

- f-f In B: , for Hegel, only the fulfilment of history.
 g-g In B: In face of.
 h-h In B: system.
 i-i Fehlt in B.
 j-j Fehlt in B.
 k-k In B: at.
 l In B hinter diesem Wort eingefügt: a.
 m In B hinter diesem Wort eingefügt: a.
 n-n In B: here.
 o-o Fehlt in B.
 p-p In B: reason.
 q-q In B: reason.

15. The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion (1946)

A (Druckvorlage): Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 1, No. 4, N.Y., 1946, S. 3–13.

B: P. Tillich, Theology of Culture, ed. R. C. Kimball, N. Y. 1959, S. 10–29.

Zur Textgeschichte von G.W. V, S. 122–137 vgl. G.W. XIV, S. 45f., 47 und 165.

Die englische Fassung aus Union Seminary Quarterly Review ist gegenüber der deutschen, Zwei Wege der Religionsphilosophie. Natur und Geist. Festschrift für Fritz Medicus, H. Barth und W. Rüegg (Hrsg.), Zürich, 1946, S. 210–219, die ursprünglichere; vgl. dazu G.W. XIV, S. 45ff. und Religion and Culture. Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich, W. Leibrecht (ed.), N.Y., 1959, S. 381. Obwohl: „Tillich selbst konnte nicht mehr sagen, in welcher Sprache er den Aufsatz konzipiert hatte“ (G.W. XIV, S. 45).

^aIn an article entitled “Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought” I have^a distinguished^b two ways of approaching God, the way of overcoming estrangement and the way of meeting a stranger. ^cOn^c the first way man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated. ^dOn^d the second way man meets a *stranger* when he meets God. The meeting is accidental. Essentially they do not belong to each other. They may become friends on a tentative and conjectural basis. But there is no certainty about the stranger man has met. He may disappear, and only *probable* statements can be made about his nature.

The two ways symbolize the two possible types of philosophy of religion: the ontological type and the cosmological type. The way of overcoming estrangement symbolizes the ontological method in the philosophy of religion. The way of meeting a stranger symbolizes the cosmological method. It is the purpose of this essay to show: (1) that the ontological method is basic for every philosophy of religion, (2) that the cosmological method without the ontological as its basis leads to a destructive cleavage between philosophy and religion, and (3) that on the basis of the ontological approach and with a dependent use of the cosmological way, philosophy of religion contributes to the reconciliation between religion and secular culture. These three points shall be discussed on the basis of extensive references to the classic expressions of the two types of philosophy of religion in the 13th century.

I. The world historical problem

In two developments Western humanity has overcome its age-old bondage under the “powers”, those half religious, half magical, half divine, half demonic, half superhuman, half subhuman, half abstract, half concrete, beings who are the genuine material of the mythos. These powers were conquered *religiously* by their subjection to ^eone^e of them, the god of the prophets of Israel; his quality as the god

of justice enabled him to become the universal God. The powers were conquered *philosophically* by their subjection to a principle more real than all of them; its quality as embracing all qualities enabled it to become the universal principle. In this process the "powers" lost their sacred character and with it their hold on the human consciousness. All holiness was transferred to the absolute God or the absolute principle. The gods disappeared and became servants of the absolute God, or appearances of the absolute principle. But the powers, although subjected and transformed, were not extinguished. They could and can return and establish a reign of superstition and fear; and even the absolute God can become *one* power beside others, perhaps the highest, but not the absolute. It is one of the tasks of the philosophy of religion to protect religion as well as the scientific interpretation of reality against the return of the "powers" who threaten both at the same time.

The problem created by the subjection of the powers to the absolute God and the absolute principle is "*the problem of the two Absolutes*". How are they related to each other? The religious and the philosophical Absolutes, *Deus* and *esse* cannot be unconnected! What is their connection from the point of view of being as well as of knowing? In the simple statement: "God is" the connection is achieved; but the character of this connection is *the* problem in all problems of the philosophy of religion. The different answers given to this question are milestones on the road of Western religious consciousness; and this road is a road towards ever increasing *loss* of religious consciousness. Philosophy of religion, although not primarily responsible for this development, must ask itself whether, according to its principles this was an unavoidable development and whether a reversal is possible.

