same time the belief in this 'object' is not founded on objective reasons. It is 'an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness.' * And we might add here that it is important that this 'objective uncertainty' should be maintained. For this very uncertainty seems to contribute to the intensity of our belief. 'The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty' he writes, and adds 'but it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is.' **

This does not mean, however, that he is thinking of a kind of subjectivity in which the subject is quite free to find the truth in any object that takes his fancy. For he does speak as if the truth in some sense resides in the object. We have already quoted his own Journal to this effect, and here we might add a sentence from his book on Adler in which he says that the object of the Christian's faith (namely that the eternal once came into existence in time) is 'not something which men are to test' but

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* Postscript. P.182

** On Revelation and Authority. P.58

'the paradox by which men are to be tested.' *

Whatever may be the final answer of Kierkegaard to this charge of subjectivism, one thing surely emerges quite clearly from this whole discussion, namely that Kierkegaard believes there is a challenge facing every person to engage in the most serious possible way in the task of discovering the truth and committing himself whole-heartedly to this discovery. And this 'truth' is something which emerges from the engagement itself. The point is well put by Hermann Diem who writes that 'truth is no longer to be conceived as an objective statement about certain relations of being, but as a form of existence in which such relations are actualized. Hence truth is "not something objective suggesting that the knowledge of it is concerned with what is to be found in existence as an object, but implies rather that knowledge is something related to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual, and that all real insight is essentially related to that which exists and to existence itself." Being in truth therefore implies a process which is never complete'. **

Here Diem suggests (in the last sentence of the quotation) that for Kierkegaard to be 'in the truth' means to be embarked, to be 'in the way'. And this leads us on to one further contrast with objective truth. Objective truth is reached at the conclusion of an investigation or an argument, but this subjective mode of

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* On Revelation and Authority, P.58.

** Hermann Diem: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence, P.38 (Diem's quotation here is from the Postscript, P.177 of the English translation).

truth does not seem to achieve the final status of a conclusion at all. To this it might be objected that though the 'truth' for Kierkegaard had not the final status of a conclusion it had nevertheless a final status : the status of a conversion. Kierkegaard was certainly prepared to speak of the conversion of a disciple but I think it is clear that this was not intended to suggest that the convert had now reached the end in his search for truth. The life of the disciple, as Kierkegaard understood it, had to be lived in the mode of subjective inwardness which was the mode of the conversion itself. Thus the moment of conversion must be present at every moment of the disciple's life and the truth must constantly be discovered and appropriated anew. We get a hint of this in a footnote to the Postscript in which he says that 'even the most certain of all things, a revelation, eo ipso becomes dialectical whenever I attempt to appropriate it. Even the most fixed of things, an infinite negative resolve, the infinite form for God's presence in the individual at once becomes dialectical.' Thus it seems that even our confession of faith must partake of this dialectical character.

So far we have discussed the truth which is subjectivity both in its relation to its own 'object' and in relation to ordinary objective truth. There is one question we may now put which could serve to sharpen some of the discussion which has gone before. Is this truth of which Kierkegaard speaks discussible? If truth

is a way to be lived then it seems doubtful whether it can be discussed. We can I suppose talk about the mode of our living, and we might even discuss whether it is an appropriate mode, but if discovering the truth is a matter of living 'in the way' then the discovery itself is made in living rather than in talking about living. If this is so then must we not say that truth is a private matter, to be discovered by the individual? * And surely this remains true even if we give due weight to the fact that our living itself has communal and historical dimensions. ** To insist that my existence is set in the context of a world, a community and a history is not to deny that it is nevertheless my existence. Nor is it to deny that my living relationship to anything which I call 'the truth' is a relationship which is rooted in my living and choosing and deciding.

At this point it would seem that whether we think Kierkegaard's position is lost in irrational subjectivism or not, the fact has emerged that for him there is no place left for philosophical discussion in determining the truth on which I can base my eternal happiness. But we should also remember that he did not reject the possibility of talking about the importance of such truth. This truth could not itself be discovered by discussion,

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* We have already had occasion to question the appropriateness of using the word 'truth' in this 'subjective' sense, (above P. 24) but we are here using the word as we believe it is used by Kierkegaard himself.

** A fact that we may sometimes think Kierkegaard, with his emphasis on 'the single one', is inclined to forget.

but we could, and Kierkegaard did, discuss the need for such a truth : the need for what he called an Archimedean point. Hence, while Kierkegaard rejected the path of metaphysical speculation, he still embarked on a discussion of the nature of man's existence, in order that he might discover how man's subjectivity is to be understood and what it is that puts him in need of a fixed point on which to base his life. And it is to this discussion of existence that we must now turn.

CHAPTER II. KIERKEGAARD'S ANALYSIS OF EXISTENCE.

In the preceding Chapter we have given a preliminary account of Kierkegaard's critique of speculative thought from which he concludes that metaphysical speculation is incompetent to discover any truth upon which we may base our lives. At the same time we recognized that it is precisely the need for this kind of truth on which living may be based which is the central concern of all his thought. This in turn led us to recognize the place Kierkegaard gave to analyzing human existence in order that he might, as a result of his analysis, understand better the nature of man's need to discover some basic truth in which to live.

Whether this analysis of existence should be called psychological or phenomenological, ontological or simply existential we shall not at this point try to decide. It is argued by Michael Wyschogrod that Kierkegaard in fact implies an antological position which must take its place within the classical tradition of metaphysics,* but this is a point which we shall take up later, after we have given some account of the actual analysis with which Kierkegaard confronts us.

To present a full review of Kierkegaard's analysis of personal existence would mean tracing his thought through all his works from the thesis on irony, through Either/Or, The Stages on Life's Way to the Concept of Dread and the Sickness unto Death.

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* See his book Kierkegaard and Heideggar, which we shall have occasion to refer to in our further discussion.

And of course this list is still far from complete. No such complete review will be attempted here. Yet without pretending to do justice to the riches of his thought, I shall attempt to penetrate a certain area of his analysis in order that we might see something of its nature.

It has already been suggested that Kierkegaard is not concerned with raising questions such as those investigated by the empirical scientists : the biochemist or the neuro-physiologist, or even the empirical psychologist (although the relation of his analysis to that of the psychologist is more complicated perhaps). Yet he is interested in the concrete reality of man's existence as a subject. And from the subjective side man's existence is understood in terms of a life to be lived, not just to be suffered. This point seems to be so obvious that it hardly needs to be argued. As subjects we not only suffer experiences but we also perform deliberate acts. We make our responses to the demands of the world and they are <u>our</u> responses. Any kind of determinism which fails to do justice to this, fails to do justice to the everyday reality of personal experience. And it is just this reality which is at the heart of our notion of subjectivity.

In view of this it is not surprising to find that a preoccupation with the importance of decision is central to Kierkegaard's thought about existence. Of course he is not

concerned with examining the pattern of actual decisions, as one might examine the pattern of some organism's response to stimuli. It is not the overall pattern of the multiplicity of human decisions which interests him, but rather what it means that we are responsible persons of whom decision is in fact demanded. What does it mean that we are responsible for our own decisions? And indeed what does it mean that we can speak of <u>our own</u> existence at all?

In claiming that we discover personal existence as <u>our</u> existence, we are claiming that there is a unity in our life and hence in our responsibility. This unity is more than the temporal empirical unity of an organism persisting in existence for a certain period of time. It includes also the self-conscious unity of one who <u>knows</u> his past and must relate present decisions to past and future, in a recognition of the wholeness of life. 'To have been young and then to grow older and finally to die is a very mediocre form of human existence; this merit belongs to every animal. But the unification of the different stages of life in simultaneity is the task set for human beings.' * This unity of every sphere of life and every period of life demands more than a number of discrete decisions, it demands a decision relating to our life as a whole. If our decisions degenerated into completely unconsidered responses to the demands of the moment, then it would seem that we had abandoned deliberate action altogether and that our existence had

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* Postscript P.311

become less than personal. 'A man who has no will at all is no self.' *

Kierkegaard certainly recognizes that there is a certain kind of aesthetic existence in which one may actually decide to react spontaneously to the desire of the moment, and this decision may be renewed at every moment with wilful deliberation, but in such a case there is at any rate a deliberate decision in regard to the aesthete's existence as a whole, even if it seems to be a negative decision. In the absence of any such decision at all the self would be disintegrated. 'In so far as the self does not become itself it is not its own self.' ** Hence there is a sense in which if I am to be a person in the full sense of the word, I must establish myself, my own existence, on some foundation, and this demands a personal decision. The foundation is not simply given, but I must grasp it in decision.

To Kierkegaard then, personal existence means existence in the face of many possibilities from which a man must choose, and this not only in the relative choices of daily life, but in regard to life as a whole. Yet having said this he sees that a man may very well become lost in contemplating these very possibilities. 'Possibility becomes more and more intense - but

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* Sickness unto Death. P.43-4.

** Ibid. P.44.

only in the sense of possibility, not in the sense of actuality; for in the sense of actuality the meaning of intensity is that at least something of that which is possible becomes actual. At the instant that something appears possible and then a new possibility makes its appearance, at last this phantasmagoria moves so rapidly that it is as if everything were possible.' *

This situation, which Kierkegaard describes as a form of despair, might be thought to be a condition of freedom pushed to its very limit : freedom pushed to the point where all things seem possible. But in fact he denies that any freedom is found here at all, since freedom can only be exercized in deliberate choice, which seems beyond the grasp of the man who is lost in possibility. 'The self', he writes, 'is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical element in the terms possibility and necessity.' **

How should we understand this strange definition of freedom? Whatever may be the relationship between freedom and possibility, the relationship between freedom and necessity at first sight seems clear enough. Surely necessity is the negation of freedom. Inasmuch as one's life is controlled by necessity, one's freedom is curtailed. How then can Kierkegaard speak of freedom as the dialectical element in terms of possibility and necessity?

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* Sickness unto Death. P.55

** Ibid. P.43.

Perhaps we should understand him as defining the area in which human freedom actually operates, rather than offering a definition which will teach us how to use the word 'freedom' correctly. We are in fact confronted with various possibilities and we can act this way or that way and actualize one of these possibilities. But having acted, having actualized one particular possibility and having rejected the rest, this actualization is now subjected to the necessity which controls events in the physical world. * That is to say by our choice we bind ourselves to all the implications of the act we choose. The exercize of freedom is thus placed on the frontier between the contemplation of possibilities and the binding implications of action. And the 'despair of possibility' which is 'due to lack of necessity' will according to this analysis be a despair arising out of an unreadiness to submit to the 'necessity' involved in realizing one possibility, at the expense of rejecting all the others : the despair of Hamlet for whom the 'native hue of resolution' was 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.'

Such irresolution seems to be in Kierkegaard's mind when he says that 'what the self now lacks is surely reality - so one would commonly say as one says of a man that he has become unreal.' **

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* It may seem foreign to Kierkegaard's way of thinking to speak of necessity as in any sense controlling concrete events, but this point need not concern us in the context of the present discussion. We need only say that without an element of 'necessity', in the sense of regularity, in the pattern of events, the ground of choice would be undermined.

** Sickness unto Death. P.55.

But in the further discussion of necessity in this same passage a new note is introduced, beyond what we have suggested so far. We may say that what an irresolute man lacks is reality, but, Kierkegaard insists, 'upon closer inspection it is really necessity the man lacks. For it is not true, as the philosophers explain, that necessity is a unity of possibility and actuality....Nor is it merely due to a lack of strength when the soul goes astray in possibility - at least this is not to be understood as people commonly understand it. What really is lacking is the power to obey, to submit to the necessity in oneself, to what may be called one's limit.' * Clearly the 'necessity' of which he speaks here is not just a necessity imposed upon us by the external conditions in which we realize our decision, or as we might say the conditions into which we cast our action. This could indeed be called a limiting factor necessarily imposed by our realizing one possibility and rejecting others, but it could hardly be called 'the necessity in oneself', nor I think 'what might be called one's limit'. How should we understand this 'necessity in oneself' then?

At first sight it may seem that Kierkegaard is here thinking of the way in which a man is limited by the limits of his own ability, of his own personality, or even of his own status. I cannot hope to achieve what a much stronger man or a much more accomplished man than I am could achieve. Nor can I do what a person

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* Sickness unto Death P.55-56.

in a much more important social position could do. In contemplating the possibilities of any situation I must take these personal limits into account. I must realize that the possibilities for me are limited to those things which I may hope to achieve.

But surely this is not the personal limit to which Kierkegaard refers. If he did mean this he would perhaps have spoken of 'what might be called one's limits' rather than referring to one's limit in the singular. In any case whether we recognize these limits of possible action or not, we are still left contemplating only possibilities. Admittedly it will make the difference between contemplating real possibilities and contemplating fantastic (impossible) possibilities, yet recognizing this does not solve the problem of the man who is lost in possibility, and is faced with the need to choose. Kierkegaard seems to suggest that what is lacking here is a personal limit on which an actual decision may be based. This 'necessity in oneself' seems to be a kind of personal basis of one's own existence in accordance with which one may decide : what we might call a fundamental orientation.

The misfortune of the man who lacked necessity is therefore that he 'did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is, is a perfectly definite something, and so is the necessary.' * And this 'perfectly definite something' includes a definite standpoint,

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* Sickness unto Death, P.56.

a fundamental orientation. We have a further indication that this is indeed Kierkegaard's view when we read that 'a case analogous to possibility is when a child is invited to participate in some pleasure or another : the child is at once willing, but now it is a question whether the parents will permit it - and as with the parents so it is with necessity'. * At this point we may say that this personal limit has something very like a moral character. When necessity is lacking 'what really is lacking is the power to obey.' One is reminded here of the necessity which is laid upon a man who says "I just could not treat my employees the way he does," meaning he could not, because he is not that kind of person, and his personal limits would not allow it.

This analysis of personal existence now seems to suggest that some personal standard is a basic factor in the human situation. One is in fact reminded of the personal need for an Archimedean point, which played so important a part in all Kierkegaard's thinking. It is not surprising that we should have come once again to this need, since the analysis started by recognizing the fundamental importance of decision. It could quite well be argued that without some standard of value no decision (and incidentally no real freedom, which pre-supposes decision) would be possible at all. One would be left to react to the stimulus of the moment without any deliberate decision even to do

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* Sickness unto Death, P.56.

this. But we might also feel that in this analysis Kierkegaard has gone further than recognizing the need for a standard, for he has identified the standard with the necessity which is in the self. So the values that inform my decisions are in some way related to the self that I am. And perhaps we might want to add that this self is something that is given to me in my existence, and part of the task before me is to know myself. At the same time we should remember that Kierkegaard also suggests that part of the task before me is that I should become myself, or choose myself, so that perhaps we should say the foundation of personal existence is not just supplied, but it is to be established by personal decision.

It is in this way that Kierkegaard understands human existence in terms of possibility and necessity and defines human freedom as the dialectical element between these two terms. And in this same context he exposes the despair which he believes is fundamental to man's life. This despair may appear as self-rejection or as an autonomous self-affirmation with no real foundation. If we do not accept the basic terms of our personal existence, we may deliberately reject ourselves, Kierkegaard believes, and then go on to live either in an immediate relation to our present wishes and desires, or else build up a kind of personal facade, an image of what we would like to be, but are not. There is, he suggests, a fundamental despair at the basis of all such existence.

The alternative course would seem to be to relate my personal decision, or my fundamental self-affirmation, to the 'necessity given in my existence.' But inasmuch as this 'necessity' refers to the personal limitation given to me in my existence, this may in the end lead to a static attitude in which I accept my self just as it is, and deliberately choose to maintain even those elements of which I do not fully approve. This raises a question as to whether I really could disapprove of any of the elements of my own personal necessity, since this 'necessity' has appeared to be something very like my own personal standards, and hence the very things which by definition I approve of. Kierkegaard's answer would probably be that the self can never finally rest in its present reality. For my personal necessity, while it may have a moral connotation, is related to the moral actuality of what I am and not to some transcendent ideal of what I ought to be. And this self, even this self in its moral aspect, stands in need of self-development. Hence a kind of negative resignation completely lacking in any possibility of self-development is but another form of despair.

Suppose my self-affirmation is more dynamic however, may I not then transcend this despair of which Kierkegaard speaks? The difficulty then becomes precisely the need for an Archimedean point on which my self-development may be based and which therefore must transcend my present personal necessity. 'If the despairing

self is active, it really is related to itself only as experimenting with whatosever it be that it undertakes, however great it may be, however astonishing, however persistently carried out. It acknowledges no power over it, hence in the last resort it lacks seriousness and is able only to conjure up a show of seriousness when the self bestows upon its experiments its utmost attention.' *

Much more could, of course, be added to this account of Kierkegaard's analysis of man's existence. One could, for example, make a list of his most characteristic categories or concepts and attempt to show the part that each one played in his thinking. It has already been pointed out, however, that such a review is not part of my present purpose. And it may perhaps be pointed out that the understanding of personal existence in terms of the need for decision seems basic to all Kierkegaard's discussion anyway. It lies behind the freedom which confronts Adam in the 'alarming possibility of being able', as we read in The Concept of Dread, and it creates the possibility of the fear and trembling of Abraham.

We have here followed the analysis largely in terms of possibility/necessity, as it appears in The Sickness Unto Death. It might help to fill out our account if we draw attention to the fact that Kierkegaard places this alongside a parallel analysis in terms of finitude/infinitude. Without repeating in any detail the

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* Sickness Unto Death, P.110

analysis already attempted we need only say here that this dialectic of finitude/infinitude points us to man as having a perspective which rises above the finite, inasmuch as he can view the sequence of events as a whole, against the background of abstract ('timeless' or 'infinite') possibilities. Yet unless this same man realizes his vision in relation to the finite facts of his present reality in the world, then he will be lost in fantasy.

This perspective is well summarized in the opening of the panegyric upon Abraham in Fear and Trembling. 'If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the foundation of all there lay only a seething power which writhing with obscure passions produced everything that is great and everything that is insignificant, if a bottomless void which was never satiated lay hidden beneath all - what then would life be but despair?' Here again Kierkegaard analyses existence in such a way as to show the need for some foundation upon which a man may base his life.

CHAPTER III - HAS KIERKEGAARD HIS OWN METAPHYSICAL PRE-SUPPOSITIONS?

So far we have reviewed Kierkegaard's criticism of the Hegelian system, his attempt to discover the limits of objective reason, his conception of subjectivity as truth and to some extent his analysis of personal existence. Let us now return to a question which is raised by more than one critic of his thought, namely this : does Kierkegaard's thought really succeed in reaching an existential position free from metaphysical pre-suppositions? James Collins writes that 'Kierkegaard's commitments concerning being and existence stand in uneasy relation to his anti-Speculative and anti-Systematic campaign. His speculative analysis of existence is at odds with his general attack upon philosophical speculation.' * And a very similar criticism is developed by Michael Wyschogrod in his book Kierkegaard and Heidegger.

In a footnote to Sein und Zeit Martin Heidegger has said of Kierkegaard that 'as regards his ontology he remained completely dominated by Hegel and by ancient philosophy as Hegel saw it' ** and in discussing this note Wyschogrod says that 'Kierkegaard's polemic against Hegel's pure Being restricts itself to an attack on the identification of the thinker's point of view with that of pure Being.' And he goes on to say that 'the undesirable result

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* James Collins The Mind of Kierkegaard. P.252

** Sein und Zeit (8th edition) p.235 note, cited by Wyschogrod op. cit. P.127. The quotation here does not follow Wyschogrod's translation, but the translation of Sein und Zeit by Macquarie and Robinson.

of this, according to Kierkegaard, is that though the system which the thinker constructs is perfectly valid for an abstract non-existing being, it has no relationship to the situation in which the human thinker finds himself. Thus Kierkegaard's attack is directed at the identification of pure Being with the situation of the thinker and not at pure Being itself. On the contrary it is the thinker's relationship to it, as the point at which pure Being meets the temporal, that constitutes the nature of his existence. Kierkegaard's effort is therefore not a basic destruction of the ontological categories of Hegel, but a new juxtaposition of them, having as its purpose the 'yielding of the tensions of existence.' *

We give this somewhat lengthy quotation from Wyschogrod, not that we might discuss whether it is a justifiable 'deciphering' of Heiddeger's meaning, but rather to ask whether it is a justifiable comment on Kierkegaard's own thought. Is it a satisfactory interpretation of Kierkegaard's protest against Hegel to say that it represents a new juxtaposition of Hegel's categories? Would it not be better to say that the categories themselves have undergone a change at his hands? Wyschogrod suggests that 'Kierkegaard's attack is directed at the identification of pure Being, with the situation of the thinker and not at pure Being itself'. If this means that he did not dismiss the <u>concept</u> of 'pure Being' as a meaningless <u>concept</u>, as some more recent opponents of metaphysics

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* Wyschogrod op. cit. P.127.

have done, this is no doubt true. But if he nevertheless rejected the possibility of comprehending 'pure Being' through any systematic thought-project, then surely he was rejecting the whole ontological enterprise, and therefore was rejecting the ontological categories of Hegel. To be sure Wyschogrod could find support for his contention that in Kierkegaard's view the system which the thinker constructs is valid, for an abstract non-existent being, but surely this is simply Kierkegaard's ironical way of exposing the system as fantastic nonsense! However he may have used the Hegelian categories he did not use them in the service of an ontological system, and therefore he did not use them as ontological categories.

There is another side to Wyschogrod's argument, however. This suggests that what ever may be Kierkegaard's explicit attitude to ontology, he cannot escape the ontological pre-suppositions which are implicit in his thought. At certain points Wyschogrod thinks this becomes very obvious. When Kierkegaard discusses the distinction between factual and ideal being, for example, he surely betrays an interest in the question of being : that is, in the ontological question. In a footnote in the Philosophical Fragments Kierkegaard writes that 'in the case of factual existence it is meaningless to speak of more or less of being. A fly when it exists has as much being as God; the stupid remark I here set down has as much factual existence as Spinoza's profundity; for factual existence is subject to the dialectic of Hamlet : to be or not to be. Factual existence

is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being, and participates in the same degree. Ideally to be sure, the case is quite different. But the moment I speak of being in the ideal sense I no longer speak of being, but of essence. Highest ideality has this necessity and therefore it is. But this its being is identical with its essence; such being does not involve it dialectically in the determinations of factual existence, since it is; nor can it be said to have more or less of being in relation to other things.' * Of this footnote, which he quotes at even greater length than we have done here, Wyschogrod says that 'at this point Kierkegaard has identified himself with the school of thought that sees a sharp distinction between the essence and existence of a thing and has thereby posited the familiar disjunction between the same essence existing or not existing.' ** But in what sense is this to be understood? This could mean that we can discuss what is essential to a concept without discussing whether there is any existent corresponding to the concept. Thus we may say that it is essential to the concept 'unicorn' that unicorns have a single horn, but this tells us nothing about whether there are in fact any unicorns. This is surely a logical point, however, and need not have ontological or metaphysical implications. The distinction between essence and

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* Fragments. P.32. Note

** Wyschogrod. op. cit. P.26.

existence may be made as an ontological distinction, if it is presented as an element of estrangement within reality itself, so that existence is understood as a kind of pale imitation or a distorted image of the pure essence. This is the kind of ontology we find in the thought of Plato, but I see no warrant for understanding Kierkegaard in this way. It is not as if Kierkegaard allows an independent reality to the realm of essence. To move in the realm of essence is, for Kierkegaard, to move in the realm of abstract thought, but this abstract thought must sustain a relation to that from which it abstracts : namely existence. If this relation is not sustained then we find ourselves indulging in 'pure thought' and 'pure thought is a phantom'. *

Even if Wyschogrod is not justified in suggesting that Kierkegaard has actually entered the metaphysical debate at this point, he may nevertheless insist that metaphysical pre-suppositions do underlie Kierkegaard's thought. He may not have succeeded in showing that Kierkegaard covertly (or not so covertly) argued for a specific ontological position but he can still hold that since 'it is not possible to formulate an existential situation such as the moment without an ontological structure at its basis', Kierkegaard must have pre-supposed such a structure. ** And having said this Wyschogrod certainly admits that this structure is not

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* see our earlier discussion above P.16-17.

** Wyschogrod. P.130

developed by metaphysical speculation but is rather 'generated from the pathetic thinking of the subjective thinker.' * He maintains nevertheless that the fact that ontological categories do appear shows that we are no longer moving in the realm of the existential. At this point, of course he is claiming more than that 'the formulation of an existential situation' imples 'an ontological structure at its basis.' He is saying that the ontological categories of this implied basis do in fact appear in Kierkegaard's thought. He says that 'it is true that pure Being never appears in Kierkegaard as such but only in terms of the subject's relationship to it, which is a constant becoming and never a being it. Even with this qualification, however, the fact remains that pure Being or eternity, a non-existential category is an operative feature in the ontology of Kierkegaard.' And he adds that it is 'a feature which cannot be arrived at by means of existential thinking.' **

But when he speaks here of 'the ontology of Kierkegaard' it is not quite clear what he means. If he means the ontology which Kierkegaard actually formulates, he is surely begging the question; for it still is in question whether Kierkegaard ever formulated an ontology. If he means the ontology implicit in Kierkegaard's thought then it may still be that Kierkegaard himself never entered the ontological debate, but rather rejected all

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* Wyschogrod. P.130

** Ibid. P.130-131.

ontological speculation. Probably what Wyschogrod means here is that 'pure Being' or 'eternity' plays an operative part in the thought of Kierkegaard, and since they are non-existential categories, at least to this extent it must be non-existential thought. But this only raises the question once again : must these categories, as used by Kierkegaard, be understood as non-existential categories? In the note we have already quoted from the Fragments Kierkegaard contrasts the notion of factual being with that of ideal being. But this ideal being he says is not really being at all; it is only essence. It has the same status as the logical definition of the unicorn and leaves the question of being, of reality, out of account altogether. Now Wyschogrod seems to suggest that he uses the word 'being' in another way to refer neither to existential nor essential being but to 'eternity'. And at this point at least we seem to be confronted with an ontological category.

Yet Wyschogrod is still prepared to admit that Kierkegaard's ontological picture is not arrived at on the basis of an ontological argument, but that his starting point is to be found in 'an existential involvement, such as the necessity for winning "my" eternal happiness of the Postscript.' * But might we not contend that this starting point is also the whole point? Might it not be that the concept of eternity really does have an existential significance for Kierkegaard rather than an ontological significance?

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* Wyschogrod. P.130

For surely Kierkegaard only uses this concept in relation to the existential need to find a basis for 'my eternal happiness' and never as an element within an ontological picture or system.

Let us now review what has really emerged in relation to Kierkegaard's thought out of this whole discussion. It seems to be true that Kierkegaard was fascinated by the contrast between the necessity of the abstract truths of reason and the contingency of the factuality of existence and this seems like that very contrast between essence and existence which been a central idea of much traditional ontology. But the thing that puzzled Kierkegaard was the fact that he could give no reality to this realm of essence except as a geometry for describing the patterns (i.e. the 'possibilities of factual existence. *

It is also true that Kierkegaard saw the paradox of belief in God as arising from a disparity between the infinity of God and the finiteness of existence; the 'necessity' of God and the 'contingency' of existence; perhaps we may even say in a certain sense the 'essential' nature of God's being and the 'accidental' nature of factual existence. And this certainly makes the conception of paradox look like an ontological formulation. Yet surely the

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* This is pointed out by James Collins : 'Kierkegaard admits that the greater part of our thinking is carried on in terms of objective, abstract reasoning. The natural, mathematical and social sciences deal with objects through their essential natures, abstract relations and inductively necessary natural laws. Such sciences give genuine knowledge within these methodic limits, but they are not competent beyond the sphere of essence and possibility. (Collins: The Mind of Kierkegaard. P.122)

whole point of Kierkegaard's formulation of the problem is aimed at showing that the paradox which confronts us in an authoritative faith demanding a concrete finite decision, is something quite different from the abstract universal concepts of the ontologist. Indeed, to present 'being' as an abstract universal concept has always been an attempt to resolve the paradox and hence it leads to fantasy. Thus while it is true that Kierkegaard confronts us with the need for an 'Archimedean point' and while it is true that he suggests that this point must have an infinite eternal significance, which transcends the accidental contingencies and relativities of factual existence, he nevertheless denies that such a point can be discovered by, or even grasped within, an ontological system of conceptual thinking. This being so surely Kierkegaard <u>is</u> rejecting metaphysical speculative ontology.

