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The Christian Faith and the Human Situation. An Examination of the
Experiential Theology of Paul Tillich and Eugen Drewermann

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Université de Montréal
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Ce mémoire intitulé

The Christian Faith and the Human Situation: An Examination of the
Experiential Theology of Paul Tillich and Eugen Drewermann

présenté par:

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RÉSUMÉ

Le présent mémoire est centré sur la recherche de voies pour communiquer le message chrétien de telle sorte que celui-ci soit intelligible pour nos contemporains et qu'il ait un pouvoir existentiel dans leur vie. Cette préoccupation a d'abord émergé à partir de mon travail pastoral. C'est là, en effet, que je suis régulièrement confronté à la réalité de la modernité où, pour un nombre grandissant de gens formés par l'approche scientifique, le message chrétien apparaît dépassé et impossible à croire, voire (même) à comprendre. Pire encore, on y voit une approche moralisante et autoritaire qui est menaçante pour l'autonomie des personnes et leur aspiration à se réaliser pleinement. Que le message chrétien, donc, soit perçu comme d'un autre âge et sans lien avec la réalité, ou qu'il soit vu comme aliénant et détruisant la personne, le résultat est le même: la foi chrétienne a de plus en plus de difficulté à rejoindre et inspirer les hommes et les femmes d'aujourd'hui, et à transformer leur vie. D'un point de vue pastoral, ceci est particulièrement troublant puisque ce fossé entre la foi et la culture moderne s'élargit juste au moment où le monde semble avoir un grand besoin existentiel de ce qu'on appelle la "Bonne nouvelle".

Le but de notre étude est donc de tenter de mieux comprendre la nature du fossé qui sépare le message chrétien et la culture moderne, et de chercher une solution qui puisse s'avérer viable.

La pertinence de cette intuition est confirmée par l'importance qu'un nombre grandissant de théologiens et leaders d'Églises chrétiennes accordent à cette question de la cassure entre la foi et la culture que plusieurs d'entre eux considèrent comme un des problèmes les plus urgents de notre temps. C'est le cas du théologien protestant Paul Tillich qui considère ce fossé comme la question la plus importante pour les théologiens contemporains. Le théologien catholique Édward Schillebeeckx estime, quant à lui, que ce fossé s'est tellement élargi que, si l'on ne prend pas cette situation très au sérieux, on risque de voir deux univers séparés se développer côte à côte, le théologique et le séculier, chacun parlant un langage qui lui est propre et incapable de communiquer avec l'autre. Pour éviter cela, nous prévient-il, nous ne pourrions pas faire l'économie d'un profond effort de synthèse entre le message chrétien et la pensée moderne, car celle-ci est le résultat d'une cassure radicale, d'une véritable transformation de la conscience humaine qui s'est opérée entre le monde médiéval et le monde moderne, et non d'une simple évolution qui ne demanderait qu'une harmonisation superficielle. Il souligne l'urgence, pour la théologie, de devenir compréhensible et pertinente pour la modernité, en parlant un langage qui prend au sérieux l'autonomie des femmes et des hommes contemporains, qui utilise les concepts et les catégories qui leurs sont familiers et qui correspond au mode de connaissance expérientiel qui est répandu aujourd'hui.

Comme plusieurs autres théologiens modernes, Schillebeeckx reconnaît qu'on ne peut faire face à cette transformation de la conscience humaine que si l'approche traditionnelle de la théologie, basée sur l'autorité et sur une métaphysique objective, est abandonnée en faveur d'une métaphysique du sujet qui effectue un tournant anthropologique vers l'expérience humaine et vers la subjectivité humaine comme voie de connaissance. Dans ce courant de la pensée de Schillebeeckx et de nombreux autres théologiens modernes, notre hypothèse de travail est que, pour surmonter le fossé profond qui sépare aujourd'hui le message chrétien et la culture moderne, la théologie doit prendre le tournant anthropologique vers l'expérience humaine. À cette fin, la présente étude examine les travaux de deux théologiens, Paul Tillich et Eugen Drewermann, qui ont eux-mêmes effectué ce tournant anthropologique. Dans les ouvrages qui sont examinés ici, à savoir *The Courage To Be* et *Systematic Theology* de Tillich, et *La parole qui guérit* et *La peur et la faute* de Drewermann, ces deux théologiens tentent d'effectuer une synthèse entre les disciplines modernes que sont la philosophie existentialiste et la psychanalyse, d'une part, et le message chrétien, d'autre part, afin de ré-interpréter la doctrine de la justification par la foi selon les catégories mentales et les sensibilités de la modernité.

Le problème de la cassure entre la foi et la culture constitue une vaste question qui peut être abordée sous deux aspects principaux: le premier est celui du fossé intellectuel qui sépare la culture et la foi, alors que le second réfère à la distance que crée, par rapport à la personne et à sa situation concrète, une approche trop rationaliste qui enlève au message chrétien son pouvoir existentiel effectif. Bien que Tillich et Drewermann abordent tous les

deux ces deux aspects de la question, on peut dire que Tillich se concentre davantage sur le premier, alors que Drewermann met l'accent sur le second.

Dans sa tentative de combler le fossé qui existe entre la pensée moderne et le message chrétien, Tillich est confronté au problème du doute radical. L'émergence, avec les Lumières, de la pensée et de la méthode critiques et le développement qu'elles ont connu depuis dans nos sociétés ont sérieusement remis en question la validité des vérités éternelles et universelles professées par la théologie traditionnelle. La situation de doute à laquelle Tillich doit faire face n'est donc pas le résultat de la désobéissance ou de l'ignorance des hommes et des femmes d'aujourd'hui; elle est plutôt l'atmosphère dans laquelle baignent nos contemporains, elle fait partie de l'expérience fondamentale de la culture moderne. Dans un tel contexte, le message chrétien doit être compris dans le cadre de cette situation de doute pour être intelligible. En effet, pour de nombreux hommes et femmes modernes, croire sur la base de l'autorité constituerait un suicide intellectuel. Si le message chrétien est présenté de manière traditionnelle, soit dans une perspective de doctrine objective qui doit être crue, ou d'une éthique énoncée par une autorité, et à laquelle il faut obéir sans cheminement qui implique l'expérience et la raison, il sera probablement impossible à comprendre et rejeté.

Devant le fait que tout contenu objectif est confronté au doute radical, Tillich puise dans l'existentialisme moderne, ainsi que dans la philosophie subjective de la religion de la tradition augustinienne/franciscaine, pour montrer que le message chrétien peut être compris à l'intérieur de la modernité. Face au doute radical, il ré-interprète le concept de justification par la foi de façon à donner à le comprendre non pas comme un *contenu*

intellectuel ou éthique, mais plutôt comme une *expérience* de Dieu devant ce qui constitue la menace la plus grave dans la situation existentielle de chacun. Il offre d'ailleurs une méthode théologique, qu'il appelle la *méthode de corrélation*, qui lui permet d'intégrer la personne et sa situation concrète dans le cercle herméneutique. C'est l'existentialisme et la psychanalyse qui lui révèlent la nature de ce qui constitue la menace existentielle la plus sérieuse à peser sur les hommes et les femmes de la modernité: il s'agit de l'angoisse du manque de sens qui résulte de la perte des certitudes religieuses dans lesquelles s'enracinaient la certitude de la vérité et du sens.

Dans une telle situation, la question qui se pose est de savoir comment trouver la capacité de surmonter l'angoisse du manque de sens. La réponse du message chrétien se trouve non en termes de contenu, mais plutôt comme une révélation fondamentale où on fait l'expérience de la capacité à surmonter la menace du manque de sens. Ainsi compris comme une révélation fondamentale qui se trouve à la fois au début et à la fin de la recherche de chacun, le message chrétien peut être vu comme justifiant même celui qui doute, puisque la foi n'est pas affaire de contenu mais expérience fondamentale de chacun. C'est le courage qui surgit lorsque nous rencontrons Dieu, ou lorsque nous faisons l'expérience de cette acceptation par une puissance plus grande que nous, qui permet de surmonter le manque de sens. Avec cette philosophie de la religion et cette méthodologie, un pont est lancé au-dessus du fossé qui sépare le message chrétien et la pensée moderne puisqu'on se trouve ainsi à respecter à la fois le caractère absolu de Dieu et l'autonomie des personnes. La religion est vue comme combattant les forces aliénantes qui menacent la vie humaine et sociale et non pas comme combattant la liberté humaine.