II. The Augustinian solution

Augustine, after he had experienced all the implications of ancient scepticism, gave a classical answer to the problem of the two Absolutes: They coincide in the nature of truth. *Veritas* is presupposed in every philosophical argument; and *veritas* is God. You cannot deny truth as such because you could do it only in the name of truth, thus establishing truth. And if you establish truth you affirm God. "Where I have found the truth, there I have found my God, the truth itself," Augustine says. The question of the two Ultimates is solved in such a way that the religious Ultimate is presupposed in every philosophical question, including the question of God. *God is the presupposition of the question of God*: This is the ontological solution of the problem of the philosophy of religion. God can never be reached if he is the *object* of a question, and not its *basis*.

The Franciscan school of 13th century scholasticism, represented by Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura and Matthew of Aquasparta developed the Augustinian solution into a doctrine of the principles of theology, and maintained, in spite of some Aristotelian influences, the ontological type of the philosophy of religion. Their whole emphasis was on the immediacy of the knowledge of God. According to Bonaventura "God is most truly present to the very soul and immediately knowable"; he is knowable in himself without media as the one which is common

to all. For he is the principle of knowledge, the first truth, in the light of which everything else is known, as Matthew says. As such he is the identity of subject and object. He is not subjected to doubt, which is possible only if subjectivity and objectivity are separated. Psychologically, of course, doubt is possible; but logically, the Absolute is affirmed by the very act of doubt, because it is implied in every statement about the relation between subject and predicate. *Ecce tibi est ipsa veritas. Amplexere illam.* (Thine is truth itself; embrace it.) These ultimate principles and knowledge of them are independent of the changes and relativities of the individual mind; they are the unchangeable, eternal light, appearing in the logical and mathematical axioms| as well as in the first categories of thought. These principles are not created functions of our mind, but the presence of truth itself and therefore of God, *in our mind*. The Thomistic method of knowledge through sense perception and abstraction may be useful for scientific purposes, but it never can reach the Absolute. Anticipating the consequent development Matthew says about the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach: "For even if this method builds the way of science, it utterly destroys the way of wisdom." Wisdom, *sapientia*, is the knowledge of the principles, of truth itself. And this knowledge is either immediate or it is non-existent. It is distinguished from *humana ratio*, human reasoning, as well as from *scripturarum autoritas*, the authority of the Holy Scripture. It is *certitudo ex se ipsis*, certainty out of the things themselves, without a medium. Perceiving and accepting the eternal truth are identical, as Alexander of Hales states.

The truth which is presupposed in every question and in every doubt precedes the cleavage into subject and object. Neither of them is an ultimate power. But they participate in the ultimate power above them, in Being itself, in *primum esse*. "Being is what first appears in the intellect" (*Quod primum cadit in intellectu*). And this Being (which is not *a* being) is pure actuality and therefore divine. We always see it, but we do not always notice it; as we see everything in the light without always noticing the light as such.

According to Augustine and his followers the *verum ipsum* is also the *bonum ipsum* because nothing which is less than the ultimate power of Being can be the ultimate power of good. No changeable or conditioned good can overcome the fear that it may be lost. Only in the Unchangeable can be found the *primum* of all goodness. In relation to *esse ipsum* no difference between the cognitive and the appetitive is possible, because a separation of the functions presupposes a separation of subject and object.

The Augustinian tradition can rightly be called mystical, if mysticism is defined as the experience of the identity of subject and object in relation to Being itself. In terms of our ideas of stranger and estrangement Meister Eckart says: "There is between God and the soul neither strangeness nor remoteness, therefore the soul is not only equal with God but it is—the same that He is." This is, of course, a paradoxical statement, as Eckart and all mystics knew; for in order to *state* the identity an element of non-identity must be presupposed. This proved to be the dynamic and critical point in the ontological approach.