A slightly different approach to this question is found in James Collins' discussion of Kierkegaard's thought. Collins admits that Kierkegaard does in fact reject metaphysical speculation, but he argues that this is really because the only form of metaphysic he knew at all well was the idealist metaphysic of Hegel. Thus Collins believes that one might still postulate a quite different kind of metaphysical system which Kierkegaard would have been much more prepared to embrace. There is, Collins suggests, always the possibility of a realistic philosophy and a nonidealistic metaphysics, which Kierkegaard never seriously considers.

'Kierkegaard's tragedy was that there was no philosophical movement on the horizon which could find a place for his deliverences. After a shrewd appraisal of contemporary tendencies, he concluded that, at its worst, philosophy degenerates into Hegelian "pure thought" and, at its best remains an analysis of essential forms.' * Yet Collins insists that there was a philosophical movement which could find a place for Kierkegaard's deliverences, and this was the Thomist movement. Furthermore he suggests that Kierkegaard's own thought already shows a certain preparedness to entertain the possibility of a new kind of speculative theory. 'Kierkegaard', he says, 'does not leave entirely unexplored the alternative routes to philosophical wisdom' ** and as evidence of this he cites a footnote in the Philosophical Fragments in which Kierkegaard reproaches Hegel for leading the readers of his Philosophy of History straight to the consideration of concrete events, as if to establish the validity of his method by this demonstration of his extraordinary learning. Kierkegaard complains that the display of learning may so distract the reader that he will in the end forget to ask whether it ever became clear that Hegel's method was valid. And so he asks why Hegel started with concrete events. 'Why at once begin to experiment in concreto? Was it not possible to answer this question in the dispassionate brevity of the language of abstraction, which

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* James Collins. The Mind of Kierkegaard. P.253.

** Ibid.

has no means of distraction or enchantment, this question of what it means that the Idea becomes concrete, what is the nature of becoming, what is one's relationship to that which has come into being and so forth?' *

Save for the name, Collins maintains 'this is asking why Hegel does not examine more exactly the metaphysical problems underlying philosophy of history.' And most of these questions are 'treated in a quite formal and technical way by Kierkegaard himself.' In view of this Collins thinks we are entitled to interrogate Kierkegaard 'as to whether his own stand on the modes of being has only an abstract essentialist significance.' But there seems to me to be a gap in Collins argument at this point, as he does not go on so to interrogate Kierkegaard. He goes on to say that 'an admission that his position does convey some knowledge about the universe in its existential character paves the way for a philosophical theory of being as existent.' ** But he enters into no discussion here as to whether Kierkegaard ever makes such an admission nor does he discuss what is meant by a philosophical theory of being as existent.

He does go on to claim, however, that the Thomist philosophy addresses itself to the problem of existence rather than restricting

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* Philosophical Fragments. P.64 note

** ibid. Pp.253-254.

itself to 'a phenomenological description of essential structures'. St. Thomas saw that 'the beings of our own experience are constituted not only by a determinate nature, but also by an ultimate act whereby this concrete subject is enabled to be in the existential order.' And this applies not only to human agents but to all finite things and thus a road is opened for a realistic speculative knowledge of all existing things. 'Since a thing is not a being in the full sense until it exercises this existential act a philosophy of being must have special regard for the existential order.' * With this no doubt Kierkegaard would have agreed. Indeed he would perhaps have put the point even more strongly and said that a thing is not a being in <u>any</u> sense until it is realized in existence. For 'in the face of factual existence it is meaningless to speak of more or less being' whereas 'ideal being' should not be spoken of as being at all but as essence. Yet what Kierkegaard called in question was whether it was possible for philosophy to have regard for the existential order. 'Existence', he says, 'like movement is a difficult category to deal with; for if I think it I abrogate it and then I do not think it.' ** And for all Collins'

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* The whole argument is on Pp.252-254 of Collins' book. In a note on this section Collins insists that 'the rehabilitation of a realistic speculative philosophy depends on the recognition that even the non-human things in the sensible world exercise the act of existing. Hints of such a broadening of the meaning and scope of existence are not entirely lacking in Kierkegaard.'

** Postscript P.274

insistence that Thomistic philosophy has a due regard for the exercise of the existential act, I do not think he succeeds in showing that St. Thomas has met this difficulty in any way that would be acceptable to Kierkegaard.

It is beyond our scope at this point to investigate exhaustively the existential ontological system of Thomism. Collins argues that the Thomist system, although it is a system does not close itself to the concrete demands of existence, and the subjective demands of personal existence. Furthermore he insists that St. Thomas realizes that 'in the speculative order we cannot legislate about the human condition but must accept it as we find it. The human mind, ' he goes on, 'is not divine and its concepts not creative. By means of our concepts and empirical investigation we can attain to some understanding of the structure of being through its experienced traits. But we are not equipped to gain an exhaustive insight into essences such that they might be completely assimilated to a system.' * So far then St. Thomas' system is able to meet the Kierkegaardian criticism, but what I think Collins fails to show is how such an existentially rooted system can really go beyond giving a phenomenological description of essential structures. Surely it is just inasmuch as a system of thought attempts to go beyond such a description that it becomes subject to Kierkegaard's strictures : it has lost touch with reality and has become fantastic.

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* Mind of Kierkegaard. P.257

In the end of the analysis it certainly does seem to me that Kierkegaard's rejection of metaphysical speculation is decisive. Indeed, I believe we might see in this rejection a certain affinity to some of the twentieth century philosophers whose work is devoted to linguistic or conceptual analysis. We have already quoted Collins' remark that for Kierkegaard philosophy 'at its best remains an analysis of essential forms.' From this it does not seem a very big step to suggesting that perhaps the natural and social sciences can take over the job of formal structural analysis, leaving philosophy the job of conceptual analysis : an analysis directed towards clarifying the proper understanding of the concepts we do in fact use to talk about the world. Of course Kierkegaard did not himself develop such a view of the philosopher's task. Nor did he subject metaphysics to the kind of rigorous linguistic or logical analysis to which it has been subjected by contemporary analytical philosophers. Yet he did discover at least some of the conceptual confusions which beset the Hegelian speculations, and he went a long way toward showing that there was something peculiar about the questions the metaphysicians were asking, and at the very least something inappropriate about their way of dealing with these questions. In fact he went a long way towards showing, on logical grounds, that there is an element of fantasy in all metaphysical speculation. This is not to suggest that the twentieth century development of logical analysis owes

anything directly to Kierkegaard, of course. But it does suggest that he saw it as part of the philosopher's task to engage in a kind of logical analysis of language. And we may even say that pursuing this task led him at least to suspect that many of the problems of metaphysics are pseudo-problems.

Yet perhaps it would be wrong to end on a note which suggests that Kierkegaard simply dissolved speculative philosophy in such a way that the philosopher is left to abandon metaphysics and turn to conceptual analysis. Kierkegaard was not concerned merely to cut the philosophers down to size, as it were, by de-bunking their metaphysical pretensions. A philosopher who aspired to nothing more than conceptual analysis might escape Kierkegaard's strictures, but such a one would be leaving out Kierkegaard's problem of existence (On what am I to base my eternal happiness?) altogether. And of course Kierkegaard's most vital concern was that we should understand this existential problem as clearly as possible.

Having acknowledged his negative attitude to the significance of metaphysical speculation, therefore, we must go on to acknowledge his positive attitude to the significance of existential analysis. He was not primarily concerned with defining the task of the philosopher and whether this kind of analysis of existence was the business of the philosopher or of the

psychologist, or even of the novelist, playwright or poet, did not worry him especially. But whoever the task belonged to, he clearly thought it was important that we should have a deeper understanding of our own existence in order that we should better understand our own needs and our own task, and that we might live our lives with a new integrity.

To this the metaphysician might very well reply that while self-understanding is important, we cannot really hope to understand our own task in the world unless we have some vision of reality as a whole. Can existential analysis in itself really challenge us to a new integrity in our living? I think Kierkegaard probably thought it could, but certainly he thought that in the end something more was needed. We need an Archimedean point, an eternal truth, on which to base our lives, if we are really to move beyond the grasp of despair. But this truth is not to be discovered by the methods of metaphysical speculation. When it comes to recognizing this truth upon which we might base our eternal happiness then we must look for the authority of a divine revelation.

In order that we might better understand Kierkegaard's thought in this connection we should now turn to his attitude to revelation and to the Christian gospel.

CHAPTER IV. KIERKEGAARD AND THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL.

The argument so far has led to the conclusion that Kierkegaard's philosophical and psychological analysis is not on the whole directed towards finding the abstract structures and possibilities of existence, though he does not deny that philosophical reason may achieve this purpose, but rather towards the need for finding some basis for life, some truth upon which the thinker can base his eternal happiness. But his analysis, as we have examined it so far, has not gone on to discover this basis itself. How is it possible that a man can in fact find such a basis at all? It was abundantly clear that the citizens of Kierkegaard's Denmark did claim that they had such a basis in Christianity, but how was this possible? It was this which set the central problem of Kierkegaard's work : the problem of becoming a Christian.

We have already seen that he was not prepared to accept the path of metaphysical speculation as the path by which man can reach this truth. He did indeed admit that the metaphysician might reach, by means of his analysis, a limiting conception of the Unknown but then this limit necessarily remains unknown. One might go on to call it 'God', but it remains unknown and nothing can really be said about it. And of course the recognition of this limit is no help in answering the question of God's existence.*

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* This is discussed in the Philosophical Fragments. Chap. III. (P.29ff)

But perhaps if our philosophical analysis directed itself towards the concrete historical reality of the Christian gospel, rather than towards the abstract question of God it might have greater success. This kind of philosophical analysis might perhaps discover the eternal truth precisely through establishing the truth of the gospel. This possibility is discussed in the opening section of the Postscript, which deals with the objective problem, which 'consists of an enquiry into the truth of Christianity.'

The truth of Christianity in this objective sense, he says, may mean the historical truth or it may mean the philosophical truth. In the first case it may be determined by a critical examination of the sources and so forth; in the second case it is a matter of establishing the relationship of this historical truth to the eternal truth.

Turning to the question of the historical truth of the gospel, Kierkegaard first makes the general point that historical knowledge can never be more than approximation knowledge, and this seems 'incommensurable with an infinite interest in an eternal happiness.' The historical enquiry may lead to a very high degree of probability being attached to our beliefs about the past, but it can hardly be that our infinite interest in existence can wax and wane with the increasing or decreasing degree of probability uncovered by our historical research.

Suppose, for example, we turn our attention toward the Scriptures. Whatever our historical research may establish about the origin and intention of these books, we will certainly not arrive at the conclusion that they are inspired simply as a result of the research we do. And Kierkegaard maintains that this is precisely because the question of inspiration is of quite a different order. 'Anyone who posits inspiration, as a believer does, must consistently consider every critical deliberation, whether for or against, as a misdirection, a temptation for the spirit.' *

The point here is not just that because historical research can only lead to approximation knowledge its conclusions are not certain enough to form the basis we need, but rather that the whole process of weighing evidence and testing conclusions is useless to us when we are enquiring about our own need for eternal truth: Suppose the critics did succeed in proving about the Bible anything that any learned theologian in his happiest moment has wished, what follows? Does this bring us any nearer faith? Kierkegaard concludes that it does not. Indeed if it reduces our relation to the object of faith to one of easy objective certainty, then it tends to weaken our faith, he contends : for in this case the inward passion of faith will tend to be dissipated. 'In this voluminous knowledge, this certainty that lurks at the door of faith and threatens to devour it, he is in so dangerous a

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* Postscript P.27

situation that he will need to put forth much effort in great fear and trembling, lest he fall a victim to the temptation to confuse knowledge with faith.' *

On the other hand suppose the opponents of Christianity 'have succeeded in proving what they desire about the scriptures, with a certainty transcending the most ardent wish of the most passionate hostility - what then?' Again Kierkegaard denies that this has any bearing on the issue of faith. Although it may be proved that 'these books are not written by these authors, are not authentic, are not in an integral condition, are not inspired (though this cannot be disproved since it is an object of faith) it does not follow that these authors have not existed; and above all it does not follow that Christ has not existed.' **

In all this Kierkegaard is not denying the historical content of what the Christian believes. He does not say, for example, that it is a matter of indifference to the Christian whether Christ existed at all. He simply argues that no matter what the historian may prove about the biblical documents, he cannot prove that Christ did not exist.

But Kierkegaard's views regarding the uncertainty surrounding the historical content of faith are not our chief

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* Postscript. P.30

** Ibid. P.31.

concern here. We are rather concerned with how he thinks the object of faith is to be recognized. In his argument about the significance of the historian's discoveries for faith there seem to be two strands, one of which draws attention to the inconclusiveness of the historian's work, the other drawing attention to the fact that no matter how well established the conclusion may be, it only establishes what happened, but cannot establish the eternal significance of what happened.

According to Hegel's view of history as the self-unfolding of the eternal thought or idea, one might indeed argue that there was some kind of eternal significance, observable to the speculative reason, in the pattern of historical events. Thus it might be claimed that eternal truth can be derived from the historical pattern. But such a view is open to all Kierkegaard's criticism of the metaphysical method. In the end any pattern which you claim to perceive will be either an abstraction, not unlike the principles and hypotheses of the natural sciences, or a fantastic product of speculation. In either case such a pattern seems to be more like a speculative hypothesis than like an eternal truth.

If we were concerned with establishing an hypothesis, then we could indeed use arguments from history : the argument from the eighteen hundred years for example. * But while such an argument

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* i.e. The argument that Christianity is proved true by the fact that it has maintained its significance for eighteen hundred years.

might lead one to accept an hypothesis, it will not establish in the individual a relation to that truth upon which he can base his eternal happiness. 'An hypothesis may become more probable by maintaining itself against objections for three thousand years, but it does not on that account become an eternal truth adequately decisive for one's eternal happiness'.* Furthermore Christianity 'desires to deal with the individual and with the individual alone; and so with every other individual,' ** and so to point the individual sinner to the millions of other believers may only distract his attention from the real question, namely the question of his own relation to the gospel.

One can see behind all this discussion Kierkegaard's basic conviction that this ultimate question of truth does not arise at the level of objective reason at all, but only at the point of the personal need to find a basis for living. Hence when he turns from the historical to the philosophical question of the truth of Christianity, he argues that inasmuch as the speculative point of view is objective it is incommensurable with Christian belief. 'Christianity does not lend itself to objective observation precisely because it proposes to intensify subjectivity to the utmost; and when the subject has thus put himself in the right

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* Postscript. P.45

** Ibid. P.47

attitude, he cannot attach his eternal happiness to speculative philosophy.' *

Thus, as we should have expected from our earlier analysis of Kierkegaard's attitude to metaphysics, he does not think the speculative philosopher is in any better position than the historian to establish the truth of faith. If the philosopher is a believer 'he must long ago have perceived that philosophy can never acquire the same significance for him as faith. It is precisely as a believer that he is infinitely interested in his eternal happiness, and it is in faith that he is assured of it. (It should be noted that this assurance is the sort of assurance that can be had in faith i.e. not an assurance once for all, but a daily acquisition of the sure spirit of faith through the infinite personal passionate interest.) And he does not base his eternal happiness upon his philosophical speculations.' **

All this is, of course, no more than an application of the principle that 'truth is subjectivity' to the particular case of Christian truth. We have thus done little more than repeat the arguments relating to the limitation of the speculative method which were presented in some detail at the beginning of this study. The objective method which he has presented as 'enquiring into' the truth of Christianity, has not achieved its aim. And this

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* Postscript P.55

** Ibid. P.53

failure is to be expected of a method arising in the objective realm of postulating hypotheses and investigating and testing theories. But this still leaves us with the question as to whether Kierkegaard proposes any alternative method for establishing this Christian truth. Should we say that he gives us such a method in his existential analysis? Can we hope that by analysing human existence we shall not only discover the problems which underlie such existence, but shall also demonstrate that only the Christian gospel can meet these problems adequately?

When we consider the form and apparent apologetic intention of much of Kierkegaard's writing we might conclude that this is his hope. If we consider again The Sickness unto Death, for example, we find him analysing human existence in such a way as to discover a basic despair which he goes on to identify with the theological concept of sin. And he compares this Christian theological understanding of the situation with the understanding of Socrates, in such a way as to suggest that the Socratic (pagan) understanding is inadequate. This may certainly be interpreted as an argument designed to demonstrate the truth of the gospel or if not the truth, then at least the adequacy of the gospel to meet man's need. *

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* It may of course be argued that even if it were shown that only belief in the gospel will save man from despair, this does not in itself prove that the gospel is true. This only proves that the gospel is peculiarly fitted for dealing with the vicissitudes of life.

In the end I do not think it is quite clear whether Kierkegaard really means to suggest that his existential analysis shows the inadequacy of non-christian understandings of existence or not. He certainly seems to argue that the Socratic definition of sin is not adequate to explain the reality of human existence, and perhaps there is an assumption that all non-christian accounts must be similarly inadequate. At the same time he also insists that 'there has to be a revelation from God to enlighten man as to what sin is and how deep it lies.' * But if the inadequacy of Socrates' account of man's ethical life can be discovered by a psychological or existential analysis, then it would seem that this very analysis has discovered the need for something like the Christian doctrine of sin. Yet in this case there seems to be no reason why someone should not have developed such a doctrine without appeal to revelation. It is hard to see how Kierkegaard could maintain that the need for such a doctrine can be demonstrated by an analysis of existence, and yet deny the possibility of developing such a doctrine as a consequence of discovering this need.

Perhaps Kierkegaard would object that we are here treating his 'psychological analysis' as if it were based upon objective observations of the way in which people live and feel, while in fact it is an expression of a subjective awareness of existence. And he might say that it is in the light of this new and subjective

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* Sickness Unto Death. P.155.

awareness that we come to see other kinds of awareness as inadequate. This would mean that he is not just showing us the facts and then arguing that only the doctrine of sin will account for these facts. Instead he is saying that as a man who stands in the presence of God and his revelation, he has a deeper awareness of the tragedy of the human state than the pagan.

If this is how the argument is to be understood, however, how should we understand the analysis of the despair of the human state? Here too we must hold that his argument proceeds from his own experience of existence rather than from empirical psychological investigations. Although he may generalize about the human state to the point of insisting that all men are subject to despair, this is clearly not a generalization based on 'scientific' observation, as if he had examined the experience of a carefully chosen sample of men and women. Indeed when he admits that there are in fact people who are not conscious of being in despair at all, but of whom he nevertheless says that despair really underlies their existence, his generalization about despair begins to look like an <u>a priori</u> judgment of some kind, rather than an <u>a posteriori</u> empirical generalization.

In fact I think we could say that underlying Kierkegaard's argument about the universality of despair is an assumption that to be unconscious of despair is to be unconscious of the demands

of existence, the demands for self-development and moral achievement. In other words we find at the heart of this argument a subjective judgment that his own awareness of existence is deeper and more true to the fulness of personal existence than is the case for the man who is not conscious of despair.

If this is the proper understanding of his existential analysis, then we cannot say that he is proposing a new line of argument which will succeed in establishing the truth of Christianity where traditional metaphysics has failed. That he proposes a new direction for philosophical thinking is something that we have already suggested, but all that this thinking will lead to, it seems, is a fuller understanding, a fuller awareness, of our own existence, and of the issues that face us as persons. Inasmuch as our experience of existence is common, we may discuss the adequacy of our analysis and we may even come to the point of recognizing a need for an 'eternal truth'. This much, certainly, Kierkegaard does seem to expect from existential analysis : that it will enable him to bring people to recognize a need for some point of ultimate significance or eternal truth. But when it comes to establishing that truth, something more than philosophy - more even than existential philosophy - is needed. It is here that we come up against the need for a revelation, and a revelation cannot be proved, or even supported, by any kind of philosophical or psychological analysis. When it comes to the truth of

revelation 'the divine authority is the category'. *

'Christianity came into the world by the use of authority.....It must not be merely the object of speculation. Take a quite simple illustration. A policeman in a riot. He says "be so good" - no arguing. No arguing - why? Because he uses authority. Is there nothing objective in Christianity or cannot Christianity be a topic of objective enquiry? Yes, why not? The objective is what he says - he with authority. But - no arguing; least of all arguing which would steal behind the back of the person with authority and at last speculate him away too reducing all to speculation.' **

Of course someone might complain that this has not solved the problem of belief at all. It simply gives the question a new form. It is no longer a matter of asking "How do I know that this is true?" but rather "How do I know that this is authoritative?" Yet this change is clearly an important move towards Kierkegaard's conception of subjectivity. The subjective question is not to be decided by judicious testing such as would establish objective truth. The crucial issue is whether this gospel will in fact grasp and enlighten and transform my life. And this is quite a different question from the 'objective' questions about historical

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* On Authority and Revelation. P.25

** Papirer X^2, A, 119 quoted by Croxall in Kierkegaard Commentary. P.235.

fact or from speculative questions about metaphysical truth. 'One may ask an Apostle, one may ask a Christian, what truth is, and then the Apostle or the Christian will point at Christ and say "Behold Him, learn of Him, He was the truth". That is to say, the truth, in the sense in which Christ was the truth, is not a sum of sentences not a definition of concepts, etc., but a life. Truth in its very being is not the duplication of being in terms of thought . . . No, truth in its very being is the reduplication in me, in thee, in him, so that my, that thy, that his life, approximately, in the striving to attain it expresses the truth and is the very being of truth.' Thus within me 'truth is, if it is at all, a being, a life and in primitive Christianity all expressions were constructed with a view to truth as a form of being.' *

Thus Kierkegaard is not interested in questions about the objective truth of the gospel. He is interested in the question as to how the truth which is a being or a life is to be created within him. Therefore his question becomes : how am I to be related to the gospel? How am I to appropriate it? How is it to become effective in my life?

Having thus far discussed Kierkegaard's attitude to philosophical analysis and revelation what can we now say of his relation to the systematic theologian in his function as a framer

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* See Training in Christianity. Pp.200-202.

and corrector of dogmatic formulae? This is an issue which I think he never really faced. Having demanded an acceptance of the Christian faith either on authority, or not at all, he seems to go on from that point to adopt an attitude of almost naive piety, albeit a piety which depends upon 'the daily acquisition of the sure spirit of faith through the infinite personal passionate interest.' Thus he can contrast his own position with that of the biblical scholar who approaches the Bible armed with ten dictionaries and twenty commentaries and who remains undecided as to the correct reading of the passage whereas he, Kierkegaard, is compelled simply to act immediately in accordance with the text or else make a humiliating confession. * As to the question of right doctrine, in one of his very few references to anything of the kind we find him saying that 'Doctrine as usually expounded is on the whole correct. I am not disputing about that. My whole concern is how far it can be effective.' **

In the end, then, one seems to be left with an assertion that Christ is the truth, and if one appropriates this with passionate inwardness then one can simply go on to follow the direct word of the Bible. The question of right doctrine can be largely ignored. And this is hardly surprising for he insists that 'Christianity is not a doctrine ... Christianity is a

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* see For Self Examination P.56-57.

** Papirer X 3 635 quoted by Diem, Dogmatics P.20 (English translation)

message about existence. That is why every generation must start on it anew; the accumulated erudition of preceding generations is essentially superfluous yet not to be scorned if it understands itself and its limits but extremely dangerous if it does not.' *

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* Papirer IX A 207 Included in selections from the Journals published as The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard translated by Gerda M. Anderson.

PART II. TILLICH'S METHOD OF CORRELATION

TILLICH'S METHOD OF CORRELATION.

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION.

It is clear that whatever Kierkegaard may have thought about the problem of method in theology, he seems to leave little room for the kind of rational apologetic that might be proposed by a christian idealist philosophy. Such a philosophy might claim to provide a systematic understanding of reality which would assign a place to christian belief within the system, so that belief itself would seem to be inevitable. But this is just the kind of thought project which Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel seems to discount.

Bearing in mind his rejection of the Hegelian concept of 'pure thought', however, we might question whether Kierkegaard would consider that philosophy had any apologetic function to perform in relation to faith. In view of some of the more forcible attacks upon philosophy and the philosophers in his writings, we might well conclude that he wished to reject the whole philosophical enterprise out of hand. And yet we have already seen that this rejection arises out of a polemic which is specifically directed against the idealist philosophers of his own day. Hence we must ask whether it is philosophy as a whole he rejects, or only the idealist philosophy of his contemporaries. Is his aim merely to 'counteract the abominable falsity which is the mark of modern philosophy'? *

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* Johannes Climacus or De Dubitandum est p. 102.

It does certainly seem true that when Kierkegaard discusses ancient philosophy, and in particular Socrates, his attitude is more positive than we might have expected from such a severe critic of philosophy in his own day. In this regard we may say that he contrasts the idealist attempt to construct a system based on 'objective reason' on the one hand, with the attempt of Socrates to awaken the individual to a new awareness of existence on the other. And in view of this we may well feel that he sees the really significant task of the philosopher as being located in this matter of existential awakening.

If we are justified in concluding that this is Kierkegaard's understanding of philosophy, however, we are left with a further problem: what part, if any, can this existential awakening play in relation to the task of the apologetic theologian? Does it mean that the philosopher is, in his own right, directing us towards the subjectivity or inward passion of faith? When we read Kierkegaard's description, in the opening pages of the Philosophical Fragments, of Socrates attempt to awaken people to the truth, is this to be understood as something parallel to the preacher's attempt to awaken people to the reality of faith? Such a parallel certainly seems to be suggested in the Fragments themselves, and yet Kierkegaard does make it quite clear that something more than the most excellent Socratic teacher is needed before a man can be awakened to the possibility of faith. Socrates certainly understood the nature

of truth as something to which the individual must be awakened, rather than as a system to be developed and taught. Thus Socrates is concerned with bringing his pupils to what we might call a point of 'existential awakening', in which each one might become aware of the truth that is in him. But a free decision made in the light of this awakening, is not necessarily the decision of faith. We stand in need of something more. We stand in need of a revelation in which the truth is brought to us.

If this is the correct way to understand Kierkegaard, as presenting a possibility which goes beyond the existential self-awakening of Socratic philosophy, it suggests that philosophy, even in this Socratic sense, must now give way to evangelical preaching. But in saying this we should remember that while Kierkegaard certainly considered that men needed to be confronted with the message of revelation, he also considered that the men of his own age needed to be brought to understand the issue of faith before they could rightly understand or receive the preaching of the evangel. The whole plan of his writings makes this clear.

This may suggest that the strategy of evangelism will demand that a man should in the first place be brought to an awareness of the structure of his own existence, so that the issue of faith, or the possibility of faith, may be opened to his view. Thus the preaching activity would be correlated with some kind of analysis

of personal existence. The nature and possibility of faith would be displayed by the 'existential analysis', while the specific object of faith would be declared in preaching.