L'aspect intellectuel du fossé entre la foi et la culture étant surmonté par des théologiens comme Tillich, la première étape de la conversion anthropologique est réalisée, montrant comment une métaphysique du sujet est possible. Drewermann peut donc se concentrer sur la deuxième étape du projet et se pencher sur la dimension existentielle. Ce qui le préoccupe, c'est qu'en tentant de construire une base solide pour une méthode exégétique que les experts bibliques et théologiques voient comme une assise scientifique, la théologie traditionnelle a rendu le message chrétien inaccessible et sans force existentielle pour les non-experts et les croyants ordinaires.

Le problème principal de la théologie traditionnelle, croit-il, est que, dans son effort pour se donner une base scientifique, elle essaie de séparer toute subjectivité du domaine de la vérité. Le critère de la vérité devient alors un pure objectivisme cartésien. Or la Bible, elle, s'intéresse à la vérité existentielle dont la personne et sa situation concrète ne peuvent être soustraites. Pour atteindre à la vérité pour aujourd'hui, plutôt que de seulement connaître ce qu'était la vérité passée, il est nécessaire que la personne et sa situation concrète soient prises en compte. Ceci demande une herméneutique autre que celle qu'offre la méthode historico-critique. Drewermann estime que la discipline moderne de la psychanalyse fournit un modèle pour l'inclusion de la personne et de sa situation dans l'herméneutique. Très tôt, dans le développement de la psychanalyse, on s'est rendu compte que pour avoir un impact sur la guérison, celle-ci ne pouvait pas être simplement objective et qu'elle devait prendre en considération le sujet humain avec ses sentiments et son imagination. En reconnaissant que l'angoisse est au coeur de l'existence, la psychanalyse prend aussi en compte la situation historique concrète. Drewermann essaie donc de faire une synthèse entre la psychanalyse et le

message chrétien de telle sorte que sa méthodologie puisse permettre au message chrétien de parler à nouveau à la personne, apportant ainsi sa vérité dans le présent et retrouvant sa puissance existentielle dans la situation actuelle. Dans les deux ouvrages mentionnés ci-haut, Drewermann explore les mécanismes de l'angoisse et de la névrose, ce qui lui permet de proposer ce qu'on pourrait appeler une *phénoménologie du péché*. D'autre part, il explore aussi le symbolisme qui jaillit spontanément à l'intérieur de ces expériences et considère que l'on peut voir cela comme l'action de Dieu qui nous mène au salut et à la restauration holistique de la personne. Nous pourrions qualifier de *phénoménologie de la grâce* ce deuxième domaine. Dans la situation historique concrète de notre époque, comme nous le fait découvrir la psychanalyse, c'est par l'angoisse du manque de sens que l'existence humaine est menacée. La réponse à cette menace, tout en étant organisée et formée par la méthodologie de la psychanalyse, se trouve dans le message chrétien. Il s'agit d'une confiance qui jaillit pour surmonter cette menace. La situation existentielle est donc comprise et surmontée en relation avec le message chrétien et ce dernier acquiert un pouvoir de transformation existentielle pour le monde moderne.

Ma conclusion est que Tillich et Drewermann ont réussi à trouver une solution à la problématique de la pensée moderne et du message chrétien. Il s'agit véritablement d'une solution car leur approche prend en compte la situation de doute radical et de suspicion qui caractérise notre culture, et elle permet de comprendre le message chrétien comme une rencontre dont on peut faire l'expérience mais qui n'implique pas un consentement immédiat de la raison. Cette manière d'aborder le message chrétien n'est pas seulement compréhensible sur le plan intellectuel, elle a aussi un pouvoir existentiel réel puisqu'il s'agit d'une expérience qui permet de surmonter ce qui constitue la

menace existentielle la plus grave dans la vie des gens aujourd'hui. L'importance que jouent à la fois la situation et l'expérience dans cette théologie assure que le message chrétien sera renouvelé par la pertinence qu'il aura dans la vie quotidienne des gens. La Pastorale devra elle aussi prendre en compte ce tournant anthropologique et enseigner et prêcher le message chrétien à partir du sujet, tout en intégrant les données du doute radical et de la suspicion. Cette approche renouvelée ouvre la possibilité d'un renouveau de la foi puisque celle-ci sera accueillie d'une manière de plus en plus personnelle. Plutôt qu'une foi qui vient d'en-haut, de manière objective, on verra plutôt une foi qui passe à travers le processus de dialogue que chaque personne développera avec la tradition. Certe plus risquée, cette approche subjective est cependant plus prometteuse. Les personnes chargées de l'éducation pastorale encourageront aussi ceux et celles qui font une expérience de Dieu à devenir des agents actifs dans l'Église plutôt que des récepteurs passifs.

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INTRODUCTION

The central concern of this paper is to find a way to communicate the Christian message in an intellectually understandable and existentially powerful way to our contemporaries. This question first arose in my pastoral work, where I consistently experienced the reality of modernity in which, for a growing number of people educated in a scientific approach, the Christian message seems antiquated, unbelievable, and even unintelligible. Even worse, it is often seen, as well, as a moralistic and authoritarian approach which threatens the self-realization and autonomy of individuals. Thus, whether it is seen as antiquated and distant from reality, or whether it is seen as destructive and alienating to the person, the result is the same: increasingly, the Christian message fails to touch, move or inspire twentieth century men and women. Speaking pastorally, what is particularly troubling is that this growing rift between faith and modern culture is widening just when there is the greatest existential need for what we call *Good News*.¹ The purpose of this

¹While I understand that there is oppression and injustice throughout the world to which the *Good News* of the gospel needs to respond, for this paper, since I am a pastor in the modern Western world, it is the existential and religious situation common to that world which I hope to understand and to respond. In that regard, the Roman Catholic theologian

paper is, then, to attempt to understand the nature of this gap and to seek a viable solution to this problem of the rupture between the Christian message and modern culture.

Further study has verified and established the relevance of this initial intuition. A growing number of church leaders and theologians now see this disjuncture between faith and culture as one of the most urgent questions in our time. The American theologian, Paul Tillich, has called this gap *the* most important question that contemporary theologians must address.² The Roman Catholic, Edward Schillebeeckx, has underlined the urgency of the question. It is because the gap between the two has so radically widened in modern times, that unless it is seriously addressed there is a great danger that two separate worlds, one theological and the other secular, each speaking its own language and unable to communicate with the other, will develop side by side. Therefore, it is pressing that theology learn to speak the language of modernity so that:

notre témoignage sur Dieu et ce que nous dirions à son propos [ne risque pas] d'être accueilli avec des hochements de tête par la grande majorité de nos contemporains comme s'il s'agissait là d'un abracadabra inintelligible pour eux.³

and psychoanalyst, Eugen Drewermann, gives us a pertinent observation, which I see corroborated to some degree in pastoral work, when he says that neuropathologists estimate that over seventy percent of the people in our modern, Western cities suffer from some form of psychic illness. Eugen Drewermann, *La parole qui guérit*, Translated by Jean-Pierre Bagot, (Collection théologies), Paris, Cerf, 1991 (First printing 1989), p. 158.

²Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953-1963), I, p3. "'The Christian message and the modern mind' has been the dominating theme since the end of classical orthodoxy. The perennial question has been: 'Can the Christian message be adapted to the modern mind without losing its essential and unique character?'"

³Edward Schillebeeckx, *L'histoire des hommes, récit de Dieu*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992. p. 94.

Schillebeeckx points out that because the formation of what we are here calling the modern mind involved, not simply a gradual evolution from the medieval to the modern, but rather a radical disjuncture and actual *transformation* of consciousness, the solution cannot be a superficial harmonization, but must rather consist in a profound synthesis between the Christian message and the modern mind.⁴ In order to be intellectually understandable and existentially powerful in modernity, theology must present the Christian message in a way that takes seriously and addresses the autonomy of modern men and women, corresponds to an experiential way of knowing which is common today and speaks in the concepts and categories which are familiar in the contemporary world. Along with many other modern theologians,⁵ he has recognized that this *transformation* in consciousness can only be addressed if theology gives up the traditional approach which is based on authority and a rationalistic or super naturalistic objective metaphysics, in favor of a *metaphysics of the subject*, which makes an anthropological turn towards human experience and the taking seriously of human subjectivity as a means of knowledge.

Suffice it to say, at this point, that my hypothesis follows that of Schillebeeckx and many other modern theologians in seeing this recourse to human experience as the only possible starting point for a new synthesis which is able to overcome this rupture between faith and culture.

⁴ibid., p. 310.

⁵The existentialist Russian theologian, Nikolas Berdyaev, recognized early in this century that, while the way to a presentation of the Christian message employing metaphysical terms and concepts is now barred there is still the possibility of presenting a Christian apologetic of the subject, starting from the categories of human experience in the world, as does all contemporary philosophy.