On this basis the ontological argument for the existence of God must be understood. It is neither an argument, nor does it deal with the existence of God, although it often has been expressed in this form. It is the rational description of the relation of our mind to Being as such. Our mind implies *principia per se nota* which have immediate evidence whenever they are noticed, the transcendentalia, *esse, verum, bonum*. They constitute the Absolute in which the difference between knowing and known is not actual. This Absolute as the principle of Being has absolute certainty. It is a necessary thought because it is the presupposition of all thought. "The divine substance is known in such a way that it cannot be thought not to be," says Alexander of Hales. The fact that people turn away from this thought is based on individual defects but not on the essential structure of the mind. The mind is able to turn away from what is nearest to the ground of its own structure. This is the nerve of the ontological argument. But Anselm, on the basis of his epistemological realism, transformed the *primum esse* into an *ens realissimum*, the principle into a universal being. In doing so he was open to all attacks, from Gaunilo and Thomas to Kant, who rightly deny that there is a logical transition from the necessity of Being itself to a highest being, from a principle which is beyond essence and existence to something that exists.

But even in this insufficient form the meaning of the ontological answer to the question of the two Absolutes is visible. *Deus est esse*, and the certainty of God is identical with the certainty of Being itself: God is the presupposition of the question of God.

III. The Thomistic dissolution

The ontological approach as elaborated by Augustine and his school had led to difficulties, as they appeared in the Anselmian form of the ontological argument and in the theological use of it by the great Franciscans. Here the criticism of Aquinas starts. But this criticism in Thomas himself and more radically in Duns Scotus and William of Occam, goes far beyond the abuses and difficulties. It has, for the larger part of Western humanity, undermined the ontological approach and with it the immediate religious certainty. It has replaced the first type of philosophy of religion by the second type.

The general character of the Thomistic approach to the philosophy of religion is the following: The rational way to God is not immediate, but mediated. It is a way of inference which, although correct, does not give unconditional certainty; therefore it must be completed by the way of authority. This means that the immediate rationality of the Franciscans is replaced by an argumentative rationality; and that beside this rational element stands non-rational authority. In order to make this step, Thomas had to dismiss the Augustinian solution. So he says: "There are two ways in which something is known: by itself and by us. Therefore I say that this proposition 'God is' is known by itself insofar as He is *in Himself*, because the predicate is the same as the subject. For God is his own being But since we do not know about God, what He is, that proposition is *not* known by itself, but must

be demonstrated through those things which are more known with respect to us, that is, through His effects." In these words Aquinas cuts the nerve of the ontological approach. Man is excluded from the *primum esse* and the *prima veritas*. It is impossible for him to adhere to the uncreated truth. For the principles, the transcendentalia, are *not* the presence of the divine in us, they are *not* the "uncreated light" through which we see everything, but they are the created structure of our mind. It is obvious that in this way the immediate knowledge of the Absolute is destroyed. *Sapientia*, the knowledge of the principles, is qualitatively not different from *scientia*. As a student of music has to accept the propositions of the mathematicians, even if he does not understand their full meaning, so man has to accept the propositions of that science which God has of himself and which the angels fully understand. They are given us by authority. "Arguing out of authority is most appropriate to this doctrine (theology)," Thomas says. The Bible, consequently, becomes a collection of true propositions, instead of being a guide book to contemplation as in Bonaventura. And while the Franciscans, especially Alexander, distinguish between (a) those doctrines which belong to the eternal truth and are immediately evident, (as for instance God as *esse, verum, bonum*) and (b) those doctrines which are secondary, embodying the eternal truth in temporal forms, and are contingent and not evident, (as for instance the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Church); Thomas puts all theological statements on the same level, namely that of authority. This has the consequence that *credere* and *intelligere* are torn asunder. According to Thomas the same object cannot be the object of faith and of knowledge; for, faith does not imply an immediate contact with its object. Faith is less than knowledge. "So far as vision is lacking to it, faith falls short of the order of knowledge which is present in science," says Thomas; and vision, according to him, is not possible in our bodily existence. Here are the roots of that deterioration of the term "faith" by which it is understood as belief with a low degree of evidence and which makes its use today almost impossible. The separation of faith in the sense of subjection to authority, and knowledge in the sense of science, entails the separation of the psychological functions which in Augustine are expressions of the same psychic substance. The intellect is moved by the will to accept contents which are accidental to the intellect; without the command of the will, assent to the transcendent science cannot be reached. The will fills the gap which the intellect cannot bridge, after the ontological immediacy has been taken away.