This kind of plan is very like that proposed by Paul Tillich as the method for his own apologetic theology. In order to push this investigation further, therefore, we shall turn to Tillich's method of correlation to see whether it supplies a satisfactory method for an apologetic theology which takes into account the Kierkegaardian critique of systematic speculative philosophy.

This method which Tillich proposes for theology proceeds first of all by analyzing man's existence, in order to find, by this analysis, the questions implied in existence. These existential 'questions' are then correlated with 'answers' supplied by the message of revelation. This may suggest that the authentiolty, or authority, of the message is to be <u>tested</u> by its adequacy to meet the demands of the existential questions discovered. Before reaching such a conclusion, however, we shall certainly have to examine Tillich's thought much more closely. At least we may say at once that Tillich does want to maintain a certain independence for these two correlates: the existential question and the message of revelation. He insists that the answers cannot be derived from the questions any more than the questions are to be derived from the revelation which provides the answers. The two are certainly not dependent in this derivative way, yet he also insists that there is a certain inter-

dependence between them. Hence he speaks of the 'inter-dependence of two independent factors.' * The fact of this inter-dependence is of vital importance for the theologian, Tillich believes, since the word of revelation will not come to man as a significant word at all unless it comes to him as the answer to some question.

This could be illustrated by considering the language in which the message of revelation is in fact expressed. Even such a basic utterance as 'I am the Lord thy God' pre-supposes that the word 'God' already has some currency; and again when Kierkegaard puts forward the claim that 'Christianity is the absolute' he assumes a whole background of meaning for the term 'the absolute'. Thus Tillich would say that if these utterances are to have any significance for the hearer, the question of God, or the question of the absolute, must in some sense have arisen.

Just how we should understand Tillich's claim that we are here confronted with two inter-dependent factors which are nevertheless independent of each other is something we shall have to examine further when we have explored his thought in some detail. In particular we shall have to try and assess what he means by the two sides of his correlation. Only then, when we have examined what he means by 'existential analysis' on the one hand and by 'the message of revelation' on the other, shall we be in a position to assess whether Tillich's method really leads to an apologetic theology which is

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* ST II, p.14

not vulnerable in the face of Kierkegaard's critique of systematic 'pure thought'.

At this stage we need only observe that there is an obvious *prima facie* resemblance between this method of correlation of Tillich and the two distinctive kinds of writing which make up Kierkegaard's work. It could well be argued that Kierkegaard's work falls naturally into works of 'existential analysis' (the pseudonymous works) and works presenting the message of revelation (the specifically Christian discourses). Kierkegaard himself said that 'a more profound self-knowledge teaches one precisely that one needs God' * and this might well be taken to suggest that before declaring the Word of God one must first bring the hearer to that 'more profound self-knowledge'. (Although it might be better to say that *at the same time* as we preach the Word of God we should also concern ourselves with bringing men to a more profound self-knowledge.)

Yet even in this *prima facie* examination it may be suggested that a clear difference is already apparent between Kierkegaard and Tillich. Kierkegaard may indeed want to bring us to 'a more profound self-knowledge which teaches one precisely that one needs God', but is this the same as confronting us with a *question*: the question to which God is the answer? Tillich suggests that unless the message of revelation comes as an answer to some question

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* *Edifying Discourses* - a selection translated by Swenson, for Harper Torchbooks, p.165.

which man already recognizes as a real question, then it will not be heard by man at all. * Kierkegaard may be taken as suggesting that unless a man has that kind of self-knowledge which leads him to recognize his need of God, he will not understand the issue of faith at all. But these two assertions do not necessarily mean the same thing. To say that a man must recognize the question to which the revelation of God is the answer may well point us to some kind of metaphysical or ontological question, which confronts us when we ask ultimate questions about the nature of being. But understood in this way, this recognition of the question would be something very different from the existential awareness about which Kierkegaard is concerned. Of course one might well retort that if the kind of question Tillich has in mind were of this ontological nature he would hardly speak of the questions being discovered by 'existential analysis'. After all Tillich does insist that 'the material of the existential question is the very expression of the human predicament'** and this does not sound like the material with which the ontologist works.

Yet ontological considerations seem so prominent in Tillich's theology, that we must look at his discussion of ontology and try to see what part it does play within his method, before we turn to his explicit discussion of existential analysis.

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* ST II, p.15

** ST II, p.17

CHAPTER II - TILLICH'S ONTOLOGY.

Through all Tillich's writings there runs a continual concern to pose and to investigate the ontological question. He accepts what he describes as 'the oldest definition given to philosophy', namely that 'philosophy is that cognitive endeavour in which the question of being is asked.' * This question of being, he says, is not a question of this or that particular being, but it is a question which enshrines the mystery of what it means to say that there is anything at all. Every philosophy, he insists, moves around this mystery of being, and has a partial answer to it. **

In this description of philosophy Tillich seems to be describing something quite different from existential analysis. Indeed he seems now to be describing something much more like that kind of all-embracing speculative system-building against which Kierkegaard directed his attack. And Tillich would not object to his ontology being described as 'speculative' as long as we remember that the word comes to us from the latin _speculari_ meaning to 'look at'. *** We should not, therefore, think of speculation as if it were a fantastic speculative game in which we create imaginary worlds. We should realize that speculation has its origin in

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* BR & UR p.5

** ibid p.6

*** ibid p.7

looking at the real world. He would, therefore, reject the suggestion that his philosophical work is a product of a 'pure thought' which has lost touch with reality. (Indeed he suggests that to understand metaphysical speculation in this way is to do less than justice to the whole classical tradition from Anaximander to Whitehead).

Hence Tillich insists that his ontology is not to be characterized as a mere thought experiment which proceeds by the power of pure thought to construct a synthetic view of the whole of reality. In fact he does not claim for his ontology that it is synthetic at all, but deliberately refers to it as ontological analysis. One must look at things as they are if one wishes to understand the principles, or the structure, of their being. This would suggest that in Kierkegaard's sense his ontology remains in the realm of 'abstract thought', which retains its relation to that reality from which it abstracts, rather than being 'pure thought' which loses sight of this relationship.

If this is the case, does it mean that Tillich's ontological analysis must, after all, be a kind of phenomenological analysis? That is to say, is it an analysis of the basic structure of phenomena? * If this is so then when he is asking the question of

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* My use of the word 'phenomenology' here does not take into account the rather technical sense given to the word in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and his successors. I use the word to refer to any study of the patterns, or the 'logic', discoverable in phenomena. (And I include here social, historical, cultural and psychological phenomena as well as physical phenomena. Thus physics is just as much a phenomenological study as geometry.)

being, which he tells us is the ontological question, he would presumably be asking some question about the structure of phenomena or of phenomenal reality. But is this really how we should understand the question of being? In dealing with empiricist philosophy Tillich tells us that 'here the ontological question is not denied, but is interpreted as the question about the most general structures and relations of reality and the methods of their analysis.' * But this is not an interpretation he is prepared to accept. For such an empiricist 'concepts like being - itself or the power of being seem to be idealistic or mystical — in any case, beyond empirical confirmation.' * Thus for Tillich the question of being is not to be identified with the question of 'the most general structures and relations of reality', since if there were an identity here he would not call in question, as he certainly seems to do, the adequacy of this empiricist interpretation of the ontological question. Yet he does use the phrase 'structure of being' in relation to ontology. Indeed in his discussion of empiricism he goes on to say that even empiricism assumes a nominalist 'vision of reality' and thus assumes a structure of being. Here a distinction seems to be drawn between 'the most general structures and relations of reality' which are the explicit concern of the empiricist, and the 'structure of being', an understanding of which is only implicit in empiricist thought, being related to an implicit 'vision of reality'. All this may surely justify our

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* BR & UR p.17

concluding that the question of being is something more than a question about the structure of phenomena.

In view of his reference to a 'vision of reality', perhaps we should understand Tillich as insisting here that everyone, from the most thorough-going empiricist to the most abstract idealist assumes some working understanding of reality as a whole, and it is this which forms the subject of the ontological analysis. And it is in this sense perhaps that Tillich insists that there is an ontology implicit in everybody's thinking. To refer again to his discussion of empiricism, he tells us that the empiricist sees reality as composed of individual things standing alongside each other and looking at each other and at the whole of reality. * Whether the empiricist would in fact admit to such a vision need not concern us. The point is that Tillich insists that he must implicitly assume <u>some</u> kind of vision. Perhaps he may imagine reality as a closed system of energy, reacting in completely determinate patterns, but inasmuch as this is a vision of the infinite wholeness of reality, it too is an imaginative vision. In Tillich's terminology perhaps we could say it is a vision of the 'structure of being' rather than being merely a description of 'the most general structures and relations of reality'.

Yet we may hesitate to identify Tillich's ontological quest as an attempt to discover such imaginative visions of the universe

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* For the whole discussion of empiricism see BR & UR p.17

as a whole, for he does not himself speak of imaginative creations in this connection. Instead he speaks of an ontological question, which seems to suggest some kind of rational investigation which will give us the right answer. When Tillich discusses the kind of 'questioning' he has in mind, however, he seems to be thinking of something rather different from either simple questions about matters of fact, or the rather more sophisticated phenomenological structural questions. He says that the question of being arises because we both have and have not the being about which we ask. If we possessed being in all fulness we should not need to ask about it, we should just know it, whereas if we did not possess being at all, we would not even be able to realize that there was any question of being. So he tells us that to ask the question means that we both have and have not that which we ask about. This is the nature of the questioning situation. *

Could this be a description of the man who asks about structural patterns in the world, as he knows it in the phenomena which he experiences? It is certainly true that if we had no experience of phenomena, or if we had no knowledge of structural forms, then we could not formulate any questions about phenomenological structures. Or again if we had already grasped the structure of phenomena in its entirety, we should not need to ask any further questions about the matter. But Tillich's talk about possessing being and yet being separated from being suggests something much

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* BR & UR p.11

more than just an intellectual state of partial understanding. * It is not just that we know partially, and yet want to know more fully. It is rather that we exist, and yet are threatened with non-existence. It seems to be in view of this structure of our existence, and not the state of our knowledge, that Tillich says we both have and have not the being we ask about. The things which constitute the world exist, but as time goes on they may cease to exist. In the same way we know of ourselves that we exist and yet we are threatened with death. Thus it is a simple observation of the facts which leads us to see that, like all the things in the world, we have come into existence and will pass out of existence. We both exist and are threatened with non-existence.

How then does this consciousness of our finitude effect our possibilities for asking questions? Tillich's suggestion appears to be that if we were not finite in the sense I have described, but if we knew our existence to have begun with the beginning of all things, and if we knew that our existence was to continue to the end, then the fact that we knew this would give us a conception of 'beginning' and 'end' such that we would know the answer to the question of being. If we knew our existence to be from infinity and to infinity, if such a thing is conceivable, then we should not need to ask the question of being in the form in which we now ask it.

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* cf. BR & UR p.12. 'Man can and must ask; he cannot avoid asking because he belongs to the power of being from which he is separated and he knows both that he belongs to it and that he is separated from it.'

As finite beings, however, we have not these limitless viewpoints, and indeed, since our awareness is finite, we cannot really have any clear idea of what such a limitless viewpoint would be like. Yet if this is so does it not mean that we certainly cannot ever answer the question of being, and perhaps we cannot even formulate or conceive what question we are asking?

To this Tillich says that the possibility of asking the question arises inasmuch as we realise that we are finite. But how does this realization affect the situation? Presumably our realization of finitude is itself a kind of imaginative transcendence of finitude. In this sense at least we can transcend our own existence to the extent of contemplating our existence in the world, rather than just reacting to the demands of the present here and now. Thus we can ask questions about the limits of existence; questions which would penetrate beyond the horizon of immediate present awareness, and in the end questions which would pass beyond every conceivable horizon.

If this is the way in which we are to understand his account of the ontological question then we may indeed suggest that what he is concerned to discover <u>is</u> something very like an imaginative vision, even if he does speak of his quest as an analysis aimed at answering a question. His aim then would seem to be something more than the deriving of a construction of categories from the analysis of phenomena, or the developing of a system of mathematical logic which

can be applied to the phenomena. Such categorical or mathematical constructions might give us a far more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena which confront us and might lead to our discerning patterns in this or that aspect of reality as it presents itself in existence, but this in itself could not give us purely logical grounds for working out a vision of being as a whole.

Thus at this point one might suggest that Tillich's ontology is really concerned with discovering what are the imaginative understandings, or the unifying visions, which are implicit in this or that person's thought. In this case he would be proposing for the ontologist a task very much akin to the task proposed by Collingwood for the metaphysician; that is to discover the absolute pre-suppositions of this or that thinker. * I do not intend to explore this comparison at all, but will only say that the implicit ontologies of which Tillich speaks seem very different from absolute presuppositions in Collingwood's sense. Furthermore, when he speaks of the ontologist being 'driven from one level to another to a point where he cannot speak of level any more' in his search for the really real, ** he does not seem to be speaking of a systematic uncovering of deeper and deeper levels of pre-supposition in the examining of the thought of this or that thinker. He seems to be speaking of a direct investigation of reality itself. Thus he claims that the

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* See Collingwood: Essay on Metaphysics. On p.41 he writes 'I am assuming that metaphysics is the science of absolute pre-suppositions.' The whole essay is really an exposition of this position.

** BR & UR p.13

philosopher transcends the most all-pervading principles or categories he can discover in existence and tries to reach being itself. Not that he can hope to define being itself, but that he might point to that which is always present yet always escaping. *

Here Tillich seems to be suggesting something almost like a mystical sense of reality. He tells us that 'this word "is" hides the riddle of all riddles, the mystery that there is anything at all', ** and I am immediately reminded of the description of the mystical given by Wittgenstein in his Tractatus Logico-philosophicus: 'Not how the world is is the mystical, but that it is'. *** But having acknowledged so much should we not now say that the 'question' of being is not in fact a question but a mystery? Will we not have to agree with Wittgenstein that we have now reached the limits of expressibility? Wittgenstein says that 'there is indeed the inexpressible This shows itself; it is the mystical', **** but can that which is inexpressible be the object of the philosopher's quest? At one point Tillich says that 'philosophy is always in what the Greeks call aporia (without a way)' ***** and this might suggest that he would agree that the philosopher's task is not to solve problems but to bring us face to face with a mystery. Yet so much of our previous discussion of ontology seems to be suggesting

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* BR & UR p.19

** ibid p.6

*** op. cit. proposition 6.44

**** ibid. proposition 6.522

***** BR & UR p.6

a quite different understanding.

I think we might now suggest that we have distinguished three different levels in Tillich's description of ontology. First there is the problem of discovering 'the principles, the structure and nature of being' and this is done by looking at things as they are given. This, we have suggested might well be interpreted as a demand for a phenomenological structural analysis. Secondly there is the question of establishing, or elucidating and explicitly accepting, some total vision of reality. Thirdly there is something rather like the contemplation of a mystery.

How then are these levels to be related to each other? Tillich's writings at least seem to suggest that there is some relationship. When he says that we must start our ontological analysis by looking at reality, for example, he certainly seems to think that there is some kind of move to be made from describing the structure of the phenomena which confront us, to discovering the structure of being as a whole and this seems to provide some ground for a movement from the first level we have distinguished to the second. But in fact one may ask whether he is really doing any more than proposing a fuller and more embracing analysis of the phenomenal structures themselves. It has been suggested by Rhadakrishnan that philosophy is an attempt to explain the world to which we belong, and we might expect Tillich to agree with this judgment. But how is such an attempt to be carried through? If it is to proceed by 'looking at things as they are given' does it then start with an

analysis of the phenomena which we experience? If this is so then perhaps we should start with the whole realm of experience, in the widest sense. 'Experience', it has been said, 'relates to the world of objects, of things, of nature studied by the natural sciences; the world of individual subjects, their thoughts and feelings, their desires and decisions, studied by the social sciences, like psychology and history; the world of values studied by literature philosophy and religion.' As philosophers, therefore, 'we must weave into a consistent pattern the different sides of our experience.....We must endeavour to frame a coherent system of general ideas in terms of which the different types of experience may be interpreted.' *

The reason for quoting these words is not that we wish to bring their author into our discussion, but because they do seem to express clearly one possible way of interpreting Tillich's understanding of the ontological task. Tillich certainly does seem to hold that all the possible kinds of analyses open to man will in some way contribute to his understanding of the world as a whole. Yet perhaps he would be somewhat hesitant in saying that his total understanding is reached by a synthesis of all these analyses - a synthesis which would weave them into a 'consistent pattern'. Certainly Tillich does not think that it is only those who have carried through such a conscious act of synthesizing who have any understanding of being to build on. On the contrary he holds that such an understanding is assumed by every thinker, even by those

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* This is quoted from The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, pp26-27.

thinkers who would certainly reject the possibility of any such synthetic activity. Thus Tillich would probably say that the opening proposition of Wittgenstein's Tractatus, 'The world is everything that is the case' is already expressing a vision of reality inasmuch as it speaks of 'the world' in a universal sense. But Wittgenstein could hardly have been said to have arrived at this view by a process of weaving together into a coherent whole all the aspects of his experience. Tillich may nevertheless want to say that although the implicit world-view of this or that thinker may not be derived from the phenomenological structures he discovers, it must nevertheless arise in some sense out of his experience, and it may have to be modified in the light of future experience, or in the light of his phenomenological analysis.

In any case we may say at least that the ontological significance which Tillich discovers in a man's view of reality is of a different order from knowledge of the structural patterns of phenomena. That is to say there is some kind of leap required to pass from an analysis of the facts to a vision of the whole, even though the direction of this leap may be affected by our knowledge of physical and sociological or psychological facts. Perhaps we could describe this situation by suggesting that the ontologist is concerned with the choice of an appropriate symbol, which will serve him as pointing to the world as a whole. Some symbols will seem more appropriate than others, and this will depend upon what he knows about the world. Thus for the man in the nineteenth century it might have been the image of a machine working in determinate

patterns, rather like a watch, while in view of recent developments in physical theory, some people may suggest that this image would now need to be replaced. But to choose such symbols at all is to do something more than to work out the implications of physical theory. It is to envisage the universe as a whole, which is surely something beyond the scope of physical theory. Yet inasmuch as it is beyond the scope of physical theory is not this ontological enterprise open to Kierkegaard's attack upon the 'pure thought' of Hegel? How is this developing of unifying visions to be related to the world? And is there any sense in which we can claim that our vision is the 'right' one?

Sometimes it would seem that Tillich would admit that no vision can finally claim to be the 'right' one, since every philosophy moves around the mystery of being and only has a partial answer. But at this point we seem to have moved to the third level which we identified earlier. It seems as if he is ultimately trying to become more fully aware of the mystery of being. But the attempt to become aware of a mystery is something different from the attempt to develop an image in which the universe as a whole is envisaged. Certainly one may feel the need to see reality as a whole. A man may find 'that individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a significant whole.' * And indeed one may certainly seek to fulfil this desire by developing

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* The phrase is Albert Einstein's. (See Einstein: 'Ideas and Opinions' p.38)

imaginative visions of some kind. Yet this creative process of the imagination is not the same thing as the experience of unity and the product of such a creative process is not the same as this experience.

Even though we can distinguish between the attempt to create a suitable imaginative picture and the desire to experience the unity of reality in some kind of direct apprehension, we may nevertheless feel there is a close link between the two. Yet perhaps we may think that this link is to be found not in ontological analysis, but in the arts. If we really hope either to find a world vision of significance, or to awaken in people an experience of reality as a whole, is it not an artistic creation which is called for? * Again we might imagine a kind of reflection upon our own situation in the world which would lead to an awakening apprehension of unity, and which might also lead to the developing of an image of the world as a whole, but such reflection might be very different from the ontologist's analysis. The 'mystical' may 'show itself' to such reflection, but the reflective process may be markedly different from rational conceptual analysis. Indeed to speak of the mystical as that which 'shows itself' is to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein's Tractatus ** and we might add that in the Tractatus Wittgenstein

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* It is interesting to note that Einstein suggests that 'it is the most important function of art and science to awaken this sense of unity and keep it alive.' (Ideas and Opinions p.38)

** Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-philosophicus proposition 6.522

argues that that which shows itself in this way is the inexpressible. Whether an ontologist could admit as much is doubtful, I think. This brings us to a question which is closely akin to some of the questions put by Kierkegaard in his critique of the Hegelian system. Can the objectivizing categories of conceptual thinking really succeed in comprehending the universe as a whole? If not is not the ontologist attempting the impossible, for does he not proceed on the assumption that a properly elaborated ontological system, or a properly developed ontological analysis, will enable us to grasp and understand the very nature of being itself?

It is this claim of the ontologist which supplies the main ground of Willem Zuurdeeg's criticism of Tillich's ontology. * When Zuurdeeg says that 'there is no guarantee that any knowledge or "understanding" of transempirical realities is possible', ** he is suggesting that since knowledge and understanding are of necessity limited to the realm of the empirical (which we may say is roughly equivalent to what we have called the phenomenal), whatever our ontological analysis discovers it will not be knowledge or understanding. In fact Zuurdeeg claims that Tillich's whole ontology is an expression of what he calls a 'conviction', which is something that cannot be established by

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* See Willem Zuurdeeg: An Analytical Philosophy of Religion pp.156, ff.

** ibid. p.162

objective reason. * Zuurdeeg does not deny that Tillich bases his ontology on experience, indeed he insists that it is so, but 'experience' here does not mean objective empirical experience; it means personal experience, which is conditioned by personal convictions and so does not offer us the kind of objective knowledge which would enable us to 'understand' the universe. **

Before we accept this criticism of Zuurdeeg's, however, we should need to examine more closely whether Tillich really intends us to take his ontology as being based on objective reason, rather than on convictional beliefs. And this leads us straight back into the question we have already been struggling with, namely, how are we to understand Tillich's ontological quest? In discussing existentialist and existential thinking he tells us that 'generally speaking one can describe essential structures in terms of detachment, and existential predicament in terms of involvement. But this statement needs drastic qualifications. There is an element of involvement in the construction of geometrical figures; and there is an element of detachment in the observation of one's own anxiety and estrangement.' *** Assuming that ontology is

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* Compare this with Kierkegaard: 'Actually, conviction is what supports the reasons, not the other way round.' And again 'All that went before was merely preparatory study, something preliminary, something that will disappear as soon as conviction makes its appearance...Otherwise there would not be any repose in conviction either; for then having a conviction would mean constantly repeating the reasons to prove it.' (Papirer X,1 A 481. Translated by Gerda M. Anderson for The Diary of Kierkegaard published by Peter Owen. The whole entry is relevant. see The Diary p.163)

** Zuurdeeg op cit pp.156-158

*** ST II p.29

concerned with essential structures, this passage would seem to support the contention that ontology is based on objective reason. Yet his hesitation in accepting a sharp distinction between objective and subjective thinking cannot be ignored. He concludes that 'involvement and detachment are poles, not conflicting alternatives',* which might suggest that in the end he rejects Kierkegaard's sharp dichotomy between the subjective and the objective (or between 'reasons' and 'convictions') altogether.

Nevertheless one can find support for Zuurdeeg's objection even in this polar understanding, for Tillich certainly places the analysis of essential structures (and, I think we may assume, his ontological analysis) far over towards the pole of detachment, while Zuurdeeg insists it is firmly embedded in a conviction, which can properly be understood only in terms of involvement. We may take it that Tillich has the ontologist in mind (as the reference to 'the structure of being' clearly shows) when he says that the philosopher 'tries to exclude the personal social and historical conditions which might distort an objective vision of reality..... The material for his critical analysis is largely supplied by empirical research .... Of course the philosopher, as a philosopher, neither criticises nor augments the knowledge provided by the sciences. This knowledge forms the basis of his description of the categories, structural laws and concepts which constitute the structure of being'.** In this he makes a claim for the

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* ibid p.29

** ST I p.25-26

objective validity of the philosopher's work and this claim would seem to be applicable to the work of ontological analysis. But it is this claim which Zuurdeeg suggests he has no right to make.

In terms of our own discussion we might say that he could only make good this claim to objective validity if he confined his ontology to the analysis of phenomenological structural patterns. Yet even in the passage just quoted it is not clear whether he intends that it should be so confined. What does he mean when he speaks of the '<u>structure</u> of being'? This is very difficult to discover, especially when we find Tillich himself suggesting that the question cannot be answered. *

Having observed the difficulty involved in penetrating Tillich's account of the <u>nature</u> of the ontological quest, we might yet hope to form a clearer understanding of the real significance of his ontology, by looking at the actual procedure he proposes for the ontologist. How does one in fact approach the analysis of the structure of being? Indeed is not the structure of being so general that it is beyond every structure and therefore itself has no structure?

In answer to this latter question Tillich claims that 'ontology is possible because there are concepts which are less

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* See the Reply to his Critics, in <u>The Theology of Paul Tillich</u> edited by Kegley and Bretall p.330, where he writes 'Miss Emmet, for instance, questions me about the definition of the term "structure". I don't believe that this question can be answered.'

universal than being, but more universal than any ontic concept, that is, more universal than any concept designating a realm of beings. Such concepts have been called "principles" or "categories" or "ultimate notions". * Thus when it comes to the question of how ontology is to proceed he certainly does seem to come down on the side of some kind of structural analysis, which may perhaps be compared with the structural analysis of physical reality undertaken by the physicist. Yet Tillich looks for an analysis which will reveal structures which are more general than the limited patterns derived from the investigations of any particular branch of natural science; for these latter patterns will apply only to that area of reality which forms the subject of the science in question; or perhaps we might better say will only apply to reality inasmuch as it is viewed in the aspect of the science in question. The general concepts of Tillich's proposed ontology would be of little use to any of the exact sciences since they would be too general to form the basis of any predictive knowledge about the actual facts of the world.

Such ontological concepts arise at four levels, Tillich suggests -

(1) The basic ontological structure which is the implicit condition of the ontological question.

(2) The elements which constitute the ontological structure.

(3) The characteristics of being which are the conditions of existence.

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* ST I p.182

(4) The categories of being and knowing. *

At the first level he suggests we are faced with an asking subject and an object about which the question is asked. The subject/object structure is thus the implicit condition of the ontological question.

At the second level he tells us that distinctive elements can only be distinguished at all by contrast with their absence, or their opposite (e.g. one cannot think of individuality without its opposite universality) and one therefore discovers the polar nature of the elements which constitute the ontological structure.

At the third level he discovers that finitude and freedom are the conditions under which the transcendent possibilities of essences are realised in existence.

At the fourth level he mentions time, space, causality and substance as the four main categories which must be analysed from the theological point of view.

Much more would need to be said if we wanted to give anything like a complete account of all the points in the very rich and wide-ranging thought in which Tillich claims ontological significance for what he is saying. However this extract from the Systematic Theology at least gives an indication as to how the ontological quest is actually to be pursued. And at this point

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* For this whole discussion see ST I pp.182-184.

I find that the actual procedure reminds me very much of the critical philosophy of Kant. In fact his questions of structure seem very similar in character to the question underlying The Critique of Pure Reason: what are the conditions under which experience is possible?

Hence we might say, for example, that the subject/object structure is a presupposition of the possibility of experience, or perhaps of knowledge. But in what sense can we claim that this really leads us to an ultimate 'principle' or 'category' of being? Again we may feel that to distinguish general characteristics in existence we must in some sense recognize polar opposites. But while this may be a valid epistemological principle, can we really apply it as a principle of polar structure in reality itself? At the third level of ontological concepts we may certainly agree that our knowledge of reality can only proceed in terms of stable general concepts (abstract ideas or changeless 'essences') which are then applied to the contingent exigencies of existence. But this again seems more like an epistemological truth than a statement about being.