In this essay I plan to examine the work of two theologians, Paul Tillich and Eugen Drewermann, who have followed this course and re-formulated the Christian message in an attempt to overcome this gap. In order to present this message in modern concepts, language and thought forms and, most importantly, to understand and transmit that message in subjective rather than objective terms, they have attempted a synthesis with what we can call the *modern languages* of existentialism and psychoanalysis. I call them *modern languages* because they do start from the subject rather than from an objective metaphysic and provide the opportunity for theology to start there as well. Their language and categories follow from this anthropological turn and attempt to speak from inside and not outside the existential situation. In this study I will examine how they have re-formulated the Christian doctrine of justification by faith in these terms so that it can be intellectually understandable and existentially powerful in the modern world.

I believe it is possible to say that, while these two theologians are concerned with both the intellectual and the existential aspects of this rupture, in attempting a synthesis with existentialism, Tillich's main concern is the intellectual problem, while in attempting a synthesis with psychoanalysis, Drewermann's principal concern is the existential aspect. It may be helpful at this point to look more closely at this double problematic which corresponds to two aspects of the one rupture which these theologians will have to deal with, in order to once again make the Christian message a contemporary one for growing numbers of modern men and women.

The problem which Tillich faces is that the religious presuppositions which earlier times held in common, such as the certainty of

God, and with that the certainty of truth and meaning, have been eroded by the doubt resulting from the rise of critical thought and method. All theological content and doctrinal formulations are thus called into question. This radical doubt is not simply a matter of individual sin or of ignorance, whether culpable or not, but rather the atmosphere in which modern men and women live and breath, the fundamental experience of an entire epoch. In this situation the Christian message cannot be given in doctrinal terms, since these would be immediately undermined by doubt. Rather, it must adapt itself to the new situation and translate itself into a language which is accessible. In terms of the doctrine of justification by faith, this means discerning how to conceive the *justification* of someone who doubts. Any response that does not accept as a given this state of meaninglessness can never be a pertinent response because doubt is a part of the situation.⁶

In this study I will examine primarily Tillich's little book of anthropological theology *The Courage To Be* in which we can see his most thorough and satisfying re-formulation of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith in the modern situation of radical doubt. It is in this book, and in his *Systematic Theology* which I will use as a background resource, that we will see an explication of Tillich's new method, the *method of correlation* which attempts to put the Christian message in relation with culture. He will say that the questions raised in culture are an integral part of the revelation. Revelation occurs only in a particular culture and never abstractly. In this situation of doubt, where the old religious presuppositions have disappeared, and with them any *given* sense of meaning or purpose for

⁶Cf. Jean-Claude Petit, *Croire et douter. Un aspect fondamental de l'expérience religieuse moderne selon Paul Tillich*. *Etudes théologiques et religieuses* 63 (1/1988), pp. 17-29.

human existence, existentialism raises the question of where a courage can be found that can overcome meaninglessness. Tillich says that although modern men and women would not express their situation as a rejection by God, since those religious presuppositions have been dissolved by doubt, the sense of perdition remains. This book shows how the Christian message can respond to that question today by drawing upon the Augustinian/Franciscan philosophy of religion which begins not with *content* but the *experience* of a fundamental revelation and can therefore provide the answer to the question of where to find this courage, without being undercut, because its only content is this fundamental experience.

Eugen Drewermann assumes that the intellectual aspect of this gap between faith and culture has been adequately bridged by theologians like Tillich and addresses himself mainly to the existential problem. He believes that in attempting to secure a solid basis for its doctrinal and moral formulations through an overly rationalistic presentation of the Christian message, traditional theology has opened a gulf between that message and the ordinary believer, making it in effect, a dead word with no contemporary relevance or existential power. The problem is that the Christian message no longer has an influence on the human soul when understood in an exclusively rationalistic way. As Schillebeeckx has noted, the questions which academic exegetes pose to the text are not the same as those of ordinary believers.⁷ These exegetical questions usually bear on what the text has said in the past and offer little understanding concerning what it could mean for the believer today. Drewermann holds that those who support the traditional

⁷*L'histoire des hommes, récit de Dieu, loc. cit., p. 10.*

approach wish to maintain the historico-critical method because it seems to give a certain scientific foundation to doctrinal formulations which, in their eyes, corresponds to a contemporary standard of scientific rationality. But, the gap which this hermeneutic creates between the message and the ordinary believer leads only to dryness and death.⁸

Aside from concerning itself mainly with what has happened in the past, this rationalistic hermeneutic fails mainly because it seeks to eliminate the human subject from the field of truth. Truth is thus arrived at after an examination which is as objective as possible. The truth of which religious texts speak, however, must be known existentially and this very much involves the human person and his or her historical context in the interpretation of the text. If this subjective aspect is not taken into account one ends up by making an abstraction of the person and his or her context, and this makes the text irrelevant to that person in that context. Karl Rahner has also leveled another important criticism at the historico-critical method when he said that it functions as a kind of *faith positivism*.⁹ He means by this that, in articulating their doctrinal formulations, theologians must begin with a kind of sacrifice of the intellect in calling the text the Word of God when they know that their colleagues in exegesis have already dissolved the text with the help of critical exegesis.

The challenge which Drewermann, therefore, sees facing theology is how it is possible today, following the legitimate acquisitions of a critical

⁸Cf. Jean-Claude Petit, *La réception de l'oeuvre d' Eugen Drewermann*. Théologiques (1/2 1993) 101-120.

⁹Cf. *La réception de l'oeuvre d'Eugen Drewermann*, *loc. cit.*, p. 112.

reading of the Bible, to read it as a text which not only speaks of truth in the past but also speaks of truth for us today. This new hermeneutical approach, if it is possible, would also affect the diverse branches of theology, just as a hermeneutic based on the historico-critical method has done. Drewermann thinks it is possible and proposes a hermeneutic based on the acquisitions of the psychoanalytic method as a model which is today best suited to meet the demands of a religious text. That is, psychoanalysis has shown itself able to take both the human subject and his or her historical context seriously in its hermeneutic. The realization of the importance of subjective knowledge goes back to the beginning of psychoanalysis. At a very early date Freud, for instance, realized that psychoanalysis could not follow completely the rationalistic approach. The phenomena of transfer and counter-transfer showed him that subjective forms of knowledge must be honored and accepted. The importance role symbol and sentiment play in the psychoanalytic methodology also highlights this emphasis on the subject. Psychoanalysis also responds to the demand to take the concrete situation of the human beings into consideration. That is why, for instance, psychoanalysis focuses so heavily upon anxiety. It's analysis has shown that anxiety, specifically the anxiety of meaninglessness, is at the heart of human experience in modernity.

For these reasons, then, Drewermann thinks that it is possible to bridge this gap and make the Christian message once again a contemporary and a healing word within our historical context. It is important to note that in this program he does not reject the acquisitions of the historico-critical method but simply seeks to supplement this methodology which is able to once again take seriously the human subject and his or her historical context in the

reading of religious texts. In seeing anxiety at the heart of human experience, in identifying and elucidating its multi-form mechanisms, and in showing a way to eventually disarm them and open a way of existence in the world where anxiety no longer reigns over us, the psychoanalytic method shows us how we can bridge the gap created by an overly objective and rationalistic methodology and allow the Christian message to become once again existentially powerful.

I will rely on two of Drewermann's many works for this task. His general reasons for the need to supplement the historico-critical method with the psychoanalytic method can be found in his *La parole qui guérit*. In his *La peur et la faute* we will see how, on the background of existentialism, he uses Freudian psychoanalysis to give a modern interpretation of sin as the disproportion human beings assume in attempting to deal with existential anxiety. The categories recognizing this disproportion assumed in the face of anxiety were first established by Kierkegaard but have been deepened and widened through a synthesis with the Freudian theory of neuroses. This *phenomenology of sin*, as we may call it, helps make the Christian concept of sin understandable and believable in modernity. Furthermore, by drawing upon modern studies in mythology, symbolism and especially the Jungian theory of symbolism, Drewermann shows in a concrete way what this *elan* or fundamental revelation experienced in the face of anxiety looks like. If we call the synthesis produced in conjunction with the Freudian theory of neuroses a *phenomenology of sin* we might call this synthesis with Jungian symbolism a *phenomenology of grace*.

In the first section of the paper I will deal with Tillich and his solution to the problem. In the second section I will examine how Drewermann develops this anthropological turn. In the final section I will present my own evaluation of their efforts and comment on the significance of their work for the task which we have put before ourselves, the communicating of the Christian message in an intelligible and existentially powerful way in modern culture.