For Thomas all this follows from his sense-bound epistemology: "The human intellect cannot reach by natural virtue the divine substance, because, according to the way of the present life the cognition of our intellect starts with the senses." From there we must ascend to God with the help of the category of causality. That is what the philosophy of religion can do, and can do fairly easily in cosmological terms. We can see that there must be pure actuality, since the movement from potentiality to actuality is dependent on actuality, so that an actuality, preceding every movement, must exist. The ontological argument is impossible, not only in its doubtful form, but in its very substance. Gilson puts it this way: "It is indeed

incontestable that in God essence and existence are identical. But this is true of the existence in which God subsists eternally in himself; not of the existence to which our finite mind can rise when, by demonstration, it establishes that God is." It is obvious that this second concept of existence brings God's existence down to the level of that of a stone or a star, and it makes atheism not only possible, but almost unavoidable, as the later development has proved.

The first step in this direction was taken by Duns Scotus, who asserted an insuperable gap between man as finite and God as the infinite being, and who derived from this separation that the cosmological arguments as *demonstrationes ex finito* remain within the finite and cannot reach the infinite. They cannot transcend the idea of a selfmoving, teleological universe. Only authority can go beyond this rational probability of God which is a mere possibility. The concept of being loses its ontological character; it is a word, covering the entirely different realms of the finite and the infinite. God ceases to be Being itself and becomes a particular being, who must be known, *cognitione particulari*. Occam, the father of later nominalism, calls God a *res singularissima*. He can be approached neither by intuition nor by abstraction; that means not at all, except through an unnoticeable habit of grace in the unconscious which is supposed to move the will towards subjection to authority. This is the final outcome of the Thomistic dissolution of the Augustinian solution. The question of the two Ultimates is answered in such a way that the religious Absolute has become a singular being of overwhelming power, while the philosophical Absolute is formalized into a given structure of reality in which everything is contingent and individual. Early Protestantism was rather wise when under these philosophical presuppositions it restrained itself from developing any philosophy of religion, and elaborated in the power of its religious experience a concept of faith in which the disrupted elements of later scholasticism entered a new synthesis. For this was the gain of the Thomistic turn, that the nature of faith was thoroughly discussed and the naive identification of immediate evidence with faith was overcome, so that the contingent element in religion became visible.

IV. Conflicts and mixtures of the two types in the modern philosophy of religion

The material which could be collected under this heading is immense. But its originality, in comparison with the classical answers, is small. These answers return again and again, separated or in mixture. While the general trend is determined by the cosmological type and its final self-negation, ontological reactions against it occur in all centuries and have become more frequent in recent years. Since I am unable to use even a part of the material I have looked through, and which itself is an infinitely small part of the whole material, I restrict myself to justifying the assertion that the two classical types are still the decisive types and that little new has been added.⁸

It has often been said that the moral type of philosophy of religion (which follows Kant's so-called moral argument for the existence of God) represents a new type.