We cannot enter here into a full discussion of the relation of the epistemological and ontological significance of the kind of critical analysis we are discussing. It may be held that for Kant epistemological and ontological questions are the same. Since being can only be known under the conditions of experience, to speak as if ontological questions must concern the thing in itself

rather than the structure of the known thing, would be, for Kant, to banish ontology to the realms of the unknowable.

In any case one may say that to discover the conditions which make experience or knowledge possible implies that reality is such that it <u>can</u> be experienced or known in just this way. And perhaps this is the point of Tillich's analysis; perhaps this is the ontological significance of what he is saying. Thus it could be maintained that if the subject/object structure, or the possibility of distinguishing polar opposites, or the possibility of forming stable general concepts are the conditions of <u>knowing</u> reality, then the reality which is known must be such as to demonstrate the subject/object structure and such as can be comprehended in terms of polar opposites and stable general concepts.

In spite of this difficulty of distinguishing between the epistemological and the ontological, however, the analogy between Kant's critique and Tillich's ontological analysis as he actually embarks upon it here, seems significant. At this point he does seem to be discovering the limiting structure which makes knowledge possible. But what of the more detailed developments of his ontology? Without pretending to examine this in all its detail, I think we might make the suggestion that most of the more detailed discussions which Tillich sees as having ontological significance are discussions of the actual nature of man's personal existence, this analysis being conformed to (and Zuurdeeg would argue

confined within and hampered by) an application of those categories already discovered. *

Thus when we actually examine the outlines of Tillich's ontology it appears as if it is indeed an objective analysis rather than a subjective expression of inwardness. Not that he denies Zuurdeeg's contention that experience is rooted in, and informed by, the subject's conviction. Tillich himself may be making a similar point when he says that 'the philosopher is a human being and in every philosophical school human interests and passions are a driving force.' Yet having said this he goes on to say 'the effect of this existential element on metaphysics has not the character of interference. The experiential basis and the logical structure of a metaphysics are not affected'. ** In other words he insists here that metaphysics, which is very closely related to ontology, can claim objective validity. And we have suggested that he would make good this claim for ontological analysis by embarking on a logical analysis of the conditions which make knowledge possible.

Whether or not we accept the results of Tillich's analysis

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* Here I have in mind not only the discussions of Individualization and Participation, Freedom and Destiny and the rest, in the Systematic Theology, but also the discussions of Courage and Anxiety in The Courage to Be, and of Love Power and Justice in the book of that title.

** See an article on The relation of Metaphysics and Theology, in The Review of Metaphysics, Vol X, No. 1. (September 1956)

is not of crucial importance to us at present. The point we want to make clear is that such an analysis would, by virtue of its very objectivity, be rejected by Kierkegaard if it should be claimed that it will point us towards the truth on which we may base our eternal happiness.

Let us now return to the consideration of Tillich's method of correlation and let us ask how his ontology fits into this method. In discussing this method Tillich tells us that 'the analysis of the human situation is done in terms which today are called existential' and this would seem to make it clear that he is not speaking here of an ontological analysis. We have already seen that he accepts that 'generally speaking one can describe essential structures in terms of detachment and existential predicament in terms of involvement', * but if this is so, how then are the two related to each other? The proposed method of correlation certainly finds a place for existential analysis in theological work, but can it find a place for ontological analysis?

It might seem that our whole discussion can be simplified at this point by the suggestion that the method of correlation provides no place for ontology in theological method at all, and so our whole discussion of ontology has been a digression. But this would mean ignoring Tillich's own discussions of the relationship of theology to philosophy. In the article on Theology and Metaphysics

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* ibid.

already quoted,* for example, Tillich argues that inasmuch as theology is an ordered 'logos-determined' account of faith ('of the symbols of ultimate concern') it must use metaphysical concepts which betray assumptions about the structure of being. In this article we may feel that he is suggesting that every theologian betrays a particular vision of being as a whole.

This would lead us back once more into our discussion of what Tillich means by ontology, perhaps now with the additional question as to whether this is the same as what he means by 'metaphysics". We do not want to take this question up again, however. We shall simply point back to the result of our previous investigation and suggest that in his actual ontological analysis Tillich seems in the end to be seeking for that structure which makes knowledge possible. At the same time we must give due attention to the fact that Tillich seems to hold that this structure, which we might describe as the structure of consciousness, gives some access to 'being itself' in the different senses he gives to that phrase. It is this which enables Tillich to make the questionable assumption that having established a kind of axiomatic inevitability of the category of 'polarity', he may then proceed to reduce any situation to a 'polar' structure in which only two factors are involved. **

If this kind of development from the structure of consciousness to the structure of being were indeed possible, then

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* ibid.

** Note Zuurdeeg's criticism. op. cit. p.158

it would be easier to see the relationship between ontological and existential analysis. In such a case ontological categories would at least provide a structural pattern which could be applied to the understanding of personal existence, just as they could be applied to any other realm of existence. Thus to quote the example already suggested, having established that all knowledge pre-supposes the distinction between opposites, and having exalted this to the status of a structural principle of being itself, we would then be justified in trying to reduce the pattern of existence to simple and discrete polarities, and this principle could be applied to elucidate personal existence just as readily as it could be applied elsewhere.

But surely we cannot assume this kind of continuity. It was suggested earlier that the general concepts of Tillich's proposed ontology would be of little use to the exact sciences, since they would be too general to form the basis of any predictive knowledge of the actual facts of the world. We would now add that they are too general to be of much use to us in any detailed analysis of the structure of existence whatever. We cannot therefore assume that our knowledge of such structural categories as render knowledge possible will automatically supply a structure for our knowledge of any particular realm of existence. And in particular we cannot assume that Tillich's ontological analysis will give us a framework for our understanding of personal existence. Yet sometimes his discussion seems to suggest that it will do so. The structure of

his theological system, for example, seems to assume a close link between the existential analysis of which he speaks and the ontological analysis on which he embarks. In fact we may sometimes feel that we find in his system not a correlation of existential questions (expressible in terms of involvement) and theological answers, but rather a correlation of ontological (essential) questions (expressible in terms of detachment) and theological answers.

Nevertheless our discussion so far seems to justify the conclusion that whatever may be the place of ontology in Tillich's theological method it cannot be absorbed into the existential analysis which is one of the correlates of his method. Whether some kind of ontology may yet find a place within a theology committed to the method of correlation is something we shall have to take up again when we have examined the method itself more closely.

CHAPTER III - TILLICH'S EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS

'In using the method of correlation', Tillich tells us, 'systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions'. * Let us ask ourselves, then, what is involved in making this analysis of the human situation, which he says 'is done in terms which today are called "existential"'.

Tillich himself says that 'Today whoever uses terms like "existence", "existential" or "existentialism" is obliged to show the way in which he uses them and the reasons why. He must be aware of the many ambiguities with which these words are burdened, in part avoidable, in part unavoidable'. ** We must therefore start by taking note of what Tillich tells us about the way he uses these terms, so that we might better understand what kind of analysis of the human situation might in his sense be called 'existential'. We find this whole issue discussed at the beginning of Part III of his Systematic Theology. *** The discussion is very compressed, occupying no more than twelve pages of the book but it nevertheless attempts to explore the ground quite fully. Thus he starts with an examination of the etymology of the word 'existence', before moving on to the rise of the existentialist problem, existentialism and essentialism,

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* ST I p.70

** ST II, p.21

*** ST II, p.21 ff.

existential and existentialist thinking and finally existentialism and Christian theology. In order that we might understand Tillich's attitude fully we shall follow through this discussion in some detail.

He justifies beginning with an etymological enquiry on the grounds that 'one of the important tasks of theology is to regain the genuine power of classical terms by looking at the original encounter of mind and reality which created them'. * In the present case we are faced with words which are burdened with ambiguities but which originally sprang from the root verb to exist. It may therefore help us to understand the present meanings, and to unravel the ambiguity if we look at the origins of this word itself. Thus we may start by asking why the word 'exist' (latin existere), the root meaning of which is 'to stand out', came to have its present reference to the existence of things in the world.

Tillich suggests that this is because existence is to be understood as standing out of non-being. To exist is to stand out of nothingness and this means to stand out of nothingness in the sense of absolute non-being (Greek οὐκ ὤν) and also nothingness in the sense of relative non-being (Greek μὴ ὤν). The absolute non-being of which he speaks is the straight out nothingness of non-existence, while relative non-being refers to potential being.

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* ST II p.22

Thus Tillich suggests as a background to our understanding of existence that it means standing out from nothingness, and standing out from the merely potential or possible modes of being. He also suggests here that the fact that the word existence basically means 'standing out' points to a view of existence as being in some sense grounded in that from which it stands out; that is non-being. This does not mean, however, that there is no real contrast between existence and non-being. Existence does stand out in a very real sense.

If I understand Tillich rightly at this point, he is suggesting that the classical tradition which forged this concept of existence saw existing reality as arising out of non-being, so that existence stands over against non-being, and yet has its standing against the background of non-being out of which it has arisen. In this sense we may say that existence stands over against the emptiness of absolute non-being and the potentialities and possibilities which are relative non-being.

These considerations lead on to the rise of the existentialist problem. It is the recognition of the contrast between relative non-being and existence, which points to the whole development of thought about the split between potentiality and actuality and thus forms the background of this problem. 'Within the whole realm of being as it is encountered there are structures which have no existence and things which have existence on the basis of structures.'*

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* ST II, p.23

Thus we can distinguish two levels of reality which we may call the essential and the existential. Tillich holds that this was recognised long before Plato and he suggests that 'the Orphics, the Pythagoreans, Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides were driven to their philosophy by the awareness that the world they encountered lacked ultimate reality'.* In Plato, however, the contrast between existential and essential becomes an ontological and an ethical problem, since for him existence is seen as the realm of mere opinion error and evil, while true being is essential being to be encountered in the realm of essences, eternal ideas or forms. Hence inasmuch as man in his existence 'stands out' of potentiality he has fallen from what he essentially is, and is therefore faced with the task of rising above existence to the realm of eternal essences.

Tillich claims that this attitude which he ascribes to Plato dominated the later ancient world, despite Aristotle's doctrine of the dynamic inter-dependence of form and matter in everything. Aristotle failed to close the gap between essence and existence, he believes, 'partly because of the sociological conditions of later antiquity and partly because Aristotle himself in his Metaphysics contrasts the whole of reality with the eternal life of God, i.e. his self-intuition.' ** This last point means that participation in the life of God remains as a goal which requires that the mind

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* ST II, p.24

** ibid,

should rise above all that is mixed with non-being into the pure actuality of divine being.

The scholastic philosophers too accepted this contrast between essence and existence as far as the world was concerned, while denying its applicability to God. God, they insisted, is eternally what he is, and so they took up Aristotle's formulation that he is pure act (or pure actuality) without potentiality. But this formulation would appear to deny the possibility of there being any divine will, since will implies potentiality. The scholastic philosophers did not want to deny the divine will, however. Hence Tillich believes we would best understand their position in saying that for them essence and existence must be applied <u>symbolically</u> to God. God is not subjected to the conflict between essence and existence. But this is not because he is wholly existent, since every existent, to be an existent, must be transcended by its own essential nature, nor is it because he is the universal essence, for this would deprive him of any self-realization. Thus Tillich concludes that the scholastics rightly saw God as the one in whom all potentiality was fully actualised. This means that in God the actuality is a perfect actualizing of the essence, so that the gap between essential and existential being is overcome.

This applies only to the reality of God, however, while the universe is still subject to this split. So the scholastics maintained, as Plato had done before them, that in the universe as

we know it existence is not a perfect actualization of essence but represents a fall away from the ideal world of essences.

In the new awakening of the renaissance and the enlightenment Tillich believes that this attitude changed. At this point men began to see existing things as the material in which essential possibilities were to be actualized. 'To stand out of one's essential being was not a fall but the way to the actualization and fulfilment of one's potentialities.' * Thus in a sense what had been affirmed by the scholastics about God is now affirmed about man, namely that his existence is an actualization of his potentiality in the fullest and most complete sense.

Tillich thinks this view of the matter was not fully elaborated until the rise of the 'distinctly anti-enlightened' German classical philosophy, however, and in particular until Hegel elaborated his system. It is in this system that we have the scholastic doctrine that God is beyond essence and existence applied to the universe. In this system, Tillich tells us, the world is seen as the process of divine self-realisation. 'Existence is the expression of essence and not the fall away from it.' ** And he insists that it is against this development that the existentialist protest is directed. For existence as understood by existentialism is not this kind of realization of the ideal. The estrangement of

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* ST II, p.25

** ibid p.27

existence from the ideal world of essence (which estrangement Hegel does not deny) is not overcome in the movement of historical existence, or the self-realization of personal and social life.

In this exposition of the background of existentialism Tillich seems in the end to suggest that there are two possible ways of understanding reality - an essentialist way and an existentialist way. This is not just to say that in the one case thought is directed toward essences and in the other towards existence. Nor is it the same as the traditional epistemological distinction between realism and idealism. We should be nearer the truth if we said that the distinction is an ontological rather than an epistemological one. It is a question of two different ways of understanding being. The essentialist way sees existence as a movement in which essential (ideal) reality is continually being realised. Thus it is with Hegel, who sees the realm of existence as a process in which the imperfect nature of the real is constantly being overcome through a dialectical movement in which the ideal is always realising itself. The existentialist on the other hand sees the essential as an ideal pattern of reality which is never truly realised in the realm of finite existence, so that existence always falls short of essence, or the actual always falls short of the possibilities of the potential.

On the basis of this distinction we may say that the philosophy of Plato, as Tillich presents it, is above all

existentialist, inasmuch as it sees the world of contingent existence, the world of appearances, as a fallen world separated from the ideal world and failing to realise the ideal potentiality of essential reality. Similarly we may assume, according to Tillich, that the scholastic philosophers are on the side of the existentialists rather than the essentialists.

If this be a right understanding of existentialism, how does it stand in relation to Christian theology? Tillich points out that Christianity asserts that Jesus is the Christ, and this assertion means that he is the bringer of the new age, the universal regeneration, the new reality. But this implies an old age in need of renewal. The message of the coming of the Saviour pre-supposes a need of salvation. So Christianity starts out from thinking in terms of a world which needs to be saved and, according to the prophetic and apocalyptic descriptions, this is because it is a world which is in a state of estrangement from God. It is this estranged state of existence which is represented in the biblical myth of the fall.

But the existentialist also sees existence in terms of estrangement, and indeed in terms of fallenness, and therefore Tillich concludes that 'existentialism is a natural ally of Christianity.' * He then goes on to develop this idea of an alliance by suggesting that existentialists, depth psychologists and artists have supplied the theologian with an immense amount of material which he can use

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* ST II p.30

and organise in the attempt to present Christ as the answer to the questions implied in existence. These sources of material have a special importance since the traditional sources of such material (the monastic theologians) have largely dried up under the impact of theologies of pure consciousness 'represented, above all, by Cartesianism and Calvinism.' *

Having followed Tillich's discussion of existentialism this far, let us now return to the question of what he means when he speaks of existential analysis as one correlate of the theologian's work. The main line of the argument seems to lead towards the conclusion that existential analysis will be a kind of analysis which will present existence as separated from essence; which will see a gap between the potential and the actual. Existentialism in this sense seems to turn out in the end to be a particular view of the world: what we have elsewhere called an imaginative vision of the world as a whole. ** We have already argued that the development of such a vision is at least one way of understanding what Tillich means by ontology. We might now suggest, therefore, that existentialism represents one ontological vision, while essentialism represents another.

This kind of ontological view certainly seems to be open to Zuurdeeg's criticism that it is in fact expressing something like a personal conviction about reality, rather than an objectively

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* ST II p.30

** See above p.92 Tf.

testable hypothesis of any kind. * But having said this one might add that existentialism is at any rate a conviction which can be readily correlated with Christian convictions (i.e. biblical convictions), while the essentialist conviction cannot. This understanding of existentialism is hardly enough to supply us with an understanding of Tillich's method of correlation, however. He is surely not suggesting that we should correlate an existentialist conviction about reality with a biblical conviction about reality, as if it were easier to arouse the first conviction, and this might then serve as a kind of ground for arousing the second. If this were what Tillich meant he would hardly talk of an existential analysis; it would seem more appropriate to speak of an existentialist message, as being in some sense parallel to the biblical message.

Yet Tillich himself would no doubt deny that the existentialist view of reality is in this sense a conviction or a faith. He would probably insist that it is arrived at by that method of speculation, of 'looking at', of ontological analysis, of which he speaks in other places. We have already discussed some of the difficulties entailed in this conception of ontological analysis, and we shall not discuss it further here. Our present concern is with his presentation of the existentialist position, and he does seem to present it as a metaphysical position related to the understanding of reality.

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* Zuurdeeg loc. cit.

In this whole discussion of 'Existence and Existentialism' which we have been considering here, there is one important section which we have left out of consideration, however. This is a section on Existential and Existentialist Thinking.* It is in this section that he seems to give us grounds for our earlier assertion that he would in fact make a distinction between ontological and existential analyses. It is in this section that we find the assertion which we quoted earlier that 'generally speaking one can describe essential structures in terms of detachment, and existential predicament in terms of involvement.' And it is in this section that he introduces an important distinction between the terms 'existential' and 'existentialist'. 'The former', he says, 'refers to a human attitude, the latter to a philosophical school. The opposite of existential is detached; the opposite of existentialist is essentialist.' **

If we take this distinction seriously then we may suggest that when Tillich speaks of 'existential analysis' and of discovering 'existential questions', as he does in discussing the method of correlation, he does not mean the same thing as if he were to speak of existentialist analysis. And again when he speaks of the contrast between describing essential structures (in terms of detachment) and existential predicament (in terms of involvement) he is not talking about the contrast between an essentialist

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* ST II, p.29

** ibid p.29

metaphysic and an existentialist metaphysic.

Indeed it would be hard to maintain that this latter contrast between two metaphysical beliefs could be a contrast between detachment and involvement, for surely an essentialist metaphysic might be held with just as high a degree of passion and with just as intense a sense of involvement as an existentialist metaphysic. And if the terms most appropriate for presenting an essentialist metaphysic are those of detachment, then should we not say that they will also be the most appropriate terms for presenting an existentialist metaphysic?

It might still be said that the existentialist is especially concerned with the human predicament, to an extent that the essentialist is not, since it is central to existentialism that it sees the existent facing a predicament, namely that he has fallen away from the ideal possibility of his essential nature. Yet the essentialist might well say that he too is concerned with understanding existence. Perhaps he does not see it as a predicament, but rather as a realm in which the potential is continually actualized, the essential realised. Thus if the existentialist needs to draw on the terms of involvement, then so does the essentialist. If on the other hand it is claimed that the essentialist is presenting a view discovered by some process of (rational) ontological analysis, and he must therefore be prepared to present it in the detached terms of discursive reason, then we may say that the same demand may be made of the existentialist,

if he is really attempting to present a rival view. There seems to be no reason to suppose that the existentialist analysis will be any more 'existential' than the essentialist analysis.

This comparison of existentialism and essentialism is not worked out in any detail by Tillich, although he does seem to think that existential concern dominates existentialist analysis, in a way in which it does not dominate the analysis of essential structures. Generally speaking one can describe the latter in terms of detachment, whereas in the former 'since the element of involvement is so dominant the most striking existentialist analyses have been made by novelists, poets and painters'. *

At this point one wonders whether Tillich's distinctions are sharp enough to avoid confusion. Does he really make it possible to distinguish between existential, existentialist and essential analyses? Let us try to sum up his own exposition as we have followed it. According to the definitions he gives us, the word 'existential' refers to a human attitude: the attitude of involvement. Therefore any analysis of any kind in which the subject is involved might presumably be described as existential no matter what is the object of analysis. The word 'existentialist' refers to a philosophical school, which believes that there is a gap between essence and existence. Therefore any analysis which forms part of the presentation of this philosophical view might

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* ST II p.29

presumably be called existentialist. Unfortunately, the word 'essential' is not defined in this discussion. It might in the end have made the position much clearer if Tillich had made a distinction between 'essential' and 'essentialist' parallel to his distinction between existential and existentialist. In fact his discussion as a whole seems to assume such a distinction, for while the existentialist necessarily repudiates the essentialist view of reality, he does not therefore reject the reality of essential structures. On the contrary he seems to be committed to considering essential structures in their relation to existence just as much as the essentialist is. We may conclude therefore that an analysis of essential structures need not proceed on the basis of an essentialist philosophy, and equally an existential analysis need not proceed on the basis of an existentialist philosophy.

Yet not only does Tillich fail to introduce any distinction between essential and essentialist into this discussion, but at times it seems as if he does not accept the implications of his distinction between existential and existentialist. When he brackets together the existentialist philosopher, the psycho-analyst, the writer, the poet and the artist, for example, how should we understand this grouping? When he speaks of the insights into human nature which existentialism (including depth psychology) have given us, how should we understand this? On what grounds could he include depth psychologists among the existentialists? Such an inclusion appears to suggest that depth psychologists accept the

existentialist ontology: that there is a split between the actuality of existence and essential potentialities, so that existence must be understood as falling away from essential possibilities or structures. But can we assume that depth psychologists will accept this? It seems very unlikely that Freud would have accepted any such metaphysical formulation. Of course Tillich may suggest that inasmuch as a depth psychologist recognises the importance of feelings of guilt, for example, as basic to human personality he is implying that there is a split between aspiration and achievement, between the ideal and the real. Thus he might argue that even if the depth psychologist denies that he understands the world in this way, this understanding is nevertheless implied in his psychological findings.

This raises once again the question raised by Zuurdeeg in his criticism of ontology. * Can the facts of existence really provide a compelling objective ground for adopting a certain conviction about the world as a whole? In relation to our present example, surely the depth psychologist may hold that the unrealised ideals of humanity are no more than fantasies with no <u>real</u> significance. In this case the split between the real and the ideal is not a split within reality, since the ideal has no reality. Existing reality on this view is the only reality we can sensibly talk about. The tension which causes human neuroses may be real enough, but this is only because it is a tension generated within

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* see above p.99 f.

existence, because an existing organism, man, entertains ideals. Or again the depth psychologist may be a thorough-going Hegelian essentialist, who understands the phenomenon of guilt as a significant stage in the self-realisation of the ideal.

The point which I wish to make here is that a phenomenological analysis of personal existence is working at a different level from developing a conviction about reality as a whole. Thus when Tillich points to the relationship between the existentialist philosopher and the theologian, and then to the relationship between the depth psychologist and the theologian, he is surely indicating two quite distinct relationships. We have already seen that he suggests that there may be an alliance between the existentialist and the theologian, because both believe in the importance of estrangement as constitutive of reality. Now we come to consider his assertion that the systematic theologian 'needs the support of the practical explorers of man's predicament.' * This 'practical exploration' may well be what is meant by existential analysis, but it does not seem to be the specific concern of the existentialist.

If we really accept Tillich's distinction between the terms 'existential' and 'existentialist', then, how are we to understand the existential analysis which Tillich sees as one part of the theologian's task? Tillich's analysis of existentialism suggested

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* ST II, p.31

that we might find ourselves once more involved in all the difficulties of ontological formulations. But now the separate discussion of the word 'existential', with 'involvement' as its definitive character, coupled with the consideration of the practical exploration of man's predicament, suggests a way of understanding existential analysis which is distinct from all ontological analysis.

At this point I think the possibility of a real comparison with the thought of Kierkegaard begins to emerge. From Tillich's actual definition of the word 'existential' it is clear that existential analysis must be an analysis in which the subject is personally involved; and his discussion of 'Existentialism and Christian Theology' gives us grounds for concluding that existential analysis means any practical exploration of human existence. At both these points the parallel with Kierkegaard is obvious. He too insisted that the subject must be involved in his thinking, if he were to approach the realm of existence, and he too turned to a kind of thinking which might well be called the practical exploration of man's existence.

Tillich himself mentions Kierkegaard as one of those nineteenth century existentialists who attacked Hegel and he tells us that 'the common point in all existentialist attacks is that man's existential situation is a state of estrangement from his essential nature' * and so he presents existentialism as a philosophy which

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* ST II, p.27

recognises this estrangement as fundamental. It is this which led us to the conclusion that existentialism comes to look like an ontological theory. But I question whether this formulation represents the nature of Kierkegaard's attack upon Hegel at all adequately. Tillich seems to assume that Kierkegaard, among other nineteenth century existentialists he mentions, accepted the classical distinction between essence and existence, but rejected the Hegelian view which sees existence as the self-realisation of essence, and instead suggested that existence is estranged from essence.

To what extent does our own analysis of Kierkegaard confirm this view? We have already seen that Kierkegaard does in fact make use of these concepts of essence and existence in his discussions, but we also had occasion to question whether he uses them in the same sense as the classical ontologists. Kierkegaard warns us that in formulating the answer to the question 'what is meant by being'? it is important 'to take heed lest the knowing spirit be tricked into losing itself in the indeterminate, so that it fantastically becomes a something that no existing human being ever was or can be, a sort of phantom with which the individual occupies himself upon occasion but without making it clear to himself in terms of dialectical intermediaries how he happens to get into this fantastic realm, what significance being there has for him and whether the entire activity that goes on out there does not resolve itself into a tautology within a recklessly fantastic venture of thought. *

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* Postscript, p.169

This long and difficult sentence seems to be warning us against the danger of answering the question of what is meant by being in terms of pure thought. Pure thought Kierkegaard tells us 'explains everything in such fashion that no decisive explanation of the essential question becomes possible.'*

In view of this argument, surely we must conclude, as we have argued earlier, that any discussion of the essential, as distinct from the existential, must either acknowledge that it is an abstraction from existence to which existence it yet remains related, or else it must become a 'recklessly fantastic venture of thought'. Thus we may say that Kierkegaard certainly acknowledged the essential and the existential realms in the sense that he acknowledged the distinction between abstract universals and concrete existing particulars, but he would surely reject the Platonic suggestion that in the essential realm of universals we know the true ideal reality. For us the universals are no more than abstractions, enabling us to think about the reality we do know, namely, the reality of existence. We cannot know reality by grasping it in an essential system. Not that Kierkegaard denies that such a system is possible. He says that it <u>is</u> possible for him who is 'outside existence yet in existence, who is in his eternity forever complete and yet includes all existence within himself.' ** But for Kierkegaard this is not a description of man's state, but of God's.

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* Postscript, p.278

** ibid, p.108

'Reality itself is a system - for God'.* Thus if we can equate this systematic knowledge with 'essential' knowledge, and I think there is a parallel between the two, then this kind of 'essential' knowledge is not within the grasp of man. Man must always relate his understanding of reality to that contact he has with reality in existence.

We might certainly say of Kierkegaard's argument here, that it is opposing Hegel on the ground that in his system-building he is failing to admit the contrast between man's finite limitation and God's infinity. Kierkegaard objects that Hegel claims to have transcended existence in his thought in a way that is really quite impossible. But is this what Tillich means when he says that the common point of the existentialist attacks upon Hegel is that man's existential state is a state of estrangement from his essential nature? Surely Kierkegaard's insistence on the contrast between man's finite limitation and God's infinity is not indicating man's state of estrangement from his essential nature. This would only be true if we could say that it was of man's essential nature to be like God! Yet perhaps our disagreement with Tillich at this point is not quite so sharp as it might appear. Kierkegaard certainly does see a tension in man's situation, inasmuch as man is an existent thinker. This necessarily involves a tension, since if he becomes a pure thinker he loses touch with his existence and becomes fantastic; while to think at all is necessarily to stand outside the

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* Postscript, p.107

realm of existence, since 'all logical thinking employs the language of abstraction', * and this means that the thinker becomes as one who would see reality sub specie aeterni. Thus there is a difficulty which 'lies in bringing this definite something and the ideality of thought together, by penetrating the concrete particularity with thought. Abstract thought cannot even take cognizance of this contradiction since the very process of abstraction prevents the contradiction from arising.' ** Here Kierkegaard seems to be describing a basic tension facing man, which may be compared to that which Tillich has described in his assertion that man is a finite being who may yet transcend his finitude. Yet having said this we may still hold, surely, that this is not the same as affirming an existentialist ontology such as we have been discussing in relation to Tillich.