I

Paul Tillich

1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEMATIC AND SOLUTION

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) the son of a Lutheran Pastor, was born in Prussia and began his university career in Germany, following the First World War. He taught at Marburg, Dresden and Frankfurt before being expelled from Germany by the Nazis in 1933 and coming to the United States. Here he was professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1933-55 and Harvard from 1955 until his death. Tillich was preoccupied by the question of faith and culture from a very early age. Especially the particularly modern problem of intellectual doubt which seemed to make belief equivalent to intellectual suicide. This early concern is clearly seen in from a brief story which Tillich tells about his confirmation. The custom in the German Lutheran Church at that time was to choose a biblical text to be read at one's confirmation. Tillich's choice surprised everyone and he could not really even explain it himself. It was the text in which Jesus speaks of helping those who carry a heavy yoke. Tillich realized only later that this passage represented his own calling to seek a solution to the yoke of modern men and women, in which the most honest and the brightest experienced the greatest difficulty in believing the

Christian message.¹⁰ The mission of making the faith intellectually intelligible and acceptable to his contemporaries is the task to which he would consecrate his talents and his life.

This task was colored, for Tillich, by his commitment to social and political movements, as well as his inclination towards philosophical theology. His first real encounter with the disastrous individual and social effects of this dualism between faith and culture came from his involvement with the German socialist movement immediately following the war. By this time socialism had completely separated itself from the Church and saw the Christian message as unbelievable and dangerous to human autonomy. As both a passionate Socialist and a passionate Christian, this separation seemed to Tillich unfortunate for both sides. For the Christian Church it meant that it would remain separated from one of the most vital currents of modern thought and one which held the possibility of restoring and renewing the Christian message. In cutting itself off from God and depending only upon human resources, Socialism and a growing segment of Western society, Tillich thought, could not adequately deal with the meaninglessness which threatened the modern world following the widespread rejection of traditional religion.

As Tillich says in another place, this meaninglessness is the problem of the 20th century. The decisive event which underlies this search for meaning and the despair of it in the 20th century is the loss of God in the 19th century. "God is dead" Nietzsche announced and with him the whole system of values

¹⁰Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian And The Believer*. London, SCM Press 1967, p. 102ff.

and meanings in which one lived.¹¹ The threat was great and its consequences potentially devastating. The image which Tillich used to describe the state of European society at that time was as *une maison en ruine*.¹² The old foundations had crumbled into the abyss of meaninglessness and the inhabitants were in grave danger unless another foundation could be established. The very destiny of humanity, Tillich believed, hung on whether or not this could be achieved.¹³

The question which arises spontaneously within humanity in this particular situation is whether there is a possibility of finding meaning in the face of the apparent absurdity of the world.¹⁴ This question is not one of simply abstract or intellectual interest. It is the existential menace of total negation which demands not simply an intellectual response but an existential answer that can conquer this threat. That is the question which humanity asks in this situation. Where is the place that a new foundation can be found and meaninglessness conquered?¹⁵

This is a question which much of the art, literature and philosophy of the twentieth century has attempted to describe and address. The question has arisen, we must remember, because the traditional God had to be killed in the name of human autonomy and freedom, as Nietzsche pointed out. But this

¹¹Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 148.

¹²Jean-Claude, Petit, *La philosophie de la religion de Paul Tillich. Genèse et évolution. La période allemande 1919-1933*. (Collection héritage et projet), Montréal, Fides, 1974. p. 25.

¹³ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵ibid., p. 135.

is a fearful freedom and it must be dealt with in some way. Existentialism was perhaps the most radical attempt, during Tillich's time, to assume this human freedom. Tillich saw it as a noble attempt to deal with this question of meaninglessness by assuming it in a courageous, autonomous and adult manner. Sartre's view that humanity's *essence is his existence* is perhaps one of the most radical statements of this position and means that one is free to make of oneself what one wills.¹⁶ Tillich's reproach to view of total freedom and autonomy is to say that it is unrealistic and can lead to greater enslavement rather than larger freedom. This is because human freedom is finite freedom, conditioned by contents from the unconscious and from one's environment. One cannot withdraw from these contents and a failure to recognize them in the name of complete freedom means that one will become a slave to them. Tillich's position is that, while he respects human autonomy, he also recognizes its limits.¹⁷ When the limits of human finitude are not respected, humanity is in great danger. Either it will be giving up this fearful individuality and freedom by a flight into a new collectivity which offers meaning, but at the price of the self; or it will find the burden too heavy and fall into what Kierkegaard analyzed as *the sickness unto death*, i.e., despair. This is the great danger which Tillich believed faced modern men and women, if a new foundation could not be established which could provide a firm footing and an interior unity.

This task of providing a new foundation of meaning should be the first priority in modernity Tillich often said. It is the task to which he devoted his own talents and energies. He believed that in order to be relevant in the

¹⁶*The Courage To Be, loc. cit.*, p. 148.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 152.

modern world theology would have to abandon the pre-established metaphysical answers *from above* and instead begin *from below* with the questions which humanity is asking.¹⁸ This prompted him to use a theological approach which attempted a dialectic between the Christian message and the modern forms of knowledge which asked these questions. As we saw earlier, existentialism attempted to raise and answer the question of meaninglessness which arose in modernity. It is because of this, mainly, that Tillich attempts to create a synthesis between existentialism and the Christian faith. In this synthesis human autonomy and experience would be respected by being taken into the theological circle as an essential aspect of revelation. Revelation would then be seen to arise in the midst of life rather than as a foreign word from the outside, therefore respecting human autonomy. Existentialism, and to some degree psychoanalysis, would also provide the philosophical categories which would allow theology to speak the language of the culture. And fortunately for theology, many of the categories of existentialism and psychoanalysis have been conditioned by a recognition of the limits of rationalism and the importance of intuitive knowledge. Categories such as this will legitimize Tillich's attempt at the re-interpretation of faith as the experience of a fundamental revelation which provides the courage (*coeur*) to overcome meaninglessness, rather than as assent to doctrine or obedience to moral commands. Since this fundamental revelation is an experience and not a clear and certain mathematical proof at the end of a line of reasoning, a certain risk is involved in faith.

¹⁸*La philosophie de la religion de Paul Tillich*, loc. cit., p. 22.

Thus, Tillich makes human experience the starting point of the Christian message. In this way theology can conform itself to the issues which are important in each epoch, rather than believing that one eternal and immutable message will fit all situations. This approach respects the autonomous nature of human thought while at the same time honoring the absoluteness of the Christian conception of God. This turn to human experience required a new methodology which Tillich called the *method of correlation* in which he put the questions which culture asked in a mutual relation with the answer from the Christian message. Only in this way, he thought, could a new foundation of meaning be laid, in order to build a *nouvelle maison* in which humanity could live at peace, and in which religion could play an integral part.¹⁹ It is to this attempted synthesis between culture and religion that I now turn.

¹⁹ibid., p. 25.

2. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PROBLEM & SOLUTION

A) *The Intellectual Problem of Doubt*

The particularly modern and thorny problem that Tillich must wrestle with is the problem of doubt resulting from the clash between the culture of traditional Christianity, in which *belief* is the intellectual ideal, and Enlightenment culture, in which *critical judgment* is the ideal. Since this clash of cultures and the resultant transformation of consciousness, faith is not as evident or as easily accessible as it once was. The particular sting of this intellectual revolution was not simply that historical inquiry undercut any certain historical foundation for the faith, although it did that, but that the new ideal of dedication to truth and intellectual integrity brought into question the ethic of belief itself. While medieval culture saw faith and belief as virtues and doubt as sin, in modern culture methodological doubt was celebrated along with a certain skepticism regarding the tendency of belief to influence the outcome of inquiry. Under the auspices of this modern culture the beginning of wisdom is clearly doubt and not faith. It is a situation in which traditional metaphysics has been discredited and viewed as armchair speculation with no basis in reality. Further, its appeal to authority can only undercut the critical ideal of autonomous thought, thus threatening the

highly prized autonomy of the human intellect to decide on the basis of observation and evidence. The intellectual question to be solved is how is it possible, given this new critical ideal of knowledge, to be at once intellectually honest and a believer? The pathos of modern unbelief is that it demonstrates, not only two different methodologies, but also two ethics of judgment. One does not trust, as Pascal would have said, *the knowledge of the heart*. Even if one wants to believe, one is skeptical of the desire to falsify the evidence. It contrasts an ethic based on the appeal to individual conscience and an ethic based on external authority. The problem is so great that no salvage operation will do. The faith will have to be formulated in such a way that it escapes the accusation of being intellectually irresponsible. Faith today must find a way to incorporate doubt within itself. This is the principle task which Tillich sets before himself.²⁰

B) The Existential Problem of Emptiness and Meaninglessness

There is an historical relation between the intellectual and the existential questions. With the inevitable advancement and eventual dominance of the scientific method, the *Dare to know* of Kant, which celebrated methodological doubt, gradually evolved into complete or existential doubt, resulting finally in Nietzsche's pronouncement that *God is dead*. This announcement simply ratified the earlier critical work of people such as Feuerbach and Marx, and later Freud, whose writings had made the traditional system based on metaphysics appear as speculation, unrelated to the real world at best, and destructive of the rights and duties of the individual

²⁰Cf. Jean-Claude Petit. "*Croire et douter. Un aspect fondamental de l'expérience religieuse moderne selon Paul Tillich.*"; and Cf. *The Historian and The Believer*, *loc. cit.*, p. 94.

conscience to decide, at worst. Under this view the God of traditional theology was seen as a tyrant demanding belief and obedience on the basis of authority and ignoring the court of individual conscience based on observation and experience. This is the god that Nietzsche said must be killed in the name of human freedom.