But this is not the case. The moral argument must either be interpreted cosmologically or ontologically. If it is understood cosmologically, the fact of moral valuation is the basis of an inference, leading to a highest being who guarantees the ultimate unity of value and perfection or to the belief in the victorious power of value-creating processes. If the moral argument is interpreted in the ontological way, the experience of the unconditional character of the moral command is immediately, without any inference, the awareness of the Absolute, though not of a highest being. It is interesting to notice in this connection that even the ontological argument can be formulated cosmologically, as, for instance, when Descartes, following Duns Scotus, makes an inference from the idea of an infinite being in our mind to his existence as the cause of this idea. This is the basic difference between the Augustinian and Cartesian starting point; it is rooted in the removal of the mystical element of Augustine's idea of ultimate evidence, by Descartes' concept of rationality.

Obviously German idealism belongs to the ontological type of the philosophy of religion. It was not wrong in reestablishing the *prius* of subject and object, but it was wrong in deriving from the Absolute the whole of contingent contents, an attempt from which the Franciscans were protected by their religious positivism. This overstepping of the limits of the ontological approach has discredited it in Protestantism, while the same mistake of the neo-scholastic ontologists has discredited it in Catholicism.

No new type has been produced by the so-called empirical or experimental philosophy of religion. Most of its representatives belong to the cosmological type. They argue for God as "the best explanation of man's general experiences" or for "the theistic hypothesis" as the "most reasonable belief", etc. in innumerable variations; adding to it, as the cosmological type always must, remnants of the Old-Protestant idea of personal faith, which remain unrelated to the cosmological probabilities. Often, however, an idea of religious experience is used which has little in common with an empirical approach, and uses Franciscan terms and assertions. If the idea of God is to be formulated "in such a way that the question of God's existence becomes a dead issue" (Wieman); if Lyman speaks of "the innermost center of man which is in kinship with the Deepest Reality in the Universe"; if Baillie denies the possibility of genuine atheism; if the concept of vision is used again and again, for our knowledge of God; we are in an ontological atmosphere, although the ontological approach is not clearly stated and its relation to the cosmological approach and to faith is not adequately explained.

More consciously ontological are philosophies of religion like that of Hocking, who emphasizes the immediate experience of "Wholeness" as the *prius* of all objective knowledge with respect to being and value, or of Whitehead who calls the primordial nature of God the principle of concretion, or of Hartshorne, who tries to reestablish the ontological argument and to combine it with the "contingent" in God. With respect to genuine pragmatism ^hI would say that ^a it belongs to the ontological line insofar as it clearly rejects the cosmological argumentation and refuses to accept the cleavage between subject and object as final. It is, however, not

free from remnants of the cosmological type, as James' Scotistic doctrine of the "will to believe", and the widespread assumption that the end of the cosmological way is the end of any rational approach to religion, indicate.

The systematic solution which I am going to suggestⁱ is stated in a merely affirmative and constructive form. The arguments on which this systematic attempt is based are implied in the classical discussion of the two ways of a philosophy of religion and its modern repercussions. I do not need to repeat them.^j They clearly show why, after the destruction of the ontological approach, religion itself was destroyed.^l

V. The Ontological awareness of the Unconditional

The question of the two Absolutes can be answered only by the identification of the philosophical Absolute with the *one* element of the religious Absolute. The *Deus est esse* is the basis of all philosophy of religion. It is the condition of a unity between thought and religion which overcomes their, so to speak, schizophrenic cleavages in personal and cultural life.

The ontological principle in the philosophy of religion may be stated in the following way: *Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.*

Awareness, in this proposition, is used as the most neutral term, avoiding the connotations of the terms intuition, experience, knowledge. Awareness of the Unconditioned has not the character of "intuition", for the Unconditioned does not appear in this awareness as a ^k"Gestalt"^k to be intuited, but as an element, as power, as demand. Thomas was right in denying that the vision of God is a human possibility, insofar as men in time and space are concerned. Neither should the word "experience" be used, because it ordinarily describes the observed presence of one reality to another reality, and because the Unconditioned is not a matter of experiential observation. "Knowledge" finally presupposes the separation of subject and object, and implies an isolated theoretical act, which is just the opposite of awareness of the Unconditioned. But this terminological question is not of primary importance. It is obvious that the ontological awareness is immediate, and not mediated by inferential processes. It is present, whenever conscious attention is focussed on it, in terms of an unconditional certainty.