Perhaps the most important thing that emerges from this investigation of Kierkegaard's understanding of existence is that his protest against idealism is not in the name of a straight-forward realist metaphysic. The realist objects to the idealist way of understanding reality and presents an alternative way. In the realm of epistemology the argument goes on as to the relationship between reason and experience, and perhaps among the ontologists we may have related discussions between essentialists and existentialists. But Kierkegaard is not satisfied to tell the Hegelian that knowledge

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* Postscript, p.273

** ibid, p.267

must begin with experience, or with empirical existence. He goes further and suggests that our direct contact with reality is not to be found in our knowledge at all, but in our existence. It is not our thinking and speaking as such which constitute our contact with reality, it is something more fundamental than all speaking, namely, our existence. This may seem to be neither more nor less than a new statement of the empiricist position. Yet I do not think it would be a correct understanding of Kierkegaard to say that he is just telling us that our understanding of reality must start from experience. He rather seems to suggest that we have a direct contact with reality in our being as existing individuals, and this is a starting point which is more fundamental than any actual content of experience which we might have.

The immediate difficulty which Kierkegaard must face, however, is the difficulty of finding any way of stating such a position, for it seems as if his protest would be directed against any cognitive grasp of reality whatsoever. He was not unaware of this difficulty as is clear when he writes that 'existence like movement is a difficult category to deal with; for if I think it I abrogate it and then I do not think it. It might therefore seem to be the proper thing to say that there is something which cannot be thought, namely, existence. But the difficulty persists in that existence itself combines thinking with existing insofar as the thinker exists.'*

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* Postscript, p.274

This might well suggest that Kierkegaard's 'existentialism' leaves no room for philosophic reflection about reality at all. It seems to follow that if we want to have any real understanding of reality we should leave the philosopher's study and go out and exist, rather than talking about existence. Or if we do prefer to stay in the study then our direct contact with reality is still to be found in our own existence, and it is this that matters, rather than any systematic understanding of reality our rational thought may produce.

How then is any developing understanding of reality possible for Kierkegaard? It is possible through an existential pathos which 'dedicates itself more and more profoundly to the task of existing and with the consciousness of what existence is, penetrates all illusions, becoming more and more concrete through reconstructing existence in action.' *

This examination of Kierkegaard's thought certainly helps us to see why the word 'existential' suggests something which is the very antithesis of detachment, for 'existential pathos is action.' But just because he holds this so strongly Kierkegaard seems to deny the possibility of there being any existentialism (An existential system is impossible - it cannot be formulated.) ** Thus on the basis of Kierkegaard's thought we might accept Tillich's distinction between the terms 'existential' and 'existentialist', only to deny

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* Postscript, p.387

** ibid, p.386

the possibility of an existentialist philosophy, if this should mean an existential system. The only existential philosophy possible would be a philosophy which made no attempt to expound reality systematically, but which merely pointed man towards his own existence.

This would certainly seem to accord well with Tillich's account of the word 'existential' as referring to a human attitude; an attitude which is the opposite of detachment. But we are left with the further question as to what kind of existential analysis could be carried out on the basis of this understanding. If an existential philosophy is intended to point a man towards his own existence, can such a philosophy proceed by means of any kind of analysis? Analysis suggests a procedure which approaches the object to be analysed and examines it. And this suggests that analysis might enable us systematically to understand the reality of empirical existence, but if we interpret Kierkegaard rightly this would not be, in his terms, to discover the reality of our own existence which we 'know' in existing. Yet when we turn to Kierkegaard's own writings we do find what must surely be regarded as extensive analyses of human existence, in such works as Fear and Trembling, The Concept of Dread or The Sickness unto Death. How then should we understand these works? Should we perhaps regard them as studies in the phenomenon of personal life, or of consciousness, and as being without truly existential significance? Or is it possible that even in these analytical studies the aim is to point

men towards a new awareness of their own existence? What is the relationship between investigating the phenomenon of consciousness and illuminating man's own existence?

There is an interesting discussion of this issue, or of a closely analogous issue, in the volume on the philosophy of Karl Jaspers, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. This discussion is not directly related to Kierkegaard's writings but arises out of a consideration of the relationship between the phenomenology of consciousness and the 'illumination of Existenz' in the philosophy of Jaspers. It is so closely related to our present concern, however, that it seems worth-while looking at it. Jaspers claims that there exists a radical difference between the phenomenology of consciousness and the illumination of Existenz.* But this poses the question as to whether phenomenological description can contribute anything at all to existential illumination. William Earle, in a criticism of Jaspers' position, (a criticism which might easily be re-framed as a criticism of Kierkegaard) says that no one can read Jaspers' chapters on Existenz without extending his insight into the human situation. 'But', he goes on, 'how dismaying then to discover that it all is not to be interpreted as objective knowledge, but as appeals to the reader to become himself!'** Having recognised it as basic to Jaspers' position that 'illumination of Existenz as thought can not complete itself but must finally

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* The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. p.819.

** ibid, p.532

transcend thought and pass into act',* Earle goes on to argue that this in the end leads us to the conclusion that Jaspers' existential assertions are really pseudo-assertions; they turn out in the end to be hortatory in function, rather than assertive. Yet Earle thinks that even as exhortations they fail unless they are at least telling us what we are to be or what we are to do. Hence they must be asserting something. In the end Earle reaches the conclusion that 'a sound phenomenology of the total structure of the inner life, and the self could absorb all that is valuable in the illumination of Existenz without becoming involved in paradoxes and appeals.'** In other words the positive value of the illumination of Existenz does not lie in directing people to that fundamental contact they have with reality in their own existence at all. And if one did want so to direct people to existence, Earle might suggest, it would not help to give a phenomenology of the total structure of the inner life. This would be to develop a rational objective construction which would give factual information, rather than illuminating people's lives with a new awareness of existence.

In the face of this criticism Jaspers continues to insist that there is a radical difference between the phenomenology of consciousness and the illumination of Existenz. 'This difference', he says, 'would be badly designated if one were to call it a return from consciousness to what lies before consciousness and supports it;

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* ibid, p.534

** ibid, p.537

it is described more correctly as the leap from observing to philosophizing, that is from knowing something to inner action through thinking.' On the other hand he admits that 'in the illumination of Existenz I am constantly making use of conceptual schemes, which as such make assertions about structures',* and in this we may suggest that he leaves open the possibility that the insights of a phenomenological analysis may be taken up as existentially illuminating.

In all this I think we could well say that Jaspers is working out a position very closely akin to that of Kierkegaard. Thus while Kierkegaard denies the possibility of an existentialist philosophy in a systematic sense ('there can be no existential system') he would nevertheless have accepted philosophizing which was describable in Jaspers' phrase as 'inner action through thinking'. It seems clear that Kierkegaard recognized the need for such philosophizing. Although it might seem the proper thing to say that there is something which cannot be thought, namely existence, nevertheless the difficulty persists in that existence itself combines thinking with existence insofar as the thinker exists. Hence he puts it to us that it is man's task to identify himself with the content of his thought in order to exist in it.** This certainly seems to suggest that the content of our thought can in some sense contribute to our awareness of existence and this not

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* The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, p.819

** See Postscript p. 302

just because it represents a stock of information about the world, or about human life even, but because it can in some way issue in an inner action, based upon a vivid inner awareness.

This may surely justify us in claiming that for Kierkegaard an existential analysis is possible, inasmuch as certain analyses of human existence may help to open to us in a new way the basis of our own existence. Perhaps this analysis itself could be quite correctly described, as a phenomenology of the total structure of the inner life (the phrase which William Earle uses) yet Kierkegaard would still have had an intention beyond the development of a more extensive objective knowledge. Indeed his intention might well be described as 'hortatory' by Earle, although his aim is surely not to exhort people to do or to be anything, but rather to open them to a fuller kind of awareness of - one could almost say a new degree of sensitivity to - the basic realities of their own existence.

From this discussion it seems that we may certainly conclude that Tillich's stress on the importance of existential analysis has a parallel in the thought of Kierkegaard inasmuch as Tillich sees the task of existential analysis as relating to the practical exploration of man's predicament. At the same time this does not mean that Kierkegaard would have accepted the importance, or indeed even the possibility, of developing an 'existentialist' philosophy. Since Tillich himself speaks of 'existential' rather than 'existentialist' analysis in regard to his method of correlation,

however, we may proceed on the assumption that it is this 'practical exploration' that he is referring to. The question as to whether an existentialist philosophy can have any place in theology must wait until we are considering the method of correlation in relation to ontology.

CHAPTER IV - REVELATION IN TILLICH'S METHOD.

Of the two elements of Tillich's correlation we have so far discussed in some detail the existential questions. We must now turn to the other element, that of theological answers, or as he also calls them revelatory answers.

These answers, Tillich tells us, 'are contained in the revelatory events on which Christianity is based',* and we may say that it is only insofar as the events are received as revelatory that they can supply a correlative answer to the existential questions. But what does Tillich mean by calling the Christian message, or the events referred to in the message revelatory? To answer this question we should first look at what he says about the Meaning of Revelation and the Reality of Revelation in his Systematic Theology.**

In discussing the meaning of revelation Tillich begins with some methodological remarks. First of all he says that theology must apply the phenomenological approach to all its concepts and in particular, therefore, ~~in~~ to the concept of revelation.*** For Tillich this means that we must describe the meaning of all our determining ideas and give a picture which is convincing to anyone who looks in the right direction. 'Phenomenology is a way of

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* ST I, p.72

** ibid, Chaps. V and VI.

*** It is clear that Tillich's use of the word 'phenomenological' is rather more 'technical' than my own. I shall therefore distinguish Tillich's use by underlining.

pointing to phenomena as they "give themselves" without the interference of negative or positive prejudices and explanations'.* This phenomenological method would have us investigate the concept of revelation by taking a typical revelatory event and looking into it, in order that we might see, by a 'phenomenological intuition' the universal meaning of revelation in and through this example.

When we are confronted with different or perhaps contradictory examples, however, this method gives us no criterion upon which to base our choice of a typical example. What we really need here is an example which has actually been received as a revelation, and which furthermore is considered final in the sense that it is critical in respect to other revelations, so that all revelations might be judged in the light of this critical example. It is not a typical example but rather a critical example which we need here: an example which has been grasped 'existentially' by the subject and which is, therefore, of critical significance for him. This does not mean that the intuitive-descriptive method of phenomenology is to be abandoned, but it is rather to be united with, or is to proceed on the basis of, this existential-critical element. It is this which provides the basis of our investigation, and if we abandon this basis we should be reduced to abstracting a concept of revelation from different examples, and this would deprive the examples of their concrete significance and reduce their meaning to empty generality. But having accepted such a basis we may derive an idea of revelation

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* ST I, p.118.

from the classical example and accept this idea as valid for every revelation.

Having so developed the principles of his methodology we may expect Tillich to turn now to the exposition of that revelation which he accepts as being the critical example. In fact he goes on to make further general remarks. His discussion of methodology forms only the first part of a discussion of the marks of revelation, and he now goes on to discuss three marks which he regards as essential to any revelation whatsoever: that it should reveal that which is essentially and necessarily mysterious, that it should be received in ecstasy and that it should be given in a miracle or sign-event.

This immediately raises a problem as to whether his previous insistence that our discussion must proceed on the existential-critical basis of a concrete revelation leaves any room for such generalised discussion of the marks of revelation. How does he, in fact, distinguish these marks? He starts his discussion of mystery by considering the origin of the word 'revelation', as referring to the manifestation of that which is hidden, and this leads to a consideration of the essentially mysterious nature of this hiddenness which is uncovered. This seems to suggest that he derives this first mark of revelation not from any concrete existential critical case but from a conceptual or linguistic analysis. Similarly, the other two marks - the ecstasy of the reception and the miraculous nature of the event - seem to be derived from the

subject-object structure of reality in which revelation occurs. Thus these marks do not seem to be derived from Tillich's own participation in a concrete revelation which he believes to be critical.

We must return to this question later, when we attempt to assess Tillich's understanding of revelation. In the meantime, we shall continue to follow his discussion, passing from the marks of revelation to the media through which it is received.

First we must look again at his discussion of the three marks of revelation. Of the mystery which is revealed he tells us that it has a negative side and a positive side. The negative side appears 'when reason is driven beyond itself to its "ground and abyss", to that which "precedes" reason ..... to the original fact (Ur-Tatsache) that there is something and not nothing' and 'the "stigma" of finitude which appears in all things and in the whole of reality and the "shock" which grasps the mind when it encounters the threat of non-being reveal the negative side of the mystery.' But this 'revealing' of the negative side of the mystery is to be distinguished from 'actual revelation', for he goes on to say that 'the positive side of the mystery - which includes the negative side - becomes manifest in actual revelation'* and this positive side appears as the power of being conquering non-being; it appears as our ultimate concern and it expresses itself in symbols and myths which point to the depth of reason and its mystery.

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* ST I, p.122

Of the ecstasy which is the next mark of revelation he says it is a "standing outside oneself" which 'points to a state of mind which is extraordinary in the sense that the mind transcends its ordinary situation. Ecstasy is not a negation of reason, it is the state of mind in which reason is beyond itself, that is beyond its subject-object structure.' * This appears to be an attempt to describe the experience in which revelation is actually received. It includes the "ontological shock" already referred to in relation to the negative side of the mystery, but it also includes the elevating power of the divine presence which overcomes this 'shock'. He then says there is a cognitive side to this ecstasy, which is often called inspiration. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that this refers either to some non-reflective act of cognition (as 'I had an inspiration' for example) or to a strange though authoritative body of knowledge (as some understand biblical inspiration). Rightly understood, Tillich believes, inspiration opens a new dimension of knowledge - the dimension of understanding in relation to our ultimate concern, and to the mystery of being.

Of miracle, which is the third mark of revelation, he says that it is 'astonishing, unusual, shaking without contradicting the rational structure of reality'. In short a miracle is an event which has the power of evoking ecstasy in the sense of that word already described. 'The sign-events in which the mystery of being

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* ST I, p.124

gives itself consist in special constellations of elements of reality in correlation with special constellations of elements of the mind'.*

Moving on to the mediums of revelation, Tillich discusses first nature, then history, groups and individuals, and finally the word as mediums of revelation. He suggests that any natural event may enter a constellation of revelatory character, but this does not mean that natural knowledge itself can reveal the divine mystery. Natural knowledge can lead to the question of the ground of being, but it cannot answer this question. 'It is the question of reason about its own ground and abyss. It is asked by reason but reason cannot answer it. Revelation can answer it.'**

The position is very much the same in regard to history, groups and individuals. 'Historical events, groups or individuals as such, are not mediums of revelation. It is the revelatory constellation into which they enter under special conditions that make them revelatory, not their historical significance or their social or personal greatness.'*** Of course, the situation here is not exactly the same as with natural knowledge for there is the new possibility that a group which actually has the ecstatic experience in relation to its history may become a medium of revelation for other groups. Usually these revelations through historical groups or individuals are accompanied or supported by revelation through nature, which might be expected since nature is

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* ST I, p.130

** ibid, p.133

*** ibid, p.133

the basis on which history moves.

To consider the word as a medium of revelation is a bit more complex, for it demands that we should in the first place discover what we mean by 'word' when we speak of 'The Word of God'. So important does Tillich consider the symbols 'Word of God' and 'Logos' that he readily understands why attempts have been made to reduce the whole of theology to an enlarged doctrine of the 'Word of God'. But he objects to this nevertheless, because in order to comprehend theology in this way one must either use the phrase 'Word of God' in such a broad sense that it will embrace every divine self-manifestation or else restrict revelation to actual spoken words. But the first of these alternatives would deprive the phrase of any specific meaning while the second (which would take the phrase literally instead of symbolically) would preserve the specific meaning in such a way as to limit God to vocal self-manifestation. Having thus rejected the attempt to make the phrase 'Word of God' embrace every divine self-manifestation Tillich nevertheless does insist that 'the word' is not to be understood as one medium of revelation among others. It is a necessary element in all forms of revelation. At this point Tillich seems to be speaking quite literally of words - of human language, but not language seen as a means of conveying information.** 'The "Word of God" is not a word of information about otherwise hidden truth'* he writes. The prophets and apostles bear witness to revelatory events and

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* ST I, p.138

** But this whole discussion should be compared with the discussion below, p.158 ff.

experiences but they are not just informing us that these events happened or that this ecstatic experience was received. More than this, their witness itself bears with it revelatory power so that it may be received in ecstasy. Thus the words of the witness are not to be identified with the Word of God, but inasmuch as they have revelatory power, they are 'transparent' to the Word of God or the Word of God 'sounds through them'. It is in this sense that the phrase 'Word of God' is symbolic. There is no collection of actual words which can claim authority as having been spoken by God. There is no body of divine information which tells us facts of which we should otherwise remain ignorant. But there are words - ordinary human words - which in the concrete historical setting in which they are spoken have the 'sound' and 'voice' of the divine mystery.

From here Tillich passes on to the dynamics of revelation, which he describes in terms of original and dependent revelation. 'An original revelation' he says 'is a revelation which occurs in a constellation which did not exist before. This miracle and this ecstasy are joined for the first time', while 'in a dependent revelation the miracle and its original reception together form the giving side while the receiving side changes as new individuals and groups enter the same correlation of revelation.'* Thus Peter was part of an original correlation and it is this original correlation which is the permanent point of reference which forms the objective miracle which is received in the ecstatic participation

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* ST I, p.140

in the dependent revelations. But the report of the original revelatory event and its reception only becomes the occasion of a dependent revelation when it is so received. The report in itself is no more than the communication of a piece of historical information.

This last point is developed by Tillich in his succeeding section on the knowledge of revelation. Knowledge of revelation cannot be introduced into ordinary knowledge as if it provided special information not otherwise available. The knowledge of facts and structures in the world as studied by various kinds of natural scientists, historians or sociologists cannot be challenged on the authority of revelation. There is no revealed information about such matters. Only where matters of man's ultimate concern are discussed is it appropriate to speak in the name of revelation and such matters are not the concern of the psychologist or of the social scientist. Of course, if matters of ultimate concern are discussed under cover of ordinary knowledge, then Tillich says theology must protect the truth of revelation against attacks from distorted revelations, whether they appear as genuine religions or as metaphysically transformed ideas. This, however, is a religious struggle in the dimension of revelatory knowledge and not a conflict between knowledge of revelation and ordinary knowledge. We can evaluate the claims of knowledge of revelation, but only by judging it according to its own implicit criteria. 'It is the task of

the doctrine of the final revelation to make these criteria explicit.'*

If knowledge of revelation is not adding to our information we might ask why we call it knowledge at all. What is it knowledge of? Tillich seems to answer that it is in the end knowledge of God, but it is just for that reason symbolic or analogical (as is all knowledge of God).

All our exposition so far has been of Tillich's discussion of the Meaning of Revelation. We must now follow him into his discussion of Actual Revelation and Reality. He begins this new chapter of his system with the statement that 'we have described the meaning of revelation in the light of the criteria of what Christianity considers to be revelation. The description of the meaning of revelation was supposed to cover all possible and actual revelations, but the criterion of revelation has not yet been developed.'** This immediately raises again the question we asked in relation to his methodological remarks. Once again we are reminded that discussion of revelation must begin with the actual revelation which we accept, and now Tillich suggests that his own discussion so far must be understood as proceeding in this way. But is the description of the meaning of revelation really developed 'in the light of the criteria of what Christianity considers to be revelation?' If it is so, would it not have made the issue clearer

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* ST I, p.145

** ibid, p.147

if the account of actual revelation had preceded the account of its meaning? As it stands Tillich appears to be saying that his exposition of the meaning of revelation has been developed in the light of criteria which he has not yet expounded. This may be no more than a formal objection to the effect that Tillich's form belies his true intention. Yet such a confusion of form can certainly lead to a misunderstanding of the whole exposition, as can be seen in a parallel confusion which arose in relation to the 'Dogmatics' of Karl Barth. In the first draft of his 'Dogmatics' Barth tells us he 'aimed to advance from the subjective possibility of revelation to the description and valuation of its reality or as it were from the problems raised by this concept to their solution'.* The structure of his work at this point led to 'a perilous obscuration, at least in form', Barth tells us. May it not be that Tillich has become involved in a similar obscuration?

This question will have to be considered in our assessment of Tillich's whole position. He suggests himself that his reference to the Christian affirmation has so far been indirect, but now he says we must turn to it directly and dogmatically. From the point of view of the 'theological circle', he reminds us, actual revelation is final revelation. And the whole of theology must work within this circle. But if one is open to other independent revelations, then one has already left the circle for

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* Barth: Church Dogmatics I, 2, pp.205-206.

one is surveying the possibility of revelation from an attitude of detachment. Of course a man may stand within another circle of commitment altogether, Tillich acknowledges. He may believe that no concrete revelation has finality, but that the ultimate is beyond all concreteness so that all concrete revelations are relative (as in Hinduism). Or he may deny that there is either actual or final revelation, affirming only moral autonomy which may be 'supported by the impression of the Synoptic Jesus' (as in humanism). But such commitments are outside the circle of Christian theology, for Christianity claims to be based on Jesus as the Christ as the final revelation. On this claim the Church is established and this revelation is 'final' not just in the sense of being the last one, but rather as the point of reference of every revelation. 'It means the decisive fulfilling unsurpassable revelation, that which is the criterion of all the others'.*

Having thus recognised the 'finality' of the revelation in Jesus as the Christ, Tillich now raises the question as to whether there are any characteristics of this revelation which may be taken as criteria of its finality. He insists that we cannot apply criteria derived from outside the revelatory situation but he does think we can find them within that situation itself. In fact it might be better to say that he believes that <u>one</u> criterion can be found, for although he presents us with a criterion which he says

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* ST I, p.148

is the 'first and basic answer' to the question of the finality of Jesus as the Christ, this first answer seems to be the only criterion which he gives us. 'A revelation is final', he says, 'if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself.'* We see this criterion manifested in Jesus who resists the demonic temptation to claim ultimacy for his own finitude and finally sacrifices himself upon the cross.

As has already been said, this criterion is itself derived from the final revelation: the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. This demonstrates the circular character of Systematic Theology, Tillich points out, inasmuch as the criterion of final revelation is derived <u>from</u> final revelation. And this circularity is an expression of the existential character of theology. Thus Systematic Theology in its own peculiar circular way provides a description of final revelation in two ways: first in terms of an abstract principle and second in terms of a concrete picture. It is this concrete picture, the picture of Jesus as the Christ, which Tillich now goes on to examine. Two outstanding impressions emerge from the New Testament presentation of Jesus as the Christ: his maintenance of unity with God and his sacrifice of everything he might have gained for himself out of that unity. The New Testament witnesses to these two characteristics and in so doing witnesses to the miracle of the Christ. The New Testament also witnesses to his reception as the Christ and in so doing witnesses to the ecstasy

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* ST I, p.148

in which this miracle was received.

But this event is not an isolated event. It pre-supposed a revelatory history which was a preparation for it and in which it was received. This revelatory history can be called history of revelation. This is not to be thought of as being the same thing as history of religion, however: not even the history of Jewish and Christian religion. For revelation judges religion. Nor is it the same thing as the history of all revelations, for one can only talk of revelation on the basis of an existential relation to it. A history which claimed to embrace both revelations to which the writer had a relationship of personal commitment and those to which he had no such relationship would in the end be merely a collection of reports <u>about</u> revelations rather than being a witness to them. But the reception of the final revelation carries with it a reception of the revelatory significance of those things which prepared the way for, or pointed towards, the final revelation. Not that they are received as independent revelations but they are received as a preparation for the revelation. Just as subsequent witness to the one final revelation springs out of a new reception of this same revelation and is, therefore, itself part of the same revelatory constellation.

Of revelation occurring in the period of preparation Tillich says that it is universal. This universality of which he speaks is not a general characteristic or law abstracted from every

revelatory experience, nor is it a 'natural revelation' which forms as it were a natural characteristic of the human situation, nor is it a revelation always occurring everywhere. It is rather the universal possibility of revelation: the universal preparedness of man to receive that revelation which is for all.

In history the preparation is carried through by conservation, by criticism and by anticipation. The conservation referred to is the conservation of that which has already been received as revelatory in a sacramental cult. This contains within it the danger of the sacramental symbols becoming identified as the content of the revelation. It is this danger of idolatry which calls forth the word of criticism, whether it be the criticism of mystics, of rationalists or of prophets. Of these criticisms it is the prophetic word which is decisive, and it is the Old Testament prophets who are bearers of the direct concrete preparation for the final revelation. The 'anticipation' is not separately discussed by Tillich, but presumably we may say that in their forward-looking aspect the words of the prophets pass from criticism into anticipation.

After this discussion of revelation and history Tillich passes on to the question of revelation and salvation. He insists that revelation and salvation are not to be separated. If revelation were understood in an intellectual, non-existential sense, then we could consider revelation as the passing on of a revelatory truth which is independent of the receiving side and can either be accepted or not as the hearer judges in his wisdom. But this is

to deprive revelation of its shaking transforming power. Neither ecstasy nor miracle belong to such an account. But for Moses and Isaiah, for Peter and Paul, it was not like that. They were shaken and transformed.

Again, if salvation is understood as an ultimate fulfilment beyond time and history, it is clearly not to be identified with revelation. But salvation means making men whole, or healthy, and this is something which takes place within time and history.

There are five more sections in Tillich's chapter on Actual Revelation and Reality. The first three of these deal with the way in which final revelation overcomes conflicts of reason in existence. First he discusses the way in which the final revelation overcomes the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy. This is the conflict between the relativism of a groundless autonomy which would seem to leave us no ground for choice or decision and so would undermine personal freedom and leave us only the possibility of blind response to the stimulus of the moment; or on the other hand acceptance of an heteronomous principle or law which was imposed upon us from outside and so limited our possibility of free choice. To what extent this need be a real tension or conflict, or how far Tillich goes toward showing how it is overcome, we need not discuss here. Briefly, he says that since Christ is completely transparent to the Ground of being (i.e. he is at one with God) the revelation saves us from groundless autonomy, and since the Christ

always points beyond himself ('He who believes in me does not believe in me')* the bearer of the revelation does not become an heteronomous authority. Secondly, he discusses the way in which final revelation overcomes the conflict between absolutism and relativism. In the New Being manifest in Jesus as the Christ, the concrete particularity of Jesus is seen as having unconditional universal validity, and through this paradox of a concrete particular with universal significance the conflict between relativism and absolutism is overcome for the believer. Thirdly, he discusses the way the final revelation overcomes the conflict between formalism and emotionalism. 'When the mystery of being appears in a revelatory experience the whole of the person's life participates'.** This means that form and emotion are united. It is the claim of final revelation 'that that which can be grasped only with "infinite passion" (Kierkegaard) is identical with that which appears as the criterion in every act of rational knowledge.' Thus a 'theonomous' reason emerges from the revelatory experience which is beyond the conflicts both of absolutism and relativism and of formalism and emotionalism.