This freedom, however, came with a cost. And it is the cost of this freedom which, paradoxically constitutes the existential problem. Where the Christian tradition had once provided a hierarchy of values, a sense of purpose, meaning and a sense of direction in life, modern humanity now faced the abyss of the absurd. There was no longer any *given* meaning or purpose to human life. There were no divinely ordained and absolute values or principles from which ethical conduct could be deduced. All that had been explained away as a projection or a wish fulfillment. The freedom is, however, a fearful freedom because humanity now faces the abyss into which meaning and purpose has fallen and is threatened with moral, spiritual and even physical extinction, in the case of suicide in the face of despair, or the possible destruction threatened by the atomic bomb, which was the social situation at the time *The Courage To Be* was written. It is this abyss into which meaning has fallen, and the anxiety which accompanies it which is the subject of much twentieth century art, literature and philosophy.

This human situation is made worse by the fact that the scientific and rationalistic approach, which has produced so much that is good and which is the source of the freedom of the human conscience, is now threatening

human subjectivity, the human person, itself.²¹ The complete dominance of this objective rationalistic way of knowing tends to impose scientific analysis and rational planning, not only with objects, for which it is eminently suited, but also with human beings, and relations with God, for which it is not suited.

The existential result of the development of this rationalistic and scientific approach, combined with the loss of meaning, is that modern men and women stand alone in facing the horizon of emptiness and meaninglessness. The alternative of going back to faith is impossible since the acceptance of the traditional image of God and formulation of faith implies the greater threat of the destruction of human freedom and intellectual integrity. The older metaphysical formulations of theism are no longer believable nor acceptable. This is the fearful freedom which generates the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness today.

C) Existentialism and Psychoanalysis -Theology's Good Luck

To reiterate, rather than drawing ethical and doctrinal conclusions from absolute and universally valid eternal principles or revelation, as does the older metaphysic, existentialism and psychoanalysis begin with the individual and his or her experience of the world and attempt to construct a coherent conceptual view of reality based on that experience. In this regard these two disciplines correspond to the Enlightenment epistemology since they seek truth on the basis of empirical observation and rational decision. Experience and individual conscience, and not authority, are thus the criteria

²¹ Cf. Drewermann referring to Horkheimer's fears concerning rationalism, in Eugen Drewermann, *La parole qui guérit*, Translated by Jean-Pierre Bagot, (Collection théologies), Paris, Cerf, 1991 (First printing 1989), p. 295.

for discerning truth. They thus offer the possibility of constructing, not a rationalist metaphysic, but a metaphysic of the subject, which could be understood and accepted today.

Existentialism and psychoanalysis also differ from the Enlightenment epistemology, however, at a few very important points. Although both children of the Enlightenment, they recognize the importance of subjective knowledge and, on the basis of this other form of knowledge, each in its own way, reacted against the Enlightenment's objectification of the person. Perhaps the first existentialist, Kierkegaard, recognized early that one could not speak of human relations, or the relation between humans and God, in the same way you would speak about the relation with objects:

The scientific method becomes especially dangerous and pernicious when it encroaches on the realm of spirit. Let science deal with plants, and animals and stars; but to deal in that way with the human spirit is blasphemy.²²

These insights of Kierkegaard, involving the need for personal experience and personal encounter as an essential aspect of knowledge have been developed and advanced by the existentialist movement and psychoanalysis in the twentieth century. Of course, today we have come to realize that, even with the natural world, it is dangerous to deal in a completely objective way.

Existentialism and psychoanalysis also differed from the Enlightenment epistemology in their recognition that not all is rationally deductible but that

²²S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson, introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1944, p. 91.

the unconscious plays an enormous role in human behavior. Since the irrational plays such a large role, not everything is deductible from first principles. This fact is what makes decision such an important category in existentialism. Since there are no *givens* which can provide direction, purpose or meaning it is necessary to create meaning by decision in existentialism. Tillich will draw upon this in asking for a decision of faith in light of the fact that it would be impossible to completely demonstrate faith rationally. The importance of the situation demands a decision. It is, indeed, theology's good fortune that, in once again rediscovering the unconscious and the irrational in human beings, and in concentrating on concrete existence and encounter and not simply abstract, rational essence, existentialist philosophy and psychoanalysis have put us in touch with our *being in the world* and with the mode of knowledge which arises from that experience.

Heidegger, whom Tillich follows closely, has called much of the history of Western philosophy, because of this emphasis on *scientia*, or science, as a mode of knowledge, to the exclusion of *sapientia*, or wisdom, a *forgetfulness of being*. He thus dedicated much of his philosophical project to the *remembrance of being* in the categories of time and space. Remembrance of being, of course, means awareness and taking account of humanity's experience of itself and of its world. Existentialism does not stop there, however. It goes beyond experience in the world to raise the question of ontology and tries to give a rational account of the ontological categories, the categories of being. This step is important also for Tillich's project. For in seeking a basis in Being itself, Heidegger offers Tillich the possibility of anchoring the Christian faith in ontology. This means that this experience of

faith can be legitimately seen as something more than an idea in the mind, such as in psychology or simply as a sociological reality.

The importance given to intuitive means of knowing and personal encounter in existentialism also allows Tillich to circumvent the traditional metaphysical image of God which has become problematic in modernity and propose, rather, an image more in line with this transformation of consciousness. Heidegger had said that the traditional image of God, which follows a rationalistic metaphysics, was an unworthy and unbelievable image because it made God into an object. Tillich apparently accepted this criticism and used it to present God, not as the supreme being, beside other beings, but as the source, the *ground of being* itself. Such a view could not be synthesized with the traditional, rationalistic theology which saw a clear and distinct image of God deduced from a line of reasoning, but it could be harmonized with the idea of an *immediacy* of God known by intuition within the human heart. This, of course, was the Augustinian/ Franciscan/ Lutheran philosophy of religion that Tillich favored instead of the Thomistic rationalistic metaphysics. This latter one, on its own, will no longer work. For it is the source of the objective and objectifying God of rationalism which Nietzsche said must be killed in the name of human freedom.

3. A NEW STARTING POINT DEMANDS A NEW METHOD

The obsolescence of the older metaphysical view and the turn toward experience means that theology needs a new methodology in order to incorporate human experience. Tillich proposes that the method in modern times must be both kerygmatic and apologetic. There have traditionally been two approaches toward announcing the Christian message, both of which have today become problematic. A new method providing a course between these two is needed in modernity. Naturalism fails in modernity because it suffers from an outmoded metaphysic which attempts to deduce God and faith from first premises found outside the world of men and women. Supernaturalism, too, is flawed. This approach begins either from revelation, or the contemplation of universal essences or truths, which are seen as valid for all people, at all times and in all places. This conception of the Christian message fails because, in Tillich's words, *it falls like a rock from the sky* and makes no contact with the culture. Such a conception must fail because it denies the culture and must always appear as a *foreign word* to those who receive it.

Tillich's view is that the theological hermeneutic must include both the Christian message and the existential situation, or human experience. In Tillich's words Christian theology must be *both kerygmatic and apologetic*. With this view, Tillich also differs from the older Protestant Liberalism. The kerygmatic aspect of the message assures that the answer does not arise from the situation but is supplied *from beyond* ; only in relation, however, with the questions which humanity asks. Tillich's criticism of Schleiermacher, for example, is that for him and for Liberalism in general, experience was seen as the source of systematic theology and not simply the medium through which systematic theology receives its sources. Thus, there was always the danger that the answer would be derived from the situation rather than from beyond.²³ Such a view also never fully realized that sinfulness is part of the human situation and human experience. Therefore, theology today must be both *kerygmatic*, in actually giving a message from beyond the human situation and *apologetic* in order to give a message which relates to the situation. Through its kerygmatic function it must transmit the message affirmed by tradition. But, its apologetic function requires theology to interpret that traditional message differently in each epoch and each culture and in relation with the lived reality of that time and that place. This is because the situation of each epoch changes. In order to not *fall like a rock from the sky* theology must be in touch with the experiences of men and women in each age and adjust the theological message to meet the challenges of that reality. Theology which speaks the language that was meaningful and revelatory at one epoch, because in touch with the experience of that time, can be hopelessly out of touch in another.