Awareness, of course, is also a cognitive term. But awareness of the Unconditional is itself unconditional, and therefore beyond the division of the psychological functions. It was a main interest of Augustinian psychology to show the mutual immanence of the functions of the soul and the impossibility of separating them in their relation to the *esse, verum, bonum*. It is impossible to be aware of the Unconditioned as if it did not exclude by its very presence any observer who was not conditioned by it in his whole being. Thomas injured the understanding of religion when he dissolved the substantial unity of the psychological functions, and attributed to the will in isolation what the intellect alone is not able to perform. And Schleiermacher injured the understanding of religion when in his great fight against

the cosmological approach of Protestant Enlightenment he cut "feeling" (as the religious function) off from will and intellect, thus excluding religion from the totality of personal existence and delivering it to emotional subjectivity. *Man*, not his cognitive function alone, is aware of the Unconditioned. It would, therefore, be possible to call this awareness "existential" in the sense in which ^lthe^l Existential philosophy has used the word, namely the participation of man as a whole in the cognitive act. In fact, this is probably the only point where this term could adequately be used in philosophy. The reason ^mI have not used it^m is the essential unity of the unconditional and the conditioned in the ontological awareness; while in the word "existential" separation and decision are indicated. And the latter are elements of faith. While theology is directly and intentionally existential, philosophy is so only indirectly and unintentionally through the existential situation of the philosopher.

The term "unconditional" ⁿwhich is used in this paper, as in many of my writings,ⁿ needs some interpretation. Although in the historical part the phrase "the two Absolutes" is applied, in order to explain the problem, the word is replaced by "unconditional" in the constructive part. "Absolute," if taken literally, means: without relation; if taken traditionally, it connotes the idealistic, self-developing principle. Both meanings are avoided in the concept "unconditional", which implies the unconditional demand upon those who are aware of something unconditional, and which cannot be interpreted as the principle of a rational deduction. But even here wrong connotations must be prevented: Neither "The Unconditioned" nor "something unconditional", is meant as a being, not even the highest being, not even God. God is unconditioned, that makes him God; but the "unconditional" is not God. The word "God" is filled with the concrete symbols in which mankind has expressed its ultimate concern, its being grasped by something unconditional. And this "something" is ^ojust not^o a thing but the power of being in which every being participates.

This power of being is the *prius* of everything that has being. It precedes all special contents logically and ontologically. It precedes every separation and makes every interaction possible, because it is the point of identity without which neither separation nor interaction can be thought. This refers basically to the separation and interaction of subject and object, in knowing as well as in acting. The *prius* of subject and object cannot become an object to which man as a subject is theoretically and practically related. God is no object for us as subjects. He is always that which precedes this division. But, on the other hand, we speak about him and we act upon him, and we cannot avoid it, because everything which becomes real to us enters the subject-object correlation. Out of this paradoxical situation the half-blasphemous and mythological concept of the "existence of God" has arisen. And so have the abortive attempts to prove the existence of this "object." To such a concept and to such attempts atheism is the right religious and theological reply. This was well known to the most intensive piety of all times. The atheistic terminology of mysticism is striking. It leads beyond God to the Unconditioned, transcending any fixation of the divine as an object. But we have the same feeling of the

inadequacy of all limiting names for God in non-mystical religion. Genuine religion without an element of atheism cannot be imagined. It is not by chance that not only Socrates, but also the Jews and the early Christians were persecuted as atheists. For those who adhered to the powers, they were atheists.

The ontological approach transcends the discussion between nominalism and realism, if it rejects the concept of the *ens realissimum*, as it must do. Being itself, as present in the ontological awareness, is power of Being but not the most powerful being; it is neither *ens realissimum* nor *ens singularissimum*. It is the power in everything that has power, be it a universal or an individual, a thing or an experience.]