In this summary of Tillich's discussion many critical questions remain unanswered and indeed unasked, but some of them may be raised in a consideration of his whole position. The remaining two sections of his discussion are devoted to the ground

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* ST I, p.170

** ibid.

of revelation (i.e. God and the mystery of revelation) and final revelation and the doctrine of 'the Word of God'. He says that having approached the concept of revelation from 'below' (i.e. from the side of man in the situation of revelation) something must now be said about God who is the ground of revelation. He therefore gives a short summary of his understanding of the term 'ground' in the phrase 'ground of revelation', and since this 'ground' is believed to be God who is the ground of being, our understanding of revelation pre-supposes an understanding of Being and God. But this latter understanding is itself dependent upon the doctrine of revelation. This, he says, is one of the major difficulties of Systematic Theology: all the parts are pre-supposed in each of the parts. In order to try and meet this difficulty, Tillich tries to fill out the description of revelation with a summary discussion about 'God' seen under the symbol of the divine life. The divine life is a dynamic unity of depth and form. The character of depth he calls 'Abyss' and the character of form 'Logos' and the dynamic unity of the two he calls 'Spirit'. The abysmal character makes revelation mysterious and the formal 'Logos' character makes revelation of the mystery possible and the spiritual character creates the correlation of mystery and ecstasy, in which revelation can be received.

It is this <u>logos</u> element in the divine life or in the ground of being which supplies the key to a proper understanding of revelation as the Word of God. There are six different meanings to the term

'Word of God' in this sense. First it is the principle or logos-character of the divine life. Second, the medium of creation. Third, it is the manifestation of the divine life in the history of revelation and, fourth, in the final revelation. Fifth it refers to the documents of the final revelation (the New Testament documents) and sixth to the message of the Church proclaimed in her preaching.

All these meanings are gathered up under the concept 'Logos' and it is with this account of the meaning of 'the Word' that Tillich completes his discussion of Actual Revelation and Reality.

In view of this whole discussion, how should we characterize Tillich's view of revelation? Perhaps the main difficulty we must face in attempting to answer this question is the difficulty which was raised from the very outset by his methodological considerations. How are we to understand his critical-phenomenological method? We have already noticed signs of an inner conflict arising in this connection. The intuitive-descriptive method is not to be abandoned but is to be united with the existential-critical element, we are told. But how is this possible? Does it mean that we start with the critical case of revelation which we have received 'existentially' and then apply an 'intuitive descriptive method' to this phenomenon? Or does it on the other hand mean that we first carry out a phenomenological investigation which abstracts a universal idea of revelation from the actual examples, and then show how this universal concept is, in fact, realised in the revelation we believe in?

If it means the latter, then a method of correlation would seem to be incorporated into the discussion of revelation itself. For on the one hand you have a conception of the meaning of revelation, developed phenomenologically (in Tillich's sense of the word) while on the other you have an actual revelation, the authority of which is displayed in the way in which it satisfies this concept.

The form of Tillich's discussion might well suggest that his procedure is of this kind, moving from the general concept of revelation as derived from investigating the various claims of different 'revealed' religions, or different 'revelatory constellations' to the particular claims of Jesus as the Christ, who, he believes, will satisfy the requirements of the concept. Thus when Tillich asserts that 'in the history of religion revelatory events always have been described as shaking, transforming, demanding, significant in an ultimate way',* he appears to be suggesting that this must be taken as a definitive characteristic of every reported example of revelation. And this generalization appears in his discussion of the meaning of revelation, before he has turned to the actual revelation he believes in at all. Certainly he tells us in the very next paragraph that there is no revelation 'in general', but this again seems to be a generalization based on observation of the facts; an observation which shows that revelation is invariably revelation for someone in a concrete situation.

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* ST I, p.123

This certainly suggests that there may be good grounds for believing that Tillich moves from a general concept of what revelation is to the particular place where his own existential relationship to revelation has its roots: in the event of Jesus as the Christ. Yet Tillich himself expressly denies that his procedure is to be understood in this way. He insists that discussion of 'all possible and actual revelations' is carried on in the light of what Christianity considers to be revelation. And we must remind ourselves again of his insistence that there can be no abstract discussion of revelation, based on an observation of all possible examples, rather than on an existentially received critical case.

If we are to take these affirmations seriously, then we must assume that Tillich intends that his discussion of the meaning of revelation should be derived from the critical and final revelation. It may be objected here that even in regard to this final revelation he seems to demand an abstract criterion by which we may test whether it is final or not, but then we must remember that this criterion is itself derived from the actual revelation which is received as final. The 'criterion' is not so much a criterion as the characteristic in virtue of which this particular revelation claims finality.

Yet inasmuch as Tillich turns first to the marks of revelation, rather than to its actuality, we may well feel that in the event his procedure conceals rather than reveals his avowed

intention. We must nevertheless take his avowal seriously. Like the first draft of Barth's 'Dogmatic' his exposition seems to be involved in 'a parlous obscuration at least in form'.* We may feel indeed that this confusion extends beyond the form to the matter itself. May it not be that through his failure to start with an exposition of the actuality of the critical final revelation he has in fact developed a general theory of revelation in the abstract? Yet this is something which according to his own account cannot legitimately be done.

If we are to understand this account of the meaning of revelation in the light of Tillich's own principles, then, we should have to say that all his talk about the marks, the mediums and the dynamics of revelation are derived from no other place than from that particular revelation which he takes to be critical and final. Perhaps he would agree with Barth's assertion that 'when we put the question about a self-revealing God we could not raise it in a vacuum or in the light or revelation generally, but only in the light of the revelation attested in the Bible'.** Yet Tillich would hardly express the point as Barth does, I think. He would surely agree that the reality of the self-revealing God cannot be discussed in the light of revelation generally, but whether there is a question of a self-revealing God which does arise for man outside the actual context of revelation is another matter. Tillich

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* Church Dogmatics I, 2 p.205

** ibid, p.203

clearly insists there is some kind of question which arises outside the context of revelation altogether, to which revelation supplies the answer and only in revelation is the answer to be found.* Yet he does not call this 'the question about a self-revealing God'. Indeed, such a phrase would seem to anticipate the answer in the framing of the question. Without anticipating our further discussion of the method of correlation, we may say that, as far as revelation is concerned, Tillich seems firmly committed to the view that our whole understanding must be controlled by that final revelation which is the origin of all Christian thinking on this matter. 'Revelation has an unshakeable objective foundation', he tells us, 'in the event of Jesus as the Christ and salvation is based on the same event'.**

Assuming that this is the true basis of Tillich's position, despite the formal indications to the contrary, we may now ask how such a position can take any cognizance of any revelation outside the context of this critical final constellation. For anybody who recognizes the final revelation, all other revelatory experiences must be judged by this final critical case. But this being so, does it not mean that the final revelation is the only original revelation, all other revelations being dependent upon it? 'An original revelation', Tillich tells us, 'is a revelation which occurs in a constellation that did not exist before', while a

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* cp ST I, p.69

** ST I, p.162

dependent revelation is a revelation in which 'new individuals and groups enter the same correlation of revelation'.* But the constellation which the Christian recognizes is the constellation originating in Jesus seen as the Christ and, therefore, all other Christian revelations are dependent upon this final revelation. Thus Tillich tells us that 'The history of the Church is not a locus of original revelations in addition to the one on which it is based. Rather it is the locus of continuous dependent revelations which are one side of the work of the divine Spirit in the Church'.**

If this is so, however, can Tillich speak of revelation in a way which would cover cases outside the Christian faith? He tells us that 'the description of the meaning of revelation was supposed to cover all possible and actual revelations'*** and this would seem to suggest that in some sense the description covers cases beyond the Christian faith. Yet if he is to take cases beyond the Christian faith seriously, and yet maintain his commitment to final revelation, then he must say that these extra-christian cases are themselves dependent for their authority, or for their proper understanding, upon their being referred to the final revelation. Yet they were not so referred by those who received them in an actual ecstatic experience.

The case of revelation in historical preparation for the

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* ST I, p.140

** ibid.

*** ibid. p.147

final revelation (i.e. revelation in the Old Testament) is easier to account for, since it could always be argued that the revelation in the Old Testament was always referred forward by those who received it: referred forward to the final revelation for which they waited. It was recognized as dependent revelation: dependent on that which was yet to come, (although this last formulation would suggest, in Tillich's terms, that the Old Testament revelation is part of a revelatory constellation so new that it has not yet begun!)

Yet for Tillich perhaps the real solution to this problem is to acknowledge from the outset that the problem cannot properly be discussed. For he insists that our discussion of revelation must be based upon our participation in, or reception of, a particular revelatory constellation. In this case then, one can say nothing of the possibility or significance of any revelatory reality unless one has actually grasped it and been grasped by it in the ecstasy of revelatory experience. This may suggest that nothing can be said about revelation at all except by way of reporting that which I have experienced - that which has grasped me in my existence. To this Tillich might retort that these two phrases 'that which I have experienced' and 'that which grasped me' do not refer to the same thing. The first refers to the subjective side (what he calls the 'ecstasy') in which the revelation is received, the other refers to the objective side (what he calls the 'miracle' or the 'sign-event') which has the power to evoke this

revelatory experience. Thus in talking about revelation we need not confine ourselves to reporting on the ecstasy which forms the subjective side; we may also point to the objective sign-event. Nevertheless to talk as a Christian about revelation is to talk on the basis of our ecstatic reception of the Christ-event as normative. Other people may certainly talk from different standpoints but for us there is no other foundation.

This all suggests that in the end Tillich's concept of original revelation seems to be congruent with his idea of final revelation, since it is hard to see how the Christian theologian could understand any other revelation whatsoever as anything but dependent. Perhaps it might seem more cautious to say the Christian theologian could not receive any other revelation as anything but dependent. But if he could not receive it could he then understand it? Surely any 'understanding' he might have of such extra-christian revelations would not be a 'theological' understanding (with an existential-critical basis) but merely an objective sociological understanding.

For Tillich, then, we may say that revelation originates in the final revelation: that is, in the historical event of Jesus. And yet it is not the objective description of the historical event itself which provides a description of revelation. Historical research can neither establish nor destroy the power of a revelatory constellation; it can only delineate with greater or less

probability the objective historical facts which stand at the origin of that constellation. Thus Tillich says that 'faith can say that the reality which is manifest in the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ has saving power for those who are grasped by it, no matter how much or how little can be traced to the historical figure who is called Jesus of Nazareth'.*

Here Tillich's position seems very close to that of Kierkegaard when he writes that 'if the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words "We have believed that in such and such a year God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died", it would be more than enough'.** Perhaps Tillich remains somewhat vague as to how the results of historical research do fit into the revelatory constellation. At least he appears to suggest that being confronted with some historical fact, or some alleged fact, may be the occasion of the shock, or the ecstasy, of the revelatory moment. Indeed in regard to the final revelation, it seems that confrontation with the historical fact of Jesus of Nazareth, no matter how much or how little we know about him, is necessary to the occasion. But may this not mean that some subsequent moment of historical discovery may be the occasion of a further shock in which our previous belief is shaken? I think Tillich might admit such a possibility and indeed he might say that

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* The Dynamics of Faith, p.88

** Philosophical Fragments, p.87

in such an event the second occasion would itself represent something very like a revelatory moment.

This seems to open us again to the possibility of a new constellation of revelation, which is no longer dependent upon the definitive final revelation. The very fact that we are involved in a revelatory constellation seems to open us to the possibility of revelations other than the one we have received. Perhaps the reason why we are turned back to this problem is because of the concept of 'correlation' which lies behind the whole discussion. For when Tillich speaks of revelation coming as an answer to some 'question' which is inherent in the human situation, this at least seems to open the possibility of the 'question' being met in some other way. Not that a believer could conceive of any alternative to his belief. It would only be possible to conceive of other constellations which would meet this ultimate existential question, if we started from a standpoint of detachment: from outside the commitment to any one particular revelatory constellation. To stand in this position may be to pose the question of revelation, but an answer can only be found if one is grasped by a revelatory constellation and in this case one abandons the detached viewpoint.

Is it really possible for Tillich to hold that the 'question' of revelation can arise for someone who has never been grasped by a revelatory constellation, however? To raise this question at all at this point may be to anticipate our further discussion of the

method of correlation itself, and yet some clarification seems to be necessary to a full understanding of what he means by revelation. He clearly holds that an outside spectator could look at belief in revelation as a sociological phenomenon to be studied, but could such an investigator really be said to understand the question of revelation? We might put this question even more sharply by asking whether Tillich can have it both ways. Can he both maintain the necessity of participating in a revelatory constellation before the concept of revelation can be discussed, and at the same time claim that the question of revelation may arise independently of such participation?

Perhaps he would say that this dilemma is an inevitable element of the questioning situation. We have already noted that he sees the questioner as one who both has and has not the thing he asks about. If he knew nothing of it he would not be able to pose the question; if he possessed it completely there would be no occasion for posing the question. Thus the man who has received no revelation may be in this paradoxical state of the questioner - both possessing and not possessing what he asks about. This kind of position is well stated in two sentences of Rudolf Bultmann 'Thus I know what revelation is without having found revelation - and yet I do not <u>really</u> know it. For the blind man also only really knows what light is when he sees, and the person who is friendless and unloved only really knows what friendship and love

are when he finds a friend and is given love'.* But can we really say that Bultmann's 'blind man' can ask the 'question' of light, if he has been born blind? Perhaps in a sense we can, inasmuch as he can ask the 'question' of being able to move about freely from place to place, knowing the geography of every room he enters without first of all walking around to explore it all. He may also know that there are other people who have an answer to this question. Thus, although he may know nothing of what seeing is like, he may yet know the 'question' to which seeing would be the answer. This analogy would suggest that the man who knows no revelation may know all too well the question to which revelation is the answer, yet he may know nothing of revelation itself. Thus there seems to be a certain ambiguity in the phrase 'the question of revelation'. It can either mean the question as to how the concept of revelation is to be understood or the 'question', in the sense of the practical predicament, to which revelation comes as an answer. Tillich does seem to suggest that inasmuch as the concept is a theological one, the first question can only be discussed on the basis of participation in the revelatory constellation. This participation is, therefore, almost a sine qua non for raising the question of the meaning of the concept.

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* The Concept of Revelation in the New Testament. (A translation of Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Neuen Testament Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1929) See Existence and Faith : Shorter writings of Rudolf Bultmann. Edited by Schubert M. Ogden.

The possibility of every man recognizing and asking the second question is, of course, the presupposition of the method of correlation.

One other important issue faces us at this point. We turned to the problem of revelation in the first place because Tillich speaks of the Christian message as one of the correlates of the theologian's method and he also refers to this as the event of revelation. Thus we are referred to a message which relates to the event of revelation. How then are we to understand this message? Is it to be understood as a report of the original revelation and its reception? We have already observed that for Tillich 'revelation has an unshakeable foundation in the event of Jesus as the Christ' and so we may expect that the message of revelation will be simply the reporting of this event: that is, it will be a straight-out historical report. It is true that, while revelation has its objective side in the 'miracle' or 'sign-event', however, Tillich would nevertheless deny that an objective historical description can really convey the message of revelation. Yet the fact remains that the message of revelation must be a message which points to the historical reality of its origin. It must point to the sign-event itself, as well as describing this event in terms of its reception, (i.e. in terms which convey the revelatory significance which this event has had for those who have received it in faith.)

Thus the Christian message must always point back to the final and original revelation. The believer may certainly want to bear witness to some subsequent moment of dependent revelation, but the Christian message as such must refer to that whole revelatory constellation which is Christianity, and so it begins with the 'decisive fulfilling unsurpassable revelation' in Jesus as the Christ. For this reason we must say that the message of revelation is necessarily the message of the Bible, which claims to bear witness to this event. At the same time we may also say that it is the message of the whole correlation which was initiated by this original miracle and its reception by the apostles. Thus the whole history of the Church's response may be part of the message although basically it remains the message of the coming of Jesus as the Christ.

If this message is to be proclaimed in these terms, however, there still remains the question as to how it is to be heard. In Tillich's terminology should we say that every new reception of the message of revelation is to be recognized as a moment of revelation in its own right? That is to say can the shaking miraculous character of the message become apparent, unless the hearer is himself grasped by the ecstasy which is the central character of the receiving side of revelation? It would seem to accord well with Tillich's conception of dependent revelation to insist that all moments in which the message is received are in fact dependent revelations, yet this would seem to involve emptying the word

'revelation' of much of its power. Surely we might feel that the term 'revelation', even 'dependent revelation', should be reserved for something more dramatic than anything that normally happens when the christian message is proclaimed and recognized as authoritative. And surely the word 'ecstasy' is too strong a term to use for the relatively unmoved, perhaps even superficial, reactions the preacher gets even from quite ardent hearers! In fact there must be an infinite gradation of responses to such proclamation, from complete indifference to quite dramatic and catastrophic conversion, and it would indeed seem to be quite arbitrary to say that at a certain point in this gradation we should recognize the ecstasy of a genuine revelatory moment. Yet we may nevertheless say that this ecstatic quality may be present in greater or lesser degree, throughout this gradation, even as the revelatory significance of the message may be partially visible and partially hidden.

The same question may then be raised in relation to the objective side in the moment of preaching: that is to say the word that is actually spoken. Can we really say that this speech forms the objective side of a dependent revelation? Can we really say that such a proclamation of the Christian message has that miraculous quality which Tillich ascribes to the objective side of every revelation? If not, can we really speak of this proclamation as revelatory at all?

Perhaps the answer to this is that the miraculous quality is in fact located in those original events to which the preacher points, and so the response of his hearers is to that same original revelation which is the origin of the Christian message. Thus it would be claimed that the original revelation is an ever-present power, which is still being received in ecstasy even as it was received in the day of its original happening.* Yet this raises questions as to whether the preacher must be sure that his preaching is historically accurate, since it suggests that he is simply re-presenting the revelation as it happened. But is he really to be thought of as simply reporting events that happened years ago? In fact his reporting will be far from simple, since it will be conditioned by generations of response to these original events, and generations of historical distortion, misunderstanding and even myth-making. Hence, if Tillich believes that the original miraculous quality has been preserved in the witness at all, he seems to be faced with one of two alternatives: either he can say that this miraculous quality can still be seen through all the layers of accretion and historical distortion, or else he can say that within the life of the Church itself the miraculous quality has been preserved, so that in some sense the actual preaching of the word has a miraculous quality in its own right (or rather by right of its relation to the power of the Gospel, or of the New Being, or of the Spirit, within the Church.)

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* cp. Kierkegaard 'This contemporaneousness is the condition of faith and more closely defined it is faith.' (Training in Christianity : the Invocation, p.9.)

In the end Tillich might say that there is a germ of truth in both these alternatives. Perhaps he would allow that however little we know about Jesus of Nazareth, something of the miraculous quality of his life and death is preserved for us in the witness of those who responded to this revelation. This is not to say that we have an objective account of his life, but an objective account is not after all what we want. We want an account of the whole nexus of revelation as it was given and as it was received; and a subjective account of this total situation is given to us in the New Testament. On the other hand Tillich might still say that the miraculous quality of these events would be lost if something of this quality were not to be discovered in the preaching of the Church. That is to say it would not be enough for the preaching to describe the miracle, it must in some degree participate in the miracle, and reproduce or re-present it.

To say what would be Tillich's final answers to these questions is not easy, as he never specifically discusses this issue in his discussion of original and dependent revelations. Part of our present difficulty arises out of a lack of clear understanding of what he means by 'dependent revelation'. In any case whether the proclamation of the Christian message is regarded as revelatory or not, we may at least say that in Tillich's view the significance of the message will only appear through its power to speak to men's questions, and not simply through a fortuitous

miraculous quality of the events to which the preacher points. It is as the message of the preacher 'answers' the 'questions' implied in the hearer's existence that it will be recognized as a message, and presumably it is out of this recognition that a recognition of its miraculous quality will arise.

At this point we might ask how this view of revelation compares with the view of Kierkegaard. In one way Kierkegaard's understanding of revelation with its constant insistence that 'authority is the category' might seem much more uncompromising than Tillich's. Kierkegaard does not indulge in any analysis of the marks or the dynamics of revelation. He does not distinguish between original and dependent revelations nor does he look for criteria by which revelation may be tested. 'The divine authority is the qualitatively decisive factor'. This is the only criterion which Kierkegaard seems to allow. 'It is not by appraising aesthetically or philosophically the doctrine that I must and can reach the conclusion that ergo he who has taught this doctrine is called by a revelation ergo he is an apostle'. And so Kierkegaard's apostle says to the individual 'Whether the simile is beautiful or not, whether it is tattered or threadbare that is of no account, thou shalt reflect that what I say was entrusted to me by a revelation, so that it is God himself or our Lord Jesus Christ who speaks and thou shalt not engage presumptuously in criticizing the form. I cannot, I dare not, compel thee to obey, but by thy conscientious relationship to God I make thee eternally responsible

to God for thy relationship to the doctrine for the fact that I have proclaimed it as revealed to me by a revelation and therefore proclaimed it with divine authority'.*

This might suggest that for Kierkegaard the apostle alone participates in the reality of revelation and on the basis of his participation he proclaims a doctrine which the hearer is to accept without any participation of his own in the revelation which is proclaimed. We might say that in Tillich's terminology, Kierkegaard believes in original revelation but not in dependent revelation. Yet Kierkegaard is so concerned about the necessity of the inward subjective appropriation of the Christian message that he cannot mean that the 'doctrine' of the apostle is to be accepted as so much information. Surely he must have thought that something decisive happened to the individual when this apostolic message was preached. And if this is so, we might surely say that he would have acknowledged something at least analogous to Tillich's moment of dependent revelation, with its 'shock' or 'ecstasy'. In any case we may say that Kierkegaard wanted to bring his readers to a decisive moment in their relationship to the Christian gospel and it was to achieve this that he embarked upon his analysis of existence on the one hand and his edifying discourses on the other.

Perhaps in the end Kierkegaard understands revelation in what I might call a 'starker' way than Tillich does. That is to

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* On Authority and Revelation. p.107-108.

say he is less prepared to discuss revelation as a social or psychological phenomenon in the affairs of men. It is something wholly other, which breaks into the affairs of men - and with authority. Whether this would have made Kierkegaard less ready to consider the method of correlation as appropriate to theology is something which we may consider after a fuller examination of that method. We shall now turn, therefore, from the consideration of the elements of Tillich's method to the method itself.

CHAPTER V - THE METHOD OF CORRELATION

'Correlation', Tillich tells us, 'is understood as "inter-dependence of two independent factors"'.* But this immediately raises the question as to whether it is possible for two factors to be both inter-dependent and independent at the same time.

Tillich's own explanation of this situation is that the independence of the two factors means that the answers cannot be derived from the questions, nor the questions from the answers while the inter-dependence arises out of the fact that for the theologian both question and answer are embraced by the 'theological circle'. 'The existential question, namely, man himself in the conflicts of his existential situation is not the source of the revelatory answer formulated by theology' and 'it is equally wrong to derive the question implied in human existence from the revelatory answer.'** This is the ground of the independence of question and answer. The problem of inter-dependence can be solved only within the "theological circle". This circle can be understood as an ellipse having two central points, the existential question and the theological answer. 'Both are within the sphere of religious commitment but they are not identical.'***

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* ST II, p.14

** ibid, pp.14 and 15

*** ibid, p.16

Does this account really explain how the questions and answers can be both inter-dependent and independent, however? If we accept the account of the meaning of inter-dependence, then, has not the independence been swallowed up or absorbed into the 'theological circle'? The original formulation may have seemed very paradoxical, but now has the paradox not been resolved by surrendering the claim of independence? If this is so, how are we to understand the claim that one cannot derive the question implied in existence from the revelatory answer?

Perhaps the whole position could be understood more clearly in terms of a partial independence of the two factors. Perhaps they have a certain degree of independence, despite the fact that the correlates are bound together within the commitment of the theological circle. This may seem to be a weakening of the paradox of Tillich's original formulation, which seems to suggest that the factors were at once quite independent and yet in some way inter-dependent. Yet Tillich himself goes on to say that 'correlation means that while in some respects questions and answers are independent, they are dependent in other respects.'*

Having said this, however, in what respects are they dependent and in what respects independent? Perhaps Tillich's clearest answer to this question is in his assertion that 'while the material of the existential question is the very expression of the

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* ST II, p.15

human predicament, the form of the question is determined by the total system and by the answers given to it.'* He then goes on to say that 'the question implied in human finitude is directed towards the answer: the eternal. The question implied in human estrangement is directed towards the answer: forgiveness. This directedness of the questions does not take away their seriousness, but it gives them a form determined by the theological system as a whole'.

At this point the relationship between the two correlates of existential question and revelatory answer seems to be far more complex than has been so far apparent and perhaps Tillich realizes the difficulties confronting his method better than some of his critics have thought. There are those who would criticize the very notion of correlation in theology on the grounds that theology must start with revelation and it can admit no understanding of human nature apart from revelation. "The phenomenological method may do well in fields where there is little disagreement between believers and unbelievers but the understanding of human existence is not such a field", they will tell us.** But perhaps Tillich would accept this, since he certainly admits that the way we formulate the questions implied in existence is shaped by the revelation which enlightens our lives. Yet at the same time he does seem to think that the material out of which these questions

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* ST II, p.17

** cp. D.S. Cairns who makes this point in relation to theologians who think they can accept the phenomenological findings of Heidegger (see Gospel without Myth. pp.43-44.)

are formulated is discovered by an 'existential' analysis. Thus Tillich might well argue that existential knowledge and faith knowledge (i.e. knowledge based on revelation) might be quite separate spheres of knowledge, were it not that the believer exists as a man, even as the unbeliever does, and at the same time has this existence in faith.* Faith is the standpoint of the theologian who undertakes an analysis of existence, and faith is fundamental to the existence he wishes to analyze; yet it remains human existence, and all the material of phenomenological studies must therefore be taken up and recognized.

This seems to suggest that there is a rather subtle dialectic between these two correlates and they are not just developed in complete independence and laid side by side. Yet there still seems to be room for an independent existential analysis which will discover the material out of which the existential questions should be formulated, though the actual formulation is in some way determined by the message of revelation.

In the light of this understanding we might now ask what kind of investigation will discover this material which is 'the very expression of the human predicament.' Does this call for an existential analysis in the sense of a practical exploration of man's predicament or does it call for something more - perhaps the development of an existentialist ontology? Perhaps we may hope to

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* Cp. Kierkegaard's suggestion that existence could not be thought were it not that the thinker exists.

understand this question better if we imagine how the method might work in practice. One can imagine the theologian exploring the human predicament and discovering the phenomenon of guilt, and then in the light of the biblical revelation formulating a question in terms of the doctrine of sin. Now the existential question has been formulated in the light of the revelation, the formulation of the question, therefore, being 'determined by the answers given to it', the answer in this case being the gospel of redemption.

At this stage it seems that Tillich is suggesting that the theologian must know as much as possible about the empirical reality of the world, or perhaps more particularly of human psychology and sociology, in order that he may elaborate his doctrine of man and the world in a living relationship to what he knows about man and the world. This is not because the doctrines are attempts to describe the facts, or even in the sense of the empirical sciences to 'explain' the facts. Nor is it because doctrines are elaborated out of the facts. It is rather because doctrines must be related to facts in the way the believer looks at those facts. The doctrine of sin may be closely bound up with the way the believer looks at the phenomenon of guilt, though it is not itself a description of that phenomenon. And it may be important to relate the doctrine to this particular phenomenon, if this phenomenon seems of basic importance in understanding the whole phenomenon of man.