²³*Systematic Theology* vol. I, *loc. cit.*, p. 42.

Tillich's whole program may be thus briefly stated in one phrase: Christian theology must learn to speak the language of the culture in which it finds itself. In order to communicate with a culture in its own language one must start from the situation, the concerns, questions and problems arising in that culture. Therefore, central to his system and that which allows him to make this connection with culture is what Tillich calls the *method of correlation* in which he takes the questions and problems of humanity on the one hand and the message of the Christian revelation in the other, and *tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message.*²⁴ It is the task of the theologian, or the Christian, to demonstrate this correlation.

A) *The Method Of Correlation*

Perhaps one of the most succinct descriptions of Tillich's method of correlation is that of Carl Braaten, who says that Tillich's thinking was modeled on Luther's distinction between law and gospel. Tillich does not use this formula explicitly but Braaten says that all his thinking is structured in terms of it. In each section of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* he employs this method in the analysis of a particular problem in philosophical terms and it is only then that it is shown how the Christian message is an answer to the question and the problem raised. In fact, all his writings and sermons are based on, first of all, showing humanity's predicament under the law and then the presentation of the gospel which offers the new possibility of life under the gospel:

²⁴ibid., p. 8

The sequence is always law before gospel, that is, always the posing of the question before the attempt to answer. For Tillich this is the proper theological method, and at just this point he deviated from Karl Barth who placed the gospel before the law, who spoke of Christ before turning to the analysis of the human situation as man today experiences it.²⁵

The consequences following from this method are important for the theological project. The first consequence which Tillich lists is that of the *independence* of existential questions and theological answers. Both naturalism and supernaturalism err in thinking that the existential questions and the theological answers are entirely dependent. Natural theology, according to Tillich, is right to the extent that it analyses the human predicament and the question of God implied in it. But, it is wrong when it tries to develop theological affirmations from this analysis. Tillich agrees here with the neo-orthodox in their criticism of naturalism. Only God can reveal God. The answers cannot come from the situation, as much natural theology has supposed. One might add parenthetically here that Tillich believes that Aquinas was aware of this and responded by adding the authority of the Church in order to close the circle of certitude. On the other hand Tillich is equally against Barth and the neo-orthodox, or supernaturalist school. Tillich says here that humanity cannot receive an answer to a question it has not asked.²⁶ And when it tries to do so, theology and preaching, while being a series of understandable words, because they are out of touch with human experience, will not prove a revelatory experience.

²⁵Carl Braaten, *Paul Tillich and the Classical Tradition*, in *The History of Christian Thought*, by Paul Tillich, edited and introduction by Carl E. Braaten, Simon and Schuster, 1967, p. xxvii.

²⁶*Systematic Theology*, II, *loc. cit.*, p. 13

The second consequence is that of the *mutual dependence* between questions and answers. Although Tillich underlines this independence between question and answer, there is also a mutual dependence. While the theological answers cannot be deduced or derived from the existential questions, they are, none the less, dependent upon the way the question is asked. As Tillich says, humanity must receive and not create or deduce the answer, but that reception is in accordance with the way humanity has asked for it. Tillich has provided us with an illustration of what he means by this:

If theology gives the answer, *the Christ*, to the question implied in human estrangement, it does so differently, depending on whether the reference is to the existential conflicts of Jewish legalism, to the existential despair of Greek skepticism, or to the threat of nihilism as expressed in twentieth-century literature art, and psychology. Nevertheless, the question cannot create the answer. The answer, *the Christ*, cannot be created by man, but man can receive it and express it according to the way he has asked for it.²⁷

Another implication of this method is that the theologian has some directive influence over the existential material. It is within his or her power to both choose the material and formulate the question:

While the material of the existential question is the very expression of the human predicament, the form of the question is determined by the total system and by the answers given in it. The question implied in human finitude is directed toward the answer: the eternal. The question implied in human estrangement is directed toward the answer: forgiveness.²⁸

Tillich's approach here is to express this independence and interdependence in order to incorporate the existential material into the *theological circle* in such a way that it might be described more as an ellipse

²⁷ibid., p. 15.

²⁸ibid., p. 14f.

with two central points--the existential question and the theological answer, rather than either simply one or the other. In order to be relevant and understandable, theology must take into account both poles. There is thus seen to be an independence but also, an interdependence, between the historical situation and the Christian message when the theological circle is conceived as an ellipsis with the two points. It is thus that Tillich takes human experience into the theological hermeneutic as an integral part. This experiential side of the hermeneutic he calls the *situation*; then there is the *response* from theology. While these two are independent they are also interdependent. And this means that revelation does not occur independently of human experience but only in relation with it. It follows, of course, that the theological message must be formulated for each historical epoch.

Tillich analyses the modern epoch and tries to show the theological correlation to it throughout his work but most especially in *The Courage To Be*. Before moving on to the situation of modernity, as Tillich analyses and then responds to it in the categories and insights provided by the *modern languages* of existentialism and psychoanalysis, I will make a few explanatory remarks about what actually the situation is and what it is not, as well as some further words on the mutual dependence between the situation and the message following from Tillich's method of correlation.

B) *The Situation*

The *situation* does not refer to the psychological or social state in which individuals and groups live. It is, rather, the *interpretation* of that

state carried out in philosophy, literature, art, science, and theology.²⁹ If it consisted simply in the state in which people found themselves, then, Fundamentalists would be right in claiming that they understood the situation and knew the answer to it. It is true that in socially disruptive times such an approach becomes attractive. Just as it is true that in socially integrated periods Liberalism is attractive. But, the true understanding of the term *situation* refers instead to the creative interpretation of existence in all spheres of culture and not to the biological, social or psychological conditioning factors, as such. The situation to which theology must respond is "the totality of man's creative self-interpretation in a special period."³⁰

In the theologian's concern to demonstrate revelation, or we might say the presence and power of God, in the situation, Tillich notes the freedom to choose the material used to describe that situation and to formulate the question in relation to that material. Tillich expresses it clearly at one point:

The material of the existential question is taken from the whole of human experience and its manifold ways of expression. This refers to past and present, to popular language and great literature, to art and philosophy, to science and psychology. It refers to myth and liturgy, to religious traditions, and to present experiences. All this, as far as it reflects man's existential predicament, is the material without the help of which the existential question cannot be formulated. The choice of the material, as well as the formulation of the question, is the task of the systematic theologian.³¹

So much for the method. Let us now move on to the book where its employment is especially visible.

²⁹*Systematic Theology*, I, *loc. cit.*, p. 3f.

³⁰*ibid.*, p. 4.

³¹*Systematic Theology*, II, *loc. cit.*, p. 15.

4. THE COURAGE TO BE

All that we have so far read leads us to the concrete illustration of this method and synthesis of faith in modern terms, which is to be found in Paul Tillich's little book of anthropological theology, *The Courage To Be*. This essay is not so much a monologue on the concept of courage as it is a contemporary re-formulation of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith as a comprehensible and existentially powerful response to the questions of the modern world, especially those raised by existentialist philosophy. Faith (courage is Tillich's secular equivalent for the religious word faith) is a doctrine most in need of re-interpretation today because its true meaning has been deformed by the Church's intellectualist and ethical approach, based ultimately, on the authority of the church. Such a conception can only be seen as inherently unbelievable, cut off from reality and even destructive in the modern world, which values experiential verification and the autonomy of the human conscience.

This book is, therefore, a fairly straightforward application of Tillich's theological method in which, with the aid of the art, literature and philosophy of the twentieth century, he interprets and incorporates the experience of

modern men and women into the theological circle as an essential element and shows how the Christian answer is the best solution in that *situation*. The response from the Christian tradition is formulated according to the categories, concepts and terms of what we might call the two *modern languages* of existentialism and psychoanalysis.