VI. The cosmological recognition of the Unconditioned

History and analysis have shown that the cosmological approach to religion leads to the self-destruction of religion, except as it is based on the ontological approach. If this basis is given, the cosmological principle can be stated in the following way: *The Unconditioned of which we have an immediate awareness, without inference, can be recognized in the cultural and natural universe.*

The cosmological approach has usually appeared in two forms, the first determined by the cosmological and the second by the teleological argument. After having denied radically the argumentative method applied in this kind of cosmology, we can rediscover the real and extremely productive meaning of the cosmological way in the philosophy of religion. From two points of view this can be done and has to be done, more than ever since the Franciscan period, in the last decades of our time. The one kind of cosmological recognition follows the first step of the old cosmological argument, namely the analysis of the finitude of the finite in the light of the awareness of the Unconditioned. In concepts like contingency, insecurity, transitoriness and their psychological correlates anxiety, care, meaninglessness, a new cosmological approach has developed. Medical psychology, the doctrine of man and the Existential philosophy have contributed to this negative way of recognizing the unconditional element in man and his world. It is, according to my experience,^p the most impressive way of introducing people into the meaning of religion—if the fallacious inference to a highest being is avoided.^q The other kind of cosmological recognition is affirmative and follows the first step of the teleological argument, namely, the tracing of the unconditional element in the creativity of nature and culture. With respect to nature this has been done in the elaboration and ultimate valuation of ideas such as “wholeness”, “*elan vital*”, “principle of concretion”, “*Gestalt*”, etc., in all of which something unconditional, conditioning any special experience, is implied. With respect to culture this has been done, “(and here I feel myself more certain and more responsible)^r by a religious interpretation of the autonomous culture and its development, a “theology of culture” as it could be called. The presupposition of this many-sided attempt is that in every cultural creation—a picture, a system, a law, a political

movement (however secular it may appear)—an ultimate concern is expressed, and that it is possible to recognize the unconscious theological character of it.

This, of course, is possible only on the basis of the ontological awareness of the Unconditioned, i.e. on the basis of the insight that secular culture is essentially as impossible as atheism, because both presuppose the unconditional element and both express ultimate concerns.

VII. Ontological certainty and the risk of faith

The immediate awareness of the Unconditioned has not the character of faith but of self-evidence. Faith contains a contingent element and demands a risk. It combines the ontological certainty of the Unconditioned with the uncertainty about everything conditioned and concrete. This, of course, does not mean that faith is belief in something which has higher or lower degrees of probability. The risk of faith is not that it accepts assertions about God, man and World, which cannot be fully verified, but might be or might not be in the future. The risk of faith is based on the fact that the unconditional element can become a matter of ultimate concern only if it appears in a concrete embodiment. It can appear in purified and rationalized mythological symbols like God as highest personal being, and like most of the other traditional theological concepts. It can appear in ritual and sacramental activities for the adherents of a priestly and authoritarian religion. It can appear in concrete formulas and a special behaviour, expressing the ineffable, as it always occurs in living mysticism. It can appear in prophetic-political demands for social justice, if they are the ultimate concern of religious and secular movements. It can occur in the honesty and ultimate devotion of the servants of scientific truth. It can occur in the universalism of the classical idea of personality and in the Stoic (ancient and modern) attitude of elevation over the vicissitudes of existence. In all these cases the risk of faith is an existential risk, a risk in which the meaning and fulfilment of our lives is at stake, and not a theoretical judgement which may be re-futed ^searlier^s or later.

The risk of faith is not arbitrariness; it is a unity of fate and decision. And it is based on a foundation which is not risk: the awareness of the unconditional element in ourselves and our world. Only on this basis is faith justified and possible. There are many examples of people of the mystical as well as of the prophetic and secular types who in moments (and even periods) of their lives experienced the failure of the faith they had risked, and who preserved the ontological certainty, the unconditional element in their faith. The profoundest doubt could not undermine the presupposition of doubt, the awareness of something unconditional.