Yet we have suggested earlier that for a thinker like Kierkegaard existential analysis may have a deeper significance than merely to describe phenomena. In working this out we suggested that Kierkegaard's understanding was closely akin to that of Karl Jaspers, who speaks of a leap from knowing something to inner action through thinking. If existential analysis can really be understood in this way, then we may expect it to play a more dynamic role in theological thinking than has been so far suggested. And this is something which Tillich himself would probably accept. He has drawn our attention to the fact that in existential knowledge the subject is involved, in a way that makes it different from objective knowledge; and this means that it can be distinguished from the objective knowledge of empirical psychology just as much as from anatomy or physiology. This at least means that, while existential analysis may proceed in the guise of an investigation of phenomena, the phenomena under investigation do not remain a matter of objective indifference. May it not also suggest to us that the investigator is so involved in his subject matter that something happens to him (something which we may call a 'personal illumination') as a result of what he discovers?

If we accept this, however, does it not mean that our existential analysis itself becomes a moment of revelation? I think Jaspers would say that it does, but then he would not accept the view of revelation put forward by Tillich. For Tillich the situation is perhaps more complex. Every moment of revelation is

to be referred to the final revelation in order that it may be properly understood. Hence that which happens to us in the moment of existential illumination could only have revelatory significance in its relation to the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. Yet this is not to deny that it is a moment of real significance within the dynamic of revelation, but the nature of this significance remains to be worked out.

Tillich's understanding here would also seem to accord well with Kierkegaard's thinking. In Kierkegaard's thought there is certainly a quest for a deeper understanding of existence but this quest is always related to the central problem of the individual's relationship to Christianity - the problem of becoming a Christian. Thus for both Tillich and Kierkegaard the quest of existential illumination may seem to be a kind of preliminary to preaching the gospel.

At this point in our discussion we seem to be directed towards that unresolved problem of twentieth century theology - the problem of natural theology. Is it here suggested that this 'existential illumination' prepares the way for a man to receive the revelation of the gospel, so that it is part of the apologetic purpose of Tillich to open men to a fuller realization of existence, in order that they might be prepared to recognize the gospel when it is preached? Some such programme may seem to be suggested in his use of the terms 'question' and 'answer', in proposing this

method for theology. But we have seen enough of the complexity of his thought to hesitate before we characterize his method in this way. And what of Kierkegaard? Did he write his works of 'existential analysis' in order that his readers might be enabled to hear the gospel? In a sense perhaps he did, but not in the sense that he would suddenly overcome the resistance or the blindness of the unbeliever, but rather in the sense that he would enrich and deepen the faith of the believer.

Perhaps the best way of expressing this is to say that man's awareness of existence is one of the factors that is at work in the inner dynamic of his reception of the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. This is not to say it is the factor, nor even necessarily that it is the most important factor; but it is one of the factors just as physical or mental health may be two other factors. This self-awareness is not itself faith, however, and it is at this point that both Kierkegaard and Tillich seem to be sharply divided from Jaspers. For Jaspers the 'illumination of Existenz' seems to represent something like a revelation in its own right, while for Tillich it gains significance in its relationship to the decisive renewal of Existenz which comes not through self-illumination, but through the revelatory event of Jesus who is the Christ. And it is this final revelation which is critical for every revelation. For Jaspers the 'illumination of Existenz' leads to authentic existence, while for Tillich existential analysis leads only to a question (albeit a question of 'ultimate concern') and for Kierkegaard it leads to an awareness of despair!

If we are right about the way in which Kierkegaard and Tillich would interpret 'existential' understanding (what Jaspers calls 'illumination of Existenz') in its relationship to faith, then we might say that the significance they see in self-understanding is comparable to the significance seen by the psycho-analyst. For the psycho-analyst self-understanding seems to become, for some people at least, a criterion for full mental health, or perhaps better for full maturity of life. Similarly, we may say that Kierkegaard is concerned to bring people to full maturity of faith and this entails not only teaching them better biblical theology but also increasing the awareness of existence in their own personal lives. Not that Kierkegaard would have said that biblical theology, properly understood, would have failed to increase man's self-awareness, but it was not the only way of doing this; and indeed in situations where biblical theology is not properly understood he would probably have questioned whether it was even the best way. And this concern for a fuller self-awareness surely has a place in Tillich's thinking too.

Of course, this does not mean that Tillich would discount the importance of our exploration of the human predicament being carried out with the greatest possible objective integrity. The most thorough-going grasp of the phenomena themselves is basic to our thinking. We cannot say that since our aim is to produce a higher degree of self-awareness and since this is not the same as imparting or discovering more accurate information, we need

not be specially committed to gathering information or observing phenomena. This would be to assume that self-awareness can be developed from any kind of description of personal phenomena, whereas Tillich and Kierkegaard (and indeed Jaspers too) would agree that a right self-awareness develops from a right understanding: from true knowledge; indeed from correct information.

Nor should we assume that the understanding of man's existence is pursued solely to achieve a special kind of personal enlightenment. If this were what Tillich believed, then while this self-understanding might play a part in the dynamics of faith, it would have no 'logical' significance within the dialectic of theological thinking. It might help a man to a more mature degree of faith but it would play no part in the conceptual elaboration of a theology. It would merely serve as a kind of preliminary therapy which had to be carried out before theological thinking began. But Tillich certainly suggests that the theologian's doctrines of man and of history and of creation must continually be related to his phenomenological knowledge of man and history and perhaps even of 'creation'. Thus, to take the example we considered earlier, it is important that the doctrine of sin should be related to the profoundest possible understanding of guilt, since if our knowledge about guilt is superficial then our understanding of sin will necessarily be impoverished.

In this sense then we can understand Tillich's method of correlation as a correlation between 'existential questions'

discovered by a practical exploration of man's predicament and answers supplied by the message of revelation. We have given no consideration in this discussion to a question which was merely mentioned earlier, however: does Tillich's existential analysis also call for the development of an existentialist ontology? Let us now consider this question in the light of our discussion of the theological dialectic of Tillich's method as we have been considering it so far.

We suggested that knowledge about the phenomenon of guilt might supply the material out of which the 'question' of sin is formulated. May we now say that before this doctrinal 'question' is formulated we must first of all organize the material systematically and develop an ontology - an ontology of estrangement for example? In terms of Tillich's method this might then be understood as part of that discovery of the material out of which the existential question is formulated; for it is only such discovery of material that can really claim independence of the revelatory constellation. Yet presumably this ontological development could only claim to be part of our discovery of material if it were a discovery of the actual structure of the phenomena we are dealing with - that is if it were a kind of sociological or psychological generalization. But it has already been suggested that to make psychological or sociological generalisations is not the same thing as to declare one's ontological convictions. We

have already argued, for example, that the discovery of material made available through depth psychology will not in itself lead, with rational necessity, to convictions about reality as a whole. We need only re-iterate here that if 'estrangement' is presented as an 'ontological' category which applies to the world as a whole, then we have made a leap beyond the discovery of phenomena and phenomenal structure, to something of quite a different kind: an ontological intuition.

In this case, the ontological intuition regarding estrangement seems to be an insight of the same order as the specifically theological doctrine of sin. It is a conviction about being itself. And this suggests either that such a conviction can be received in some way entirely independent of any revelation, or else that the ontological insight is itself formulated in response to revelation. And in this event one's ontology does seem to be open to Zuurdeeg's criticism that it is really a concealed theology.

If we try to incorporate ontology into the dialectic of Tillich's method in this way, therefore, it seems that in the end our understanding of being will become a way of <u>answering</u> man's questions; and this would certainly be unacceptable to Tillich. If ontology leads us to a unified vision of the universe, for example, should we not say that this vision should be correlated with man's quest for unity? And might we not say that this quest

has a central place in man's predicament? Indeed the quest for a unified vision of the universe may be an expression of man's need for finding meaning and significance in existence. This seems to suggest that we might correlate the questions discovered by an existential analysis with the answers supplied by ontology! But this is not the method Tillich proposes; nor does it seem compatible with his belief in the crucial significance of the final revelation.

Perhaps we should remind ourselves again at this point that Tillich himself does not speak of an existentialist ontology having any place in his method of correlation. He speaks always of an 'existential' rather than an 'existentialist' analysis. Furthermore, his account of revelation would make a correlation with man's existential problems more understandable than a correlation with his ontological problems. Revelation is a shaking phenomenon which discovers a man's ultimate concern, rather than being a rational answer to some metaphysical question. At the same time we must remember that in his discussion of revelation he does say that 'the genuine mystery appears when reason is driven beyond itself to its "ground and abyss" to that which "precedes" reason to the fact that "being is and non-being is not"'.* This certainly seems to allow for a more positive relationship between revelation and ontology than we have so far allowed. Here the 'mystery', which is an essential mark of revelation, seems to be quite clearly correlated with the ontological question. But having

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* ST I, p.22

said this we should notice how the ontological question is conceived at this point. We have already seen something of the difficulty and indeed the ambiguity of this concept of 'the ontological question', and so we should do our best to distinguish how it is to be understood in each separate context in which it appears. In the present context - the discussion of the marks of revelation - we are dealing with a mystery which stands at the limits of the competence of human reason. Hence we may surely say that here the question of being remains a question. There is no place here for the developing of a conceptual system to answer the question. Indeed the very reference to the point at which reason is driven beyond itself seems to make it clear that no conceptual system <u>can</u> be constructed at this point.

Perhaps we should say, then, that if ontology is conceived in this way perhaps it has a place in Tillich's theological method. But let us remember that conceived in this way 'ontology' is no longer concerned with developing metaphysical systems. It is no longer concerned with the essentialist or existentialist visions of reality. It is only concerned to remind us of the fact that there is a mystery at the limit of our knowledge of the universe. And indeed we might well say that in this it is pointing us to one particular aspect of the human predicament. Thus we may say that our analysis of man's existence must take into account the fact that he is a thinker who is able to transcend the immediate impressions of the moment through his thought. He can for example

contemplate what came before this present moment; and what came before that; and what came before that again. So he can push back and back until he seems to be contemplating the possibility of an infinite regress. Yet this infinity of time is something he cannot comprehend; but nor can he comprehend any limit which could be called a beginning.

This is just one example of how an analysis of man's existence as thinker may give us the material out of which the question of the ultimate mystery might be formulated. But can we now say that the form of this question is determined by the theological answers given to it? If so, can we imagine how this material supplied by an analysis of man as thinker might be taken up in the theological circle and formulated as a doctrinal question? Can we set out the moments of such a dialectic as we did in the case of guilt, sin and salvation? Perhaps we might say that our examination of existence reveals the phenomenon of man pressing his questions to the limits of the universe as we know it and then seeking to look beyond the limits; and this phenomenon provides the material out of which the 'question' of creation is formulated; and this 'question' is answered by the 'logos-significance' of Christ.

This formulation may immediately arouse the suspicion that we are forcing our theology into the 'question and answer' form in a most unjustifiable way, however. Is this not rather like Hegel forcing everything to conform to the pattern of his dialectic?

Surely the doctrine of creation is in no sense a question. It is much more like an answer. It is a positive assertion, not a doctrine, which points to a need, or looks for a solution, as the doctrine of sin seems to do. Hence we should perhaps say that the limit-questions 'how did the world begin'? or 'why is there something and not nothing'? are formulated by man and are answered by the doctrine of creation.

This understanding of the doctrine of creation is not as satisfactory as it might first appear, however, for the doctrine cannot be a simple straight-forward answer to the question 'why is there a world'?, the answer being 'because God made it'. If this were the way to understand this doctrine, then Tillich would have to admit that sometimes revelation does give us some piece of otherwise unobtainable information. For here we would have been given a piece of information, and this information answers a question which seems to transcend the very limits of possible knowledge (and which for this reason some people would say cannot even be asked let alone answered). But it seems very doubtful whether the assertion that God created the world is giving any very clear information of an explanatory nature at all. Yet if the doctrine of creation is not to be understood as giving information, how should it be understood? Perhaps the best answer to this is that it is in fact transforming our questions about 'being' into the question of God. Hence it ceases to be a question of metaphysical speculation and becomes a question of the meaning of the universe

for us. And inasmuch as the doctrine is already determined by the answer to the question, it is itself a positive affirmation that one may look for meaning and significance in the universe, and one is not abandoned to a fatuous insignificance.

If this is how we understand the doctrine of creation, then it does stand in need of completion, in the positive revelation of God and his purposes, without which the mere assertion that God created the heavens and the earth remains empty; and in this sense the doctrine may surely be understood as being a formulation of the question of being.

Of course, this does not really mean that we have incorporated ontology into the theological method. It might on the contrary suggest that the question of being is not to be answered, nor indeed even to be formulated, by ontological speculation, but in one sense at least it arises as a formulated question within the theological circle and is formulated in the light of revelation. It is not suggested here that Tillich would agree with this conclusion, though his treatment of the traditional arguments for the existence of God suggests that he might not be altogether unsympathetic to our argument here. But what is suggested is that if we accept the method he proposes for theology, then this is the way in which the question of being should be understood.

Having thus dealt with the question of being as it arises within the theology of correlation, does this mean that we have now finally answered the question about the place of ontology in

theological discussion, or must we admit that the need for some kind of understanding of reality as a whole still remains with us? We have suggested that in the light of revelation the limiting question about the origin of the universe, while not exactly dismissed as meaningless, is nevertheless transformed into the existential problem of God, which is the problem of finding meaning for my own life (i.e. Kierkegaard's problem of finding an 'Archimedean point'). The doctrine of creation certainly does not enable us to discover the origin of the universe in the sense that Darwin may claim to have discovered the origin of species; yet we may nevertheless claim to have discovered that it makes sense to look for 'significance' or 'meaning' in existence. But does not this affirmation itself demand some kind of vision of reality as a whole? Can we really escape the problems associated with the reality of God by translating the concept of God into the concept of ultimate concern, as Tillich sometimes seems to do? Surely it is clear that the believer is asserting more than the mere possibility of man finding a point of ultimate concern; he is saying that it is of the nature of things that there is such a point to be found. At least this much must surely be included in the assertion that this is a God-created universe. At least there seems to be included here some kind of universal sanction for our faith and it is precisely this universal sanction which distinguishes the belief in creation from a humanistic belief in finding man's ultimate concern within purely contingent social structures. And this belief in a universal sanction does seem to call for a

particular kind of vision of the universe. It may be compatible, for example, with a vision of the universe as being like a work of art, which is being shaped and moulded by a divine artist, while it is much less obviously compatible with a vision of the universe as being like a random collection of energy concentrations, reacting blindly in determinate patterns.

It is at this kind of point that the conversation between the theologian and the scientist or the philosopher may still seem to be inevitable. It may be called in question whether any vision of a God-created universe is possible, even as a significant symbol, in the face of what we know about physical structures. And again, the theologian may have to face the question of the epistemological significance of any symbolic vision of the world as a whole. And here the whole question of the epistemological significance of any theological talk at all cannot be escaped.

All these problems must be taken seriously by the theologian and clearly they are taken seriously by Tillich. And perhaps to take them seriously will demand of the theologian that he answers questions about how he does in fact visualize reality as a whole. Yet if Tillich's method is to be accepted by the theologian, such questions will not be the primary questions of his theology. Theology starts with the message of revelation and the way this message addresses man in his existence and only subsequently can we ask how this fits into our understanding of universal reality. It is the revelation and its significance for man's life, which is

crucial for the theologian and any attempt to relate this to our 'universal understanding' (or even our attempts to decide whether any 'universal understanding' is possible) must take into account this revelation which is of fundamental importance to our existence. In this I find it difficult to accept Zuurdeeg's contention that because 'experience is determined by what we are, that is to say, by our particular convictions', it 'does not offer at all the kind of insight which would enable us to know or "understand" the universe, being, being-itself or God.'* Perhaps Zuurdeeg's point depends on the fact that the words 'know' and 'understand' are inappropriate to areas such as the area of personal convictions, or to attempts to characterize the universe as a whole. He would wish to reserve such words, perhaps, for 'objective' knowledge. But while this would certainly mean that our universal visions are not to be regarded as 'knowledge' or 'understanding' it does not mean that such visions can ever be formulated independently of convictions. Indeed Zuurdeeg clearly thinks that they cannot and it seems to me likely that Tillich would, in the end, agree with him. For surely Tillich would agree that one of the facts his understanding of reality must take into account is the fact of the shocking ecstatic experience which grasped him in the moment of revelation, and the way in which this enlightened and renewed his personal existence. No matter how he may envisage reality, or even if he is to decide that it cannot be 'envisaged', his whole

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* Zuurdeeg op. cit. p.157

reaction to the world must take this fact of revelation and his response to revelation - that is his convictions - into account.

This means that the theologian's attempt to answer questions about how he understands reality is not an *a priori* activity which is prior to his declaration of the message of revelation, declared as an answer to man's predicament, but it is an *a posteriori* activity which begins only after the faith itself has been expounded; and expounded, in accordance with that method of correlation which, we have argued, finds no place for ontological systems. This in turn means that this *a posteriori* discussion is not of crucial importance to dogmatics as such. That is to say, it is not necessary to our right understanding of the faith that we should find answers to the epistemological or metaphysical questions of the philosophers. Those who find different answers to these questions or even who find no answers may remain united in matters of faith and doctrine - that is in relation to the message of revelation and their reception of it.

APPENDIX TO PART II.

The account of the method of correlation given here may be open to the objection that it takes too little account of Tillich's actual theological writings. It leans heavily on his discussion of method without giving due attention to the way in which the method is in fact applied. Tillich himself in discussing the problem of theological method has said that 'no method can be found in separation from its actual exercise; methodological considerations are abstractions from methods actually used.'* And again he says that 'methodological awareness always follows the application of a method, it never precedes it.'** In view of these remarks can we discuss his methodological proposals without looking at the shape of the theology from which the method is presumably abstracted? To this I would reply that the study of method, like many other abstract studies, may surely be worked out in terms of its own inner logic. This does not mean, of course, that an abstract study of method can be carried on without any regard to the project to which the method relates, but it does mean that the actual methodology may be examined, and its implications worked out, without considering in any detail whether the proposer of the method actually accepts these implications in his own work. Thus Tillich's proposals

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* Quoted from a paper on the Problem of Theological Method re-printed in Four Existentialist Theologians (Ed.) Will Herberg Doubleday New York 1958. See p.238.

** ST I p.39

in relation to theological method may certainly be abstracted from his theological work as a whole, but it is surely possible for us to examine the methodological proposals themselves, even though this could point towards theological writings different from Tillich's own.

In saying this we do not want to make any judgment as to whether Tillich does in fact depart from his own methodology. We are only trying to clarify the aim and the scope of the present discussion. The examination of Tillich's system is not our present concern. We are concerned with the rather specific problem of methodology as it concerns the theologian.

To fill out our account, however, something more should be said about Tillich's discussion of the source and the norm of systematic theology. Certain suggestions have already been made as to what sources the theologian will draw on, both in our discussion of the message of revelation, and in our discussion of existential analysis, but now we will look at Tillich's own discussion of these questions.

At the beginning of the second chapter of his Systematic Theology Tillich puts three questions: What are the sources of systematic theology? What is the medium of their reception? What is the norm determining the use of the sources? Answering the first of these questions Tillich points in the first place

to the biblical documents as the basic source, since they are the original documents about the event upon which Christianity is based. This applies in particular to the New Testament of course. But we must also include the Old Testament documents in our source material, as these bear witness to the same definitive event. On the other side of the event we should also include the reception of this message by the Church. The recognition of these sources has already been included in our discussion of revelation, and the main thing to be added here is some account of the way in which Tillich sees these sources as being received and interpreted within the realm of theology.

First of all the biblical material must be taken up into the construction of 'biblical theology'. At first sight this may seem to imply that biblical theology is a kind of historical-critical study, using the methods of what has sometimes been called 'scientific history'. Thus the task of constructing a biblical theology would be a fairly straight-forward matter of considering all the thought-forms and images in the work of this or that biblical writer, understanding them in their historical setting, and drawing out some kind of unified picture of the writer's understanding of the faith. Having done this with different biblical writers it might then become possible to attempt some kind of unified picture which did justice to the whole of the New Testament. In any case one could at least ask what was common to these different writings. Such an understanding seems to imply

that biblical theology proceeds according to the methods of both historical and literary criticism. But Tillich sees a further dimension in what the biblical theologian is doing. 'The biblical theologian,' he writes, 'to the degree to which he is a theologian (which includes a systematic point of view) does not present pure facts to us; he gives us theologically interpreted facts.' * How then does this 'systematic point of view' fit into the work of the biblical theologian? Perhaps it means that while the biblical theologian must certainly begin with an historical-critical study, he cannot rest there; he must go on to bring his historical findings into conformity with his own theological system. This does not necessarily mean that the historical findings must be distorted in order that they may be made to agree with theological presuppositions, for it may well be held that the relationship between the system and the biblical source material must be dialectical, with each in turn being corrected in the light of the other. Thus the system will be formulated, and constantly revised, in the light of the historical critical study of the bible, and the facts discovered by this study will be interpreted in the light of the system.

This kind of dialectic may certainly be included in Tillich's understanding of biblical theology, but it would seem that in the end he sees the situation as being rather more complex than

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* ST. I p.40

this would suggest. For the subjective commitment of the believer does not seem to have a necessary place in the structure of this dialectic. It might well proceed according to a more or less explicitly formulated logic, according to which each new interpretation was examined and evaluated. But for Tillich the commitment, or the devotion, of the theologian is an essential element in any adequate biblical theology. Thus the exegesis of the biblical theologian is 'pneumatic (spiritual) or, as we should call it today, "existential". ' And so he holds that 'systematic theology needs a biblical theology which is historical-critical without any restrictions and, at the same time, devotional-interpretative, taking account of the fact that it deals with matters of ultimate concern.' * Unfortunately theology seems presently to be suffering from the fact that there is an unbridged gap between 'scientific' exegesis and 'pneumatic-existential' exegesis, but it is only as this gap is bridged that an adequate biblical theology will emerge, Tillich believes.

Having presented this understanding of the theologian's relation to the biblical source material, Tillich goes on to present a similar view of the theologian's relation to Church history. Here again it is not just a matter of laying bare the facts of church history with the greatest possible 'scientific' accuracy,

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* ST.I p.41

but it also means expressing these facts in their inner relation to the theologian's 'ultimate concern'. Thus we may say that the theologian should look for the development of what we might call an 'historical theology' parallel to 'biblical theology'. Yet the phrase 'historical theology' would probably be very misleading, since it may well be taken to suggest a theology of history. We are not concerned here with history in this general sense however, but with the history of the Church, or the history of Christian thought. Yet Tillich thinks the phrase 'history of Christian thought' may also mislead, as it could mean a detached description of theological thinkers through the centuries. He therefore thinks it preferable to describe this 'historical theology' by the traditional term 'dogmatics'.

Having thus dealt with what we might call the 'revelatory' side of the theologian's source material, we might now expect him to go on to what we have called the 'existential' side. Thus we might expect him to add to his exposition of 'source material' the material supplied by the practical explorers of man's predicament. In this preliminary discussion of the matter he does not talk in quite these terms, however. Instead he says that 'a broader source of systematic theology than all those mentioned so far is the material presented by the history of religion and culture.' *

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* ST.I p.43

This may seem at first sight to be suggesting that we find in religious and cultural phenomena an independent revelation or source of information about our ultimate concern. Yet our previous discussions of the nature of final revelation, as Tillich understands it, makes it clear that he does not believe that any revelation can really be independent of the event of Jesus as the Christ. His own discussion of this material presented by the history of religion and culture suggests that it must be taken up by the theologian in order that he may understand it in its relationship to the being of man, and the New Being made known in Jesus, the Christ. This material thus becomes part of the material out of which our understanding of the human predicament should emerge. Thus we are reminded here that the practical exploration of man's predicament must take into account the communal and historical dimensions of human existence. We cannot be satisfied with psychological studies, but we must include studies of cultural and religious structures as well. Indeed we might say that there is no human activity which can be left out of account here. Man's scientific theorizing, his technical activities and even his casual amusements, all these may have to be included in our developing understanding of the phenomenon and the predicament of personal existence.

So much for the sources of systematic theology, which Tillich says display an almost unlimited richness. What of his second question as to the medium of the reception of these sources?

It is in experience that he finds this medium. He distinguishes three senses in which the term 'experience' may be used in this connection. It may be used in what he calls the 'ontological sense' in which the pragmatists use it. In this sense reality is identical with experience. It may be used in a scientific sense, in which 'experience' designates the given in its recognizable structure. Not just the given as such, but rather the given as constituting an articulated world. Thirdly it may be used in a mystical sense, in which experience is understood in terms of participation. Of these three senses of the term it is the third which Tillich finds of interest to the theologian. All theologies of experience, he maintains, must in the end come to using the word in reference to participation. And it is this participation which is the medium through which we receive the revelation which is the source of our theology. The participation itself is not a source of theological thinking, but is only the mode in which all sources are received.

In answer to his third question about the norm of systematic theology we might expect Tillich to point to the final revelation itself as the norm. But he holds that something more precise is needed. In every age he seems to think some definitive formulation of the meaning of this final revelation must be discovered, in relation to man's present awareness of his predicament. I say that this formulation must be <u>discovered</u>, because Tillich says that

'the growth of these norms is a historical process, which in spite of many conscious decisions, is on the whole unconscious.'* Tillich establishes the norm of his own system in relation to the fact that 'today man experiences his present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness and despair in all realms of life.** This leads him to the conclusion that the material norm most adequate to the present apologetic situation is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

This whole discussion forms a background to our discussion of the method of correlation itself and should help us to see better the whole scope of this method. Thus we are reminded that the problems associated with biblical theology and dogmatics are not to be avoided, but in fact they must appear as soon as we begin to enquire more closely into the sources of the theologian's work : sources which are presupposed in all our discussions of method.

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* ST.I p.54

** ST I p.55

CONCLUSION

In the light of our discussion so far can we now make good our claim that Kierkegaard's 'existentialism' seems to point the theologian on to a method of correlation such as that proposed by Tillich? This claim has been supported by our insistence that Tillich must be understood as proposing a correlation of revelatory elements with genuinely 'existential' elements. Yet in saying this we did not in the end succeed in banishing the ontological question. For we were still left with the question of the truth of theology in its relation to reality as a whole (as distinct from the value it may have in its relation to the existence of the believer). In view of this remaining ontological question can we really claim that this theology of correlation stands in the tradition of Kierkegaard? Does it not in the end reject the principle that truth is subjectivity and recognize the need for some kind of objective understanding?

Even though we accept that the method of correlation undertakes to develop theology out of an 'existential' attitude akin to Kierkegaard's, there seem to be good grounds for suggesting that in the end Tillich would hold that Kierkegaard has overstated his case to a point where he is in danger of becoming lost in mere subjectivism. And so in order to protect ourselves from this subjectivism we must make some claim to a truth which goes beyond the subjectivity of satisfying our own inward needs. On this

interpretation we should say that Tillich has indeed recognized the importance of the existential starting point for theology. He has recognized the need for a truly existential theology. Yet he cannot rest in this, for he sees also the need to relate his faith to reality itself. Thus having been grasped by the power of revelation and having comprehended this revelation in relation to the human predicament we cannot escape from attempting to discover the truth of this revelation in the setting of reality as a whole.

Before accepting this account however we must ask whether Kierkegaard's own position is open to a development of this kind. If Kierkegaard's 'existential' analysis is accepted, does it really leave the way open to complementing it with any kind of ontology. If Kierkegaard did no more than remind us that faith is, by its very nature, concerned with meeting the inward need of the existent - the need to find a basis for his eternal happiness - then we could argue in this way. For, if this is the way in which we understand him then it may certainly mean that any exposition of faith must relate it to the structure of personal existence and show how it renews our existence. But there is no real need to stop there. No doubt Kierkegaard was right to object to a philosophical trend which would suggest that the theologian should turn straight to the ontological or metaphysical problems of understanding revelation in its relation to the structure of reality as a whole : a method which would thus by-pass the crucial issue of faith as an inward

personal response to revelation. Such a trend had to be resisted because it would lead us to discussing the metaphysical implications of revelation without ever facing its 'existential' challenge. But once the point had been clearly established that the reality of faith was to be found precisely in its existential challenge and its power of existential renewal, what then? Having thus acknowledged the reality of faith might we not then go on to ask how this fitted in to our understanding of the whole of reality?