Where traditional theology seems cut off from reality and incomprehensible in modernity, Tillich is able to call upon these categories which rely on human experience, categories such as care, anxiety, meaninglessness, despair, encounter and courage, which provide an acceptable image of God when traditional objective, metaphysical theology has reached its limit. Revelation is then understood, not as the communication of doctrines or knowledge *about* God, which, according to Tillich is a badly distorted concept, but rather a manifestation of the divine to a human being, which has transforming power. Thus, when it is no longer possible to offer an objective proof of God's existence, if it ever was possible, a subjective proof emerges which, because it sees faith in relational rather than intellectualist terms, and as a venture and a risk rather than a certainty, is able also to incorporate the modern problem of doubt. It is a combination which allows us once again to see the depths of sin and salvation and is thus able to restore power and meaning to the old Lutheran formula of *justification by faith* which has become increasingly incomprehensible today. Here faith is understood, not as assent to certain true doctrines or obedience to ethical commands, but, rather as the *experiencing of a power* which is the source of the only courage which can sustain men and women in the present *situation*, this situation being understood by the interpretations of modern art, literature and philosophy as one marked by the anxiety of emptiness and

meaninglessness.³² This re-formulation of the doctrine of justification by faith is couched in the relational terms of psychoanalysis which are so familiar to modern men and women rather than in the juridic terms familiar to the Middle Ages. Tillich's modern formulation of faith is thus understood as the ability to *accept that you are accepted despite feelings of unacceptability*.

Tillich is a theologian who is steeped in the classical Christian tradition and consequently his re-formulation of faith is not a new conception but rather, a re-discovery of a largely neglected approach which has always existed in theology. He sees it, in fact, as the recuperation of the Augustinian/Franciscan understanding of faith which had been sidelined by the emergence and almost complete dominance of the approach favored by Thomas Aquinas. In the ancient debate over the priority of intellect over will in faith and in the life of God, the intellectualist approach favored by Thomas won out and banished the Augustinian/Franciscan solution to almost complete oblivion. It is this ancient debate and Thomas' victory, though, Tillich believes, which is at the root of the difficulties we face today in making the Christian message comprehensible. In a somewhat parallel way, he believes, it is also the beginning of the over-rationalistic tendency in Western society which faces modernity with the threat of emptiness and meaninglessness.

It is because of this impasse that the Thomistic approach has reached that Tillich returns to the Augustinian/Franciscan approach in interpreting courage in volitional or ontological terms rather than in rationalistic terms. Under the intellectualist view, faith or courage, is seen as the ethical power to

³²*The Courage To Be, loc. cit., p. 18*

assent and agree to the dictates of reason and revelation. It is thus seen as one virtue beside others. Understood as an ontological concept, however, courage, or faith, is seen as *virtue* itself and is able to participate in and create meaning. Understood ontologically courage is that which gives a human being the power to create meaning and purpose on the basis of a decision, rather than the ability to assent to the dictates of reason or revelation. This courage realizes that there is no absolute certainty in this world and that doubt is therefore always a constant companion. Its assurance is not based on rational proof but on an experience which motivates the will to trust or faith.

This decision to understand courage ontologically can restore the lost meaning and purpose to life, without having at the same time, to sacrifice the intellect by believing unbelievable doctrines. This is why the rationalist approach to courage as the power to assent to truth or obey commands has become problematic. It is the unquestioning acceptance or belief in first principles which has become impossible. This ontological understanding of courage is the approach which modern epistemology favors and through its subjective approach it can once again commend the Christian message to modernity. The ontological concept of courage is an essential category of existentialist philosophy.

Tillich begins *The Courage To Be* with a brief historical overview of how the concept of courage has been used in the Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Nietzsche. Here he notes that it has been used both as an ontological and an ethical concept. It appears, though, that he believes that it cannot be properly understood unless used ontologically. But, in any case, in light of the current need to re-interpret faith he decides in favor of

the ontological approach. Following this introduction there are several chapters in which he uses the ontological concept of courage as a key to reveal the hidden nature of reality. This is essentially an existentialist ontology.

The first thing encountered in exploring the structure of being is that against which courage struggles. There is and always has been an inherent threat in the structure of reality. It is the threat of possible non-being. Seen from the individual's interior life this threat of non-being is experienced as anxiety. Anxiety is the fear of nothingness. It is not the fear, for instance, one faces in terms of sudden death but the implications of that death. In religious terms it is the fear of eternal death. The fear, in fact, of non-being. This anxiety arises from the subjective awareness of one's own finitude and contingency. When courage opens up the structure of being it finds that this non-being which is experienced in the individual as anxiety is as basic as being itself. Although non-being is as basic as being it is, however, shown to be dependent upon the being which it threatens, and therefore second in priority to being. It is important to realize, as Tillich says, that these philosophical concepts of being and non-being can be viewed "*against the background of the religious experience of the transitoriness of everything created and the power of the "demonic" in the human soul and history.*" ³³

This discovery of the relationship of dependence between being and non-being has important consequences. First of all, it shows that being is not simply static but that there exists an eternal struggle between being and non-

³³ibid., p. 33.

being. In this struggle, speaking metaphorically, Tillich says that Being and Non-being are locked in a kind of eternal *embrace* in which Being eternally overcomes Non-being. The power of Being is its self-affirmation *in spite of* Non-being. This is important because it allows one to see that this pattern of successful struggle and overcoming is rooted in the very structure of reality itself. Thus, Being, or we might say life itself, is the source of all self-affirmation and of the courage to be. The possibility of seeing courage or faith as an essential element in reality will be important for Tillich in responding to the sickness of despair and emptiness in modern society. He will be able to say that courage or self-affirmation is meaningful because it is part of the very structure of being itself and therefore part also of the structure of human beings.

The next thing that this relationship of dependence between being and non-being reveals is that non-being has no differentiation within itself but conforms itself to the special qualities of the being which it negates. This permits Tillich to see three epochs in Western society in which anxiety and courage take slightly different forms. Tillich suggests that there are three types of anxiety corresponding to the three directions from which non-being threatens being and corresponding, as well, to three distinct epochs in Western society. It will, of course, take a different form of courage to combat each of these threats. A concrete illustration of this may be useful at this point.

There is first of all the anxiety of fate and death which was prominent during the classical period of Western society. The courage which was able to overcome this threat is best exemplified by the Stoics, who saw themselves as

integrated in the eternal Logos, or Reason and were thus able to overcome this type of anxiety. The second type is the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, which Tillich associates with the Middle Ages and which was overcome by the Reformation courage of immediate encounter with God. The third type is the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness, which was the situation in the mid-twentieth century when Tillich wrote *The Courage To Be*. This constitutes the major part of *The Courage To Be* and I will deal with it by itself more fully later in the essay.

If not successfully addressed anxiety can be transformed into despair, which Kierkegaard called *the sickness unto death*. And in many cases it leads to actual physical death if there is no courage found which can overcome it. For despair can result in suicide. It should be remembered that although there are distinct periods when these types of anxiety appear, they are not exclusive. The three forms can appear simultaneously. It is just that because of the situation in one epoch one type will be more heavily emphasized. It is also important, and a point which Tillich wants to make to existentialism and psychoanalysis, that this anxiety is not the result of psychic sickness but it is a part of the human condition. Therefore there must be a co-operation between religion and the healing disciplines. This differentiation in the types of anxiety will be important for Tillich's purposes because it will allow him to show that the Christian message is not eternal and out of time but must be formulated according to the differing experiences of each epoch. A message correlated to the threat of eternal death or guilt, for instance, will not touch those in the modern epoch whose anxiety takes another form and whose epistemology has made the traditional pronouncements on eternal death and guilt unbelievable.

As this key of courage unlocks being, and we explore further into its nature, we see also that being and ontological principles have a polar structure, that of the self and the world which produces two movements in the individual. There is a movement towards the self in which one seeks individuation or the affirmation of oneself as an individual; the other movement is the affirmation of oneself as a participant in a larger group. These are two forms of self-affirmation, or courage, which are distinguishable but not separable. There have always been two legitimate tendencies towards finding the courage to exist, or to be: the traditional one in which one conquered the anxieties of existence by participation in a group, and the more modern one, where one affirms one's existence as an individual. The Medieval church, for example, functioned in the first way, providing an antidote to the threat of anxiety and despair through its traditions, its sacraments, its education and its authority. But, the problem is, and this is where this differentiation is important for Tillich, that this kind of courage to be by participation in a collective courage, which was so important in the Middle Ages, became somewhat unbelievable in the Enlightenment and challenged by the courage to be oneself by later existentialism. This collective type of courage to be, however, broke down with the discovery of personal and not just collective guilt and with the emerging aspect of autonomous question asking. With this breakdown came the need to find the courage to be as an individual. The most extreme form of this courage to be as oneself are the various forms we find in the existentialism of the early twentieth century. Such a dichotomy cries out for a new unity.

Tillich's analysis is that to go too far on either side of this polarity is a great mistake. Somehow we must find a place in the middle. One must, for example, jealously guard one's individuality. It has often been shown today the great dangers and disasters that can befall those who are so terrified by the anxieties of modern existence that they will try to ease this anxiety by seeking exclusively a collective courage to be. This means giving up one's own struggle and accepting the answers given by some collectivity. Tillich sees this as similar to the neurotic solution chosen by many individuals who suffer psychic pain. In order to have security one retreats to a position which one can defend. But, this retreat must leave much of reality behind in order to be secure. Such a neurotic solution is thus not the real solution to the problem.

Today especially, we cannot escape the autonomous question asking, which is part of our culture, by a retreat to a collective courage to be. Doubt is now part of us and must be answered. That is why Tillich says that Eastern mysticism is not really a possibility for Western people either. It doesn't take seriously the reality of doubt so it doesn't work through to a solution which would make this doubt a part of the equation. It goes beyond doubt to an immediate encounter and thus doesn't take doubt seriously. Such a solution could provide salvation for an individual but it cannot answer the problematic which doubt and autonomous question asking has created in Western society. Therefore, although it can provide a means of personal salvation it cannot provide an answer as to how to announce the Christian message in a modernity faced with that problematic. The danger in such a response to anxiety is the potential loss of self in the security of the collective.

It was this kind of loss of self which prompted the most prominent kind of courage in modern times, the courage to be as one self. It was exemplified, in Tillich's time, by the existentialism which began to emerge following the chaos created by the First World War and became full-blown following the Second World War. Its basis is, of course, the experience of personal guilt and radical question asking which undermined the older collectivisms. There were various forms of the courage to be as oneself but the most radical form is existentialism. The background of modern existentialism is the nineteenth century reaction to philosophical Idealism and the rationalistic objectification of the world. Kierkegaard is often cited as the grandfather of this existentialism which once again sought to put the concrete human being back into the philosophical equation. This revolt consisted in the realization that the objective, rationalistic approach to reality, while excellent for relations of quantitative measure, when used for human or religious relations, tended to turn the individual into a *thing* which is interchangeable and subject to calculated and rational management rather than as a person who should be treated with utmost respect. The detached, analytical attitude is still important in existentialism, but it is only one aspect of the act of knowing and when it is too heavily emphasized, as certain forms of collectivisms have done, it threatens the annihilation of the self.

It is interesting to briefly note the background of this sense of the annihilation of individuality and the objectification of the person that provoked the nineteenth century existentialist revolts. The development of this *technical reason* which objectified everything is part, of course, of the long history of Western intellectual history. But it seemed to become especially threatening when even Calvinism and Sectarianism took up the

Cartesian project. Descartes certainly drove the wedge in deeply by seeing humanity as simply an epistemological subject. The disassociation between thought and sentiment thus began in earnest. Fuel was added to the fire when, in the eighteenth century, the content of Protestant ethics became adjusted to the demands of the industrial society. This called for a reasonable management of oneself and one's world. The early sociologist, Max Weber, who was one of the first to signal the dangers of a rationalized bureaucratic management also made the connection between this rational management and the emerging form of Calvinistic Protestantism. At one point the secular and religious forms of essentialist thought merged, replacing the existential subject, with his or her existential conflicts and despairs by the modern *Mass Man* who is governed by this annihilating rationalism present in both his or her personal and public life. The nineteenth century marked the revolt against this potential destruction of the self once technical reason has come into control.³⁴

Since the last decades of the 19th century revolt against this objectified world has determined the character of art and literature. When with July 31, 1914, the 19th century came to an end, the Existentialist revolt ceased to be a revolt. It became the mirror of experienced reality.

It is against this background that Existentialism struggled for the courage to be as oneself in the face of this objectification of the person. All collectivities stifled autonomous question asking and gave in exchange a false and unreal sense of security. The problem is, though, that in its attempt to

³⁴ibid., p. 136

embrace and overcome the anxiety of meaninglessness by the courage to be as oneself, Existentialism runs a high risk of losing its world in an empty self-relatedness. On the basis of the message that God is dead, which had been announced by Nietzsche in the late 19th century, existentialists tended to refuse all content. *Essence is existence*, as Sartre said. There is nothing given.

This kind of freedom, however, is to usurp the position of God, Tillich says, and we must realize that we are finite after all, and must live with certain givens. His freedom, for instance, is conditioned by contents from his own subconscious and from the environment from which he cannot withdraw. To fail to recognize these contents means a greater enslavement. Tillich says that this kind of exaggeration in the courage to be as oneself leads to either a kind of despair which is soul destroying or to the longing for the kind of security that collectivism offers. It is an unwise courage.

As we approach the final chapter of *The Courage To Be* and Tillich's solution to the problems raised, a brief summary before we turn to the kind of courage Christianity has offered. First of all, we must remember that a rationalistic metaphysic is no longer possible and Tillich, therefore, pursues a subjective metaphysic. It is for this reason that he uses courage as an ontological rather than an ethical concept. Used ontologically, courage is a key which opens up the nature of reality. Being, when it is opened up, reveals itself as a dynamic entity which is the source of the courage to be, since it continually affirms itself against non-being. Being contains within itself a polar nature which corresponds to the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as an individual. In Western history there has been a tendency to gravitate to either one pole or another. Tillich believes, however, that this

tendency produces a lop-sidedness which is dangerous in either case. The collectivist approach, represented to some degree, by traditional theology, threatens the self. The individualist approach, represented by existentialism, is threatened by the absence of any content, the loss of one's world in an empty self-relatedness. The only possible solution is to find a kind of courage, or faith, which can unite these two forms.

After having examined the secular forms of courage or faith which present themselves, Tillich turns to the kinds of courage which Christianity has offered. There are essentially only two forms of faith or courage to be in the Christian tradition, the mystical and the theistic, neither of which on its own Tillich affirms, is sufficient. Mysticism is based on the idea of direct participation in the divine. In itself this form of courage or self-affirmation on the basis of divine union is sufficient to allow individuals to experience this union. But, because it does not address the problem of doubt which the Enlightenment has raised in Western society, it cannot, and usually doesn't try, to provide a philosophical answer to how that courage is possible in the face of doubt.

Theism is the second form of courage we find in the Christian tradition and it is usually based on the personal attributes of God, which find their source in the Bible and the divine human encounter. Tillich identifies three expressions of theism, none of which is sufficient to provide the kind of courage needed in the present context. The first expression is that associated with the vague feeling of divinity that people sometimes express or the popular appeal to God that politicians sometimes make in order to ingratiate themselves to the populace. This kind of theism is totally discounted. The

second form is not only discounted but is said to be bad theology and even the "root of atheism in our time and the deepest root of existential despair and the widespread anxiety of meaninglessness of our period."³⁵ This is the rationalistic image of God as lawgiver and obstacle to human autonomy which Nietzsche said must be killed. The third version of theism, however, that which emphasizes the person to person encounter with God evident in the Jewish and Christian traditions is important but also must be transcended. It is important because it recognizes the personal nature of God. The great problem during the Reformation was to find forgiveness, for example, and it is only a personal God that can understand and forgive. Christianity, however, has always recognized the ambiguity in this expression of faith. As Luther said, we must always remember the contrasts in God. It would be a mistake to see God simply as a person with whom we might have a relationship. This may too easily degenerate into sentimentalism. There is a mystery in God which must also be maintained.

Whatever solution proposed, it must presuppose the situation of meaninglessness and despair, which is the situation of today. Tillich's solution is to unite and transcend both this mystical religion and personal encounter. Such an approach accepts doubt and despair as essential aspects of life which faith does not completely annul. Tillich calls it *absolute faith*.

This means that all the forms of faith which we have mentioned must be transcended today. The reason is obvious for the two lesser forms of theism. It is also fairly obvious with mysticism, since it cannot answer the problem of

³⁵ibid., p. 185

doubt and meaninglessness. But, even the person to person encounter must be transcended because the contents demanded by this vision will be constantly undercut by doubt. Further, even this image of God as involving personal encounter seems to miss much of the mysterious, unknown and unknowable aspects of God. It is a little too clear cut and because of this is insufficient as a complete view of faith. This shortcoming, Tillich mentions, has been recognized through the history of theology and has therefore always been supplemented.

Tillich takes mysticism and the person to person encounter form of theism and says they must be both united and transcended in order to produce an *absolute faith* which can at the same time be true to the Christian tradition and overcome the problem of doubt and meaninglessness while not falling into either an empty self-relatedness or being absorbed by a collectivity which would destroy the self. Here faith, or courage, is interpreted not as the theoretical affirmation of something uncertain, it is not in fact even of the order of an opinion, it is more the state of being grasped by the power of being itself. Faith is the *experience* of the affirming power of being. It is a venturing risk of the existential acceptance of something transcending ordinary experience. There are no concrete contents in this encounter, for they would only be undercut