Although faith is a matter of fate and decision, the question must be raised whether there is a criterion for the element of decision in faith. The answer is: The unconditional of which we are immediately aware, if we turn our minds to it. The criterion of every concrete expression of our ultimate concern is the degree to which the concreteness of the concern is in unity with its ultimacy. It is the danger of every embodiment of the unconditional element, religious and secular, that it elevates

something conditioned, a symbol, an institution, a movement as such to ultimacy. This danger was well known to the religious leaders of all types; and I would say that the whole work of theology can be summed up in the statement, that it is the permanent guardian of the unconditional against the aspiration of its own religious and secular appearances.

^uMay I close with the expression, not of a certainty and not of a faith, but of a firm conviction: That^u the ontological approach to philosophy of religion as envisaged by Augustine and his followers, as reappearing in many forms in the history of thought, if critically reinterpreted by us, is able to do for our time what it did in the past, both for religion and culture: to overcome as far as it is possible by mere thought the fateful gap between religion and culture, thus reconciling concerns which are not strange to each other but have been estranged from each other.

Anmerkungen

- a-a Fehlt in B.
- b-b In B: One can distinguish.
- c-c In B: In.
- d-d In B: In.
- e-e In B nicht kursiv.
- f-f In B nicht kursiv.
- g-g Fehlt in B.
- h-h Fehlt in B.
- i-i In B: here suggested.
- j-j Fehlt in B.
- k-k In B kursiv.
- l-l Fehlt in B.
- m-m In B: it is not used here.
- n-n Fehlt in B.
- o-o In B: not just.
- p-p Fehlt in B.
- q In B hier Absatz.
- r-r Fehlt in B.
- s-s In B: sooner.
- t-t Fehlt in B.
- u-u Fehlt in B.

16. The Problem of Theological Method (1947)

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*Tillichs Aufsatz erschien zusammen mit „The Problem of Theological Method I“, E. A. Burtt, a.a.O., S. 1–15. Beide Autoren hatten ihre Artikel auf der Frühjahrsversammlung der American Theological Society in New York vorgelegt. Zu Burtt findet sich, a.a.O., S. 1, folgende Anmerkung des Hrsg.: „Edwin A. Burtt, professor of philosophy at Cornell University, has taught at Chicago, Stanford and Harvard universities. He is the author of *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (1925), *Principles and Problems of Right Thinking* (1928), and *Types of Religious Philosophy* (1939).“*

I. Method and reality

Method is the systematic way of doing something, especially of gaining knowledge. No method can be found in separation from its actual exercise; methodological considerations are abstractions from methods actually used. Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* followed Galileo's application of the method of mathematical physics and brought it to general consciousness and philosophical definiteness. Schleiermacher's method, as used in the *Glaubenslehre*, followed the mystical-romantic reinterpretation of religion and established a methodology of inner experience. The methodological remarks made in this paper describe the method actually used in my attempts to elaborate a theology of "self-transcending Realism" (*gläubiger Realismus*), which is supposed to overcome supra-naturalism as well as its naturalistic counterpart.

It is not a sound procedure to borrow a method for a special realm of inquiry from another realm in which this method has been successfully used. It seems that the emphasis on the so-called "empirical" method in theology has not grown out of actual theological demands but has been imposed on theology under the pressure of a "methodological imperialism," exercised by the pattern of natural sciences. This subjection of theology to a strange pattern has resulted in an undue extension of the concept "empirical" and the lack of a clear distinction between the different meanings of "experience" in the theological enterprise. For some it is the general human experience on the basis of which they try to approach inferentially the religious objects; for others it is the religious experience of mankind, empathically interpreted. Sometimes it is the religious experience of the theologian and the group to which he belongs that gives the material for an "empirical" theology. Sometimes an ontological intuition is called "experience." Certainly, every concrete reality is open to many methods, according to its different "levels" or "functional potentialli-