But we cannot so easily assume that Kierkegaard's thought is open to this kind of interpretation. In fact it often seems that he wants to do more than merely to remind us that faith is concerned with our existential predicament. Indeed he seems to suggest that our only possibility of <u>understanding reality</u> is also to be found in our own self-awareness - our awareness of reality in our own existence.

If this is part of Kierkegaard's claim then his insistence that truth is subjectivity is more than just a reminder that the challenge of revelation must be grasped in our inwardness. It also means that our understanding of reality must be grasped in this same way. And this would seem to suggest that Kierkegaard simply abandoned the ontological enterprise as impossible and pointed us back to faith as the authentic mode of our own existence and said that that is the fullest 'truth' we can ask for. Yet we may think he was pointing towards a more positive conclusion than this, namely the conclusion that the truth which is subjectivity

is in some sense that very 'truth' which the ontologist seeks! That is to say that the knowledge of being which forms the subject of the ontological quest can really be discovered in authentic existence.

We suggested in our discussion of ontology that the ontological quest could be understood in three ways : as a quest for the most general structures or categories discoverable among phenomena, as a quest for a vision or image of reality as a whole or as a quest to experience reality as a whole. Our present interpretation of Kierkegaard seems to suggest that he would have seen the possibility of knowing 'being itself' (had he used this language) in neither of the first two ways, but possibly in a way more like the third. But this does not mean that he held that we could 'understand' or 'comprehend' reality through a mystical reflection or a mystical participation. It was rather through an 'existential pathos' which 'passes into action', or in Karl Jaspers' phrase an inner action through thinking.

Yet however positive our interpretation of Kierkegaard might be at this point, the fact remains that he does seem to deny the possibility of understanding reality as a whole through any kind of systematic cognition. Whether or not he is proposing some kind of 'existential ontology' (though certainly not an existentialist one in Tillich's sense) to replace all traditional conceptual ontologies, he does at least seem to deny that reality can be

comprehended conceptually (that is in a conceptual system). Hence he would surely deny the possibility of giving any straightforward answer to ontological questions, about revelation, if this should mean answering questions about the systematic understanding of faith and reality. For Kierkegaard, the question of the truth of revelation can only be answered in the inward reality of faith. It may certainly be possible to develop an account of revelation in correlation with an existential analysis, but there is then no further possibility of showing that this revelation has any real significance beyond its power to grasp (as some might say to obsess) the life of the believer. Yet Kierkegaard might reply that the only way one could possibly comprehend the relationship of revelation to reality is in the actual inward conviction of faith.

If we think that there remains a sense in which Kierkegaard interprets existential conviction as having a genuine 'ontological' significance, Tillich on the other hand might be said to interpret rational ontology as having an existential basis. He would probably say that any complete existential analysis of the human predicament would have to take into account the rational side of man's existence. It is part of man's predicament that he wants to understand reality rationally. He wants some kind of rational ground for understanding the truth of his faith. Tillich certainly acknowledges that this ground cannot be discovered in the form of logical or empirical proofs of the faith, as in the classical proofs of the existence of God. Yet he does seem to think that some kind

of ontology can be formulated which will supply a ground (perhaps one might call it a 'background') within which the reality of faith can be understood. And the need for such a ground, he would perhaps say, is given in existence itself.

To this Kierkegaard might retort that even if one sees this need as a 'question implied in existence', or perhaps precisely <u>when</u> one sees this need as a 'question implied in existence', one is forced to the realization that it is a 'question' which can only be answered in the inner passion of faith. * The problem of the truth of faith indeed appears as an existential problem, but perhaps for that very reason the only possible solution to the problem is also existential. There seems to be no objective ground beyond the reality of faith itself which can be used to establish the truth of the gospel or the authenticity of revelation. This authenticity can only be realized inasmuch as faith is realized in the life of the believer.

To this no doubt Tillich would agree. Faith is not identical with knowledge. It is not an intellectual hypothesis. Yet the question remains, in the light of a revelation which <u>is</u> authenticated in faith, can one avoid trying to understand this faith in rational terms? Is not this precisely the concern of theology? And if one refuses to go beyond the reality of faith in its

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* Kierkegaard would surely agree with the Elder Zossima, in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov who, when faced with the questions: 'How then am I to get back my faith? How is one to prove it? How is one to be convinced?', replies 'It is something one cannot prove. One can be convinced of it though . . . by the experience of active love.'

relation to the human predicament, one may certainly arrive at a rational understanding of faith as a phenomenon of personal existence, but it may be questioned whether to rest in such a phenomenology will satisfy the believer's desire to claim authenticity for the revelation to which he would bear witness.

We have already noted that Tillich himself sometimes seems to suggest that we should be satisfied with such phenomenology, inasmuch as he sometimes seems satisfied to limit the meaning of the word 'God' to that which concerns us ultimately. In one of his sermons he says that if the word God ' has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation.' * And one can find the same note sounded in his talk of 'the God above God' in his book The Courage to Be. He sometimes seems to suggest that if one is seriously concerned, then this concern is in itself an affirmation, and in the presence of this affirmation of concern it is appropriate to say 'God.'

We shall have to discuss this relating of 'God' to 'ultimate concern' more fully later on, but we shall only notice here that Tillich does not present this concept of 'ultimate concern' as being free from ontological implications. In his affirmation of concern the doubter may be affirming the 'God above God', and

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* The Shaking of the Foundations, p.57. Compare Kierkegaard's remark that 'one who distinguishes absolutely has a relationship to the absolute telos and ipso facto also a relationship to God'. (Postscript p.369).

if we say that he is, then perhaps we shall already imply that this is an affirmation of 'the power of being which works through those who have no name for it.'* And if we draw any such conclusion from the concern itself, as Tillich seems to do, then we are still grounding the concept of God in an ontological affirmation about 'the power of being'.

All this may be taken to suggest that in the end Tillich does insist that theology must go on from the existential account of faith to give an ontological account. Hence if one accepts our 'existential' account of the method of correlation, one must add that the development of such a correlation is not the whole of theology, but is only an initial stage, which must be followed by some kind of ontological claim relating to the reality, or the ontological significance, of the faith which has been described. This would mean calling in question whether Tillich stands in the tradition of Kierkegaard at all. For Kierkegaard the existential account of faith is surely the only way of access to its authenticity. For Tillich, on the other hand, it begins to look as if this existential account is only a methodological preliminary which still leaves the task of displaying the <u>real</u> authenticity of that faith, which has so far only been declared as a subjective phenomenon.

This last conclusion about Tillich's thought will not do, however, for it takes too little account of his belief in the reality

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* The phrase is Tillich's. See S.T. II, p.14

of revelation. It is surely clear that Tillich does hold that it is in this reality that the authenticity of faith is grounded. The theologian must work within the circle of faith, on the basis of the revelation which has grasped and illuminated his existence. He is not primarily concerned to establish the authenticity of that revelation, but only to bear witness to it, and to present a 'systematic' account of its reality. In view of this we may surely maintain our claim that Tillich's theology is fundamentally existential in its basis and in its method. And we may go on to suggest that his search for an ontological comprehension is not in any case an attempt to discover a final systematic comprehension of reality as a whole. It is rather an acknowledgment of the fact that in our existence as thinkers we need (and Tillich would say we inevitably pre-suppose) some kind of understanding, or conceptual model of reality, as a background to our thinking. This does not mean that any such understanding can in any sense claim to be the <u>right</u> one, (or for that matter the <u>Christian</u> one) but it means we should try to develop the most adequate ontology we can.

The difference between this claim of Tillich and the ontological claims of Hegel against which Kierkegaard directed his attack may not seem very great. It may seem that though Tillich does not claim that we can discover a final or absolute ontology, he is nevertheless committed to the same quest for a systematic comprehension of the absolute. Yet the difference between Hegel

and Tillich is greater than this, if our interpretation of Tillich is correct. For he sits much more lightly to ontological constructions than Hegel seems to have done. For Tillich no such construction is more than a partially effective device for meeting the need to see reality as a whole and to see faith in its relation to reality. It therefore makes no final claim to have grasped the absolute, but is simply the way of understanding which at present seems to be more adequate than any other that is offering. On this understanding it is doubtful whether an ontology could in any final sense be called the 'right' one or the 'true' one. It can at best make the more modest claim to being the most adequate one.

It is in view of this understanding of ontology that we deny its primary place in theology. Given a final system which could comprehend the absolute, then surely the theologian might be faced with the task of accounting for his faith within the framework of the system. But if no such system is possible then the position is rather different, for ontological pronouncements cannot claim the same right to shape or control one's confession of faith.

The theologian is in the first place concerned with defining the Christian message, the message of revelation, and this he must do in relation to his own faith and the present faith of the Church. This means he must be prepared to draw on the whole historical witness to the event of revelation on the one hand and the reception of that event in the personal historical existence of

contemporary man or the other. It is in this way that the message of the Church, the definitive doctrine of the Church, may be understood. Discussion may subsequently go on as to the most adequate ontological framework for comprehending this message in its relation to reality, but such discussion will not control the definitive understanding of the message itself. Indeed such discussion may seem in the end to belong within the province of philosophy rather than that of theology. 'The philosophical basis is the ontological analysis of the structure of being. If the theologian needs this analysis either he must take it from a philosopher or he must himself become a philosopher', Tillich writes.* And we might add that even the question as to whether any such analysis is possible is a philosophical rather than a theological question.

Understood in this way Tillich's method of correlation frees the theologian from the metaphysical task of presenting the Christian message within the framework of a total Christian comprehension of being. And this means that in defining its dogmas, the Church should be committed to existential rather than ontological formulations. The significance of this last point might be made clearer if we considered its implications in relation to one or two classical examples of theological disputation. One

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* ST. I, p.30.

such example concerns the presence of Christ in the eucharist. This has understandably figured in theological debates as an issue of vital importance to the dogmatic self-understanding of the Church. But in terms of our present understanding this dogmatic issue should not be formulated in ontological terms such as 'transubstantiation' or 'consubstantiation', for this would be to make the issue a matter of ontology. The doctrinal formulation on the other hand, must simply present the eucharist as realizing the power of the gospel, and in some sense presenting the gospel and Christ himself to the believer, in a way which meets the believer's present need. One may go on to ask metaphysical questions as to how this comes about, but any answer one gives to these questions, whether it be in terms of substance or a spirit-matter dualism or any other terms at all, cannot be of crucial significance for the definition of the dogma itself.

The same kind of thing might be said about the doctrine of the person of Christ. Here is an issue at the very heart of the Church's message. But if our understanding of doctrinal formulation should be accepted, then our dogma cannot be developed out of a metaphysical discussion of how the divine and human realities could co-exist in the man Jesus. The doctrine of the person of Christ must affirm the Church's belief in the saving and renewing significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And this must be framed in its reference to our understanding of man's predicament.

This might certainly lead us to accept Tillich's formulation that Jesus is the bearer of the New Being (following St. Paul's word 'If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature') as long as we understand this as referring to a renewal of our own existence or our own lives. If this reference to New Being is thought to have ontological implications, however, we seem to have left the realm of dogma and turned to the realm of speculative philosophy.

If this understanding of theology is accepted, then it seems to follow that at least some of the disputes which have divided the Church on matters of doctrine may in fact have been based on a misunderstanding of the nature of doctrinal issues. Yet such historical judgments should not be passed too easily. If we take our first example we may be tempted to say that inasmuch as the reformers were divided from the Thomists on the question of the presence of Christ in the eucharist this was a metaphysical division. Hence they were both seeing a metaphysical issue (the issue of transubstantiation) as having crucial doctrinal significance. Yet perhaps this interpretation would be lacking in real perception. Perhaps the point at issue had a far more 'existential' significance * than we are allowing. Perhaps the reformers real concern was that the official Thomist doctrine was failing to point to the eucharist as a re-presentation, or a realization, of the power of the gospel

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* that is a significance touching the believer's personal response to the eucharist.

within the lives of men. Perhaps the real complaint was precisely that this doctrine no longer had relevance to the present human predicament; and so it tended to reduce the eucharist to a mechanical operation rather than allowing it to be a dependent revelation. Clearly a careful historical investigation would be needed before we could reach a firm conclusion on this issue. Yet at least we can say that contemporary disputes about the eucharist would completely forsake the proper ground of theological debate if they became involved in ontological questions such as the question of transubstantiation.

One could argue in a very similar way in relation to the disputes of the first centuries of Church history about the person of Jesus. Whatever may be the right understanding of those debates in their historical setting, for us to renew such debates in our own time would surely be a very questionable procedure. Whatever may have been the real significance of disputes between monophysite Churches and other parts of the Church in their origins, such divisions in the present appear to be divisions between Christians who develop different ontological structures for understanding their faith in its relation to reality. And if this is so we may question whether these are really divisions on matters of doctrine, as we understand the term, at all.

Perhaps the most difficult question to be faced by a theologian adopting this understanding of his work is the question

of the reality of God. Can the theologian really confine his formulation of the doctrine of God to the categories of the Christian message in its relationship to man's predicament? This is of course to raise again the question we raised earlier in relation to the meaning of the word 'God'. Can we really maintain that this word has a purely existential connotation, free from all ontological reference? We pointed out earlier that this might be done if we defined the word 'God' as meaning 'that which concerns us ultimately'. If we stick rigidly to this definition we may then say that the theologian is concerned in his doctrine of God to outline what it is that provides this point of ultimate concern for the Christian. But this need include no speculative questions about the ontological status of such a point. And so it becomes a matter of philosophical speculation, rather than theological formulation, to ask any further questions about God's reality. Much of our discussion so far certainly seems to point to this kind of conclusion. Yet this seems to call in question the theistic basis of Christian theology. It seems to open the way for a theology which certainly finds its ultimate concern in the Christian message but which remains either radically agnostic or even atheistic in relation to the question of God's being.*

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* Perhaps in terms of our present discussion it might be better not to speak of a <u>theology</u> remaining atheistic, since we are suggesting questions of God's being are outside the province of theology, We should perhaps better speak of the <u>theologian</u> as remaining atheistic in his philosophical ontology.

At first sight such an atheistic theologian might seem unthinkable. Indeed strictly speaking it might seem like a contradiction in terms. How can anyone work out a theology without theos? Yet the possibility of such theological work certainly seems to be posed by Professor R.B. Braithwaite in his lecture An empiricist's view of the nature of Religious Belief. Of course it may be claimed that if the word 'God' is really defined in terms of 'ultimate concern' then the question of an atheist theology does not really arise. Since every theologian acknowledges a point of ultimate concern, he acknowledges, by definition, a God. Whatever he may say about the relation of this focus of concern to reality, or whatever he believes about the ontological status of his concern, he nevertheless has this concern and hence he has ipso facto a belief in God.* But can the theologian's doctrine of God really be reduced to these terms? It has already been suggested that for Tillich the interpreting of the concept 'God' in terms of 'ultimate concern' can never be final. It is true that Tillich is prepared to say that 'the atheists are those that deny the God of the theists, but they do not deny the God above the God of the theists—— they cannot, even if they try seriously to do so. For their seriousness in trying to be atheists witnesses against their claim to be atheists.'**

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* We have already noted that for Kierkegaard to be related to an an absolute telos (actually to the absolute telos) is ipso facto to be related to God.

** Quoted from a talk given on the B.B.C. under the title The God above God and printed in The Listner of August 3rd 1961.

And this might be taken to mean that the 'God above God' can at least be identified with 'ultimate concern' without remainder. But even here Tillich's position is not so simple. I do not believe Tillich's position here can be summed up by saying that the atheist in denying God is denying that he is concerned, but in making the denial he shows that he is concerned, (i.e. concerned enough to make the denial) and hence the denial is self-contradictory. I believe that Tillich is rather arguing that the seriousness of the atheist's concern points beyond itself, to the ground of all seriousness, which is God. Thus he is giving an ontological significance to the seriousness of the atheist.

Whether he is justified in thus rejecting the unbeliever's claim to be an atheist need not concern us here. Our point is that he does not really give us grounds here for a purely existential doctrine of God: a doctrine which leaves the ontological question open.

But having posed this question of the reality of God as the most difficult question which a truly existential theology has to face, it would seem appropriate to take this argument still further. Suppose we were to take up this relationship between 'God' and 'ultimate concern' and work it out more radically and less ambiguously than Tillich seems to have done. Would this meet the difficulty? In order to explore this possibility it might be valuable to examine an analysis by H. Richard Niebuhr which seems

to push the understanding of God as the object of man's concern even further than Tillich's discussions do.

In his book The Idea of Radical Monotheism Professor Niebuhr suggests that while the word 'God' has many meanings the theologian should use it only in its reference to the possibility and reality of the faith which grasps the life of the believer. And this reality of faith he defines as 'dependence on a value centre and loyalty to a cause'. Hence he says that 'when we speak of "gods", we mean the gods of faith, namely, such value-centres and causes'. *

Here we have a definition of 'god' which even avoids the absolute concept of ultimate concern for it leaves open the possibility of life being orientated towards a plurality of relative concerns, all of which are thus 'gods' for him who accepts them all. And in the face of this definition of 'god' it does indeed seem plausible to deny the possibility of atheism, for it seems unlikely that anyone could deny the reality of god in this radically existential sense of the word. 'To deny the reality of a supernatural being called God is one thing', writes Niebuhr, 'to live without confidence in some centre of value and without loyalty to a cause is another.' ** Here, we may feel, is an understanding of the term 'god' which really works out the implications of an equation of God, with personal 'concern' in a manner more radical and single-minded than anything we can find in Tillich's writings.

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* Radical Monotheism, p.24

** ibid p.25

Yet if we follow Niebuhr through his discussion of polytheism and what he calls 'henotheism' (i.e. finding one's good or one's value-centre within some particular social structure or even some natural structure within the world) to his discussion of radical monotheism we find him concluding that 'for radical monotheism the value-centre is neither closed society nor the principle of such a society, but the principle of being itself.'* This may suggest to us that in the end the radically existential connotation of the word 'God' has not been maintained since the radical monotheist doctrine of God is in the end linked to an ontological formulation: a formulation in terms of the principle of being. We are not here confronted first with a gospel of God and then left to give an ontological justification of the reality of the God we believe in. We seem rather to be told that whatever the radical monotheist finds to be the principle of being, <u>that</u> will be his god! This would certainly seem to land us back in a position not unlike Hegel's: first we must find the absolute and then we shall have our God. But Niebuhr says this is not what he means. 'Radical monotheism is not in the first instance a theory about being and then a faith, as though the faith orientation toward the principle of being as value-centre needed to be preceded by an ontology that established the unity of the realm of being and its source in a single power beyond it.' It is rather that 'the principle of being is identified with the principle of value and the principle of value

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* ibid p.32

with the principle of being.'* This last phrase to the effect that the principle of value is identified with the principle of being might be taken to mean that the object of faith, whatever it may be, is invested by the radical monotheist with an ultimate ontological significance. But this is counter-balanced by its dialectical opposite that the principle of being is identified with the principle of value. But as to how these principles are to be discovered we may not be quite clear. Niebuhr does later suggest that radical faith is elicited in the situation of revelation, and this may mean that the radical monotheist's use of the word 'God' remains within the theological circle and he speaks of God in terms of the message of revelation and man's reception of that message. Yet this monotheist is still necessarily committed to ontological formulations it would seem. But this leaves us with the question whether Professor Niebuhr's radical monotheism is an appropriate description of Christian faith. In terms of his understanding of faith as a value centre and loyalty to a cause, where does such a centre lie for the Christian? Surely it lies, as Tillich insists, in the final revelation: the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. Surely it is to the constellation of revelation, (of value and commitment) which was inaugurated by this revelation which is for the Christian both value centre and cause, demanding loyalty. But for Niebuhr's radical monotheist the whole realm of being seems to be this centre and cause. Therefore one may want to question

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* ibid pp.32-33.

whether the Christian faith can be described as radical monotheistic faith at all! Inasmuch as the Christian finds his value centre in, and gives his loyalty to, a specific revelatory constellation within the historical process it may seem that Christianity is, in Niebuhr's terms, more like a henotheism. Perhaps if the Christian sees in this revelatory constellation a message of renewal for the whole creation then this henotheistic faith has a relation to being itself. But this would surely be better presented in Kierkegaard's terms of paradox rather than under Niebuhr's category of radical monotheism. Kierkegaard at least recognizes that there is something paradoxical about claiming an absolute significance for a particular revelatory constellation.

Professor Niebuhr suggests that 'insofar as the Christ event elicits radical faith it is seen as demonstration of Being's loyalty to all beings'* but how this absolute principle is demonstrated by the particular event, he does not say, except that it is demonstrated through the eliciting of radical faith. Perhaps we should understand him as suggesting that the Christ event does not supply a value centre in itself but rather points one to Being as the true value centre. And this seems closely parallel to Tillich's insistence that the Christ always points beyond himself.

Having so far explored H.R. Niebuhr's discussion of the concept of 'God' in Christian theology we seem to have been led

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* ibid, p.44

straight back into all the problems of ontological formulations. Yet it is not suggested here that the theologian, having first presented a self-understanding of faith in its relationship to the predicament of personal existence, must then go on to develop an ontological system to account for his belief. It is rather suggested that the understanding of faith in its relation to being is part of the very self-understanding of faith. By this I mean that the very symbols of faith themselves carry some kind of ontological significance, and the separate development of a separate account of the structure of being is not called for. Indeed we might say that Niebuhr is simply drawing attention to the fact that the Christian concern is a concern about reality; the Christian commitment is a commitment to reality itself seen as a meaningful whole. And this is something which we have already suggested is included in the doctrine of creation, or in the correlation between the 'question' of creation and the 'answer' of the logos-significance of Christ.

It may be questioned at this point whether the introduction of Niebuhr's analysis at this stage of the argument has really done anything more than further complicate our problem by introducing a new viewpoint which has not been fully explored. And yet I think that Niebuhr's attempt to work out his position on the basis of a radically 'existential' definition of the terms 'faith' and 'god' has enabled us to take our own investigation further. And in his

understanding of the relationship between faith and ontology we may well find a clue which will help us to understand Tillich's position better. For Niebuhr the account we give of our faith must include the fact that this faith in some way meets our need to comprehend reality as a whole, and in this sense it stands in relation to the question of being. With this we might surely expect Tillich to agree. But the question which we have still failed to resolve is the question whether this very understanding of faith imposes an ontological task upon the theologian. Does it or does it not mean that the theologian's exposition of the faith must show how this faith is related to being?

Our own answer, in terms of our exposition of the method of correlation, has been that although the theologian cannot avoid the question of the relation of faith to reality, this is not his primary concern. His primary concern is to set out in something like a phenomenological way the nature of the constellation of revelation in its correlation with man's predicament. It is at this level, we have argued, that the gospel is to be declared and the dogmas of the Church are to be formulated. Yet we have not denied that it will be necessary to go on from here to face questions about the 'ontological significance' of this faith and clearly such questions may become a matter of debate among theologians. If this is so it might be better to propose the method of correlation as a method for dogmatics (that is the formulation of dogma)

rather than as a method of all theological work. If metaphysical discussion has any significance at all * then we may expect such discussion to be of real interest to the theologian even if it is not relevent to his dogmatic formulation, so perhaps the division we have drawn between philosophy and theology has been too sharp.

We may in any case suggest that the distinction we have drawn between the ontological and the existential is much sharper than we can find in Tillich's work. Indeed this opens to us the most vulnerable aspect of the whole of the present discussion of Tillich. Is it not true that the present discussion has depended upon taking certain statements and certain sections out of Tillich's writings — sections and statements in which the distinction between existential and ontological thought is most sharply drawn — and from them extracting an account of Tillich's method? And does this account not ignore many other passages in which his work presents a markedly different aspect? Is it not strange that we can develop a theological method which is independent of philosophical considerations, out of the work of a man who has written that 'no theologian should be taken seriously as a theologian, even if he is a great Christian and a great scholar, if his work shows that he does not take philosophy seriously'?**

To answer these charges I can only say that it would be to

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* the question as to whether it has or not is left open in the present discussion.

** Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality, pp.7-8.

misunderstand the intention of this whole discussion if it were taken to be an exposition of the thought of Paul Tillich. In proposing the method of correlation, Tillich has pointed the way down a road, and it has been the intention in the present work to go down that road and explore it. Whether Tillich would go with us, or how far Tillich would go with us, is something which perhaps we cannot finally decide. In any case a constant attempt has been made to remind ourselves of the reservations and disagreements which he would be likely to express with our conclusions. Yet we are still able to maintain that there are discernible in Tillich's methodological proposals the seeds of thoroughly existential theology.

It is in this that we have discerned the relationship between Kierkegaard and Tillich. Perhaps Tillich would not accept Kierkegaard's claim to have laid bare the impotence of abstract speculative thinking. And perhaps Kierkegaard would not have accepted Tillich's preoccupation with systematic ontology. Yet Kierkegaard's work does seem to discover the demand for an existential rather than a metaphysical theology and Tillich's methodology does seem to give us a way of developing such a theology. It is this methodology, we maintain, which might guide the Church in the formulation of its doctrine, while ontological questions should be handled with freedom in the unity of faith rather than being seen as definitive of faith itself.

This may not seem to a very momentous conclusion to have

reached. It may seem to amount to no more than a shifting of the boundary between theology and philosophy. The theologian is not in the end relieved of the need to grapple with ontological problems, but they are now to be regarded as falling outside the sphere of dogmatic theology. Either they should be regarded as philosophical problems, or perhaps as problems concerning a special philosophical branch of theology itself.*

Yet our conclusions may have a rather more positive significance than this would suggest. In particular they surely have important implications for the discussions which are carried on between believers and unbelievers. Traditionally much of this discussion has centred around the ontological questions of theism and atheism. If our conclusions are accepted, however, it would lead to a significant shift in this frontier. The question of belief and unbelief becomes a question as to whether the constellation of Christian revelation, as an historical phenomenon, really has the power to renew and fulfil human life; whether it demands an absolute commitment and has the power to 'answer' the deepest needs (to use Tillich's word the 'predicament') implied in our existence. It is this issue which is crucial in the declaration of the gospel and in the moment of faith or of unbelief it is this existential message of renewal which is accepted or

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* There is no intention here to pre-judge the issue as to whether any rational ontology is possible at all. The logical question as to the very meaning or possibility of the ontological quest is obviously a question of primary importance for the philosophical discussion, but not for dogmatic theology.

rejected. The question of the ontological significance of the faith must be asked subsequently and the decisive response to the message itself need not be affected by the answer given to this question. Indeed it need not be affected even if it is decided that no satisfactory answer can be given. The argument as to whether the universe is to be understood theistically or atheistically is an ontological issue and as such is not of crucial importance to the decision for or against the Christian gospel. Christian dogma does not include even the claim that any correct, or finally true, ontology can ever be embraced by man's reason. (Whatever the affirmation 'I believe in God the Father almighty' may mean, it surely does not mean 'I have developed a satisfactory theistic ontological system'!)

If our existential understanding of dogmatic theology really implies this attitude to ontological questions then it would seem to be a conclusion of some significance for the Church both in its understanding of its own unity in faith and in its understanding of its evangelistic task.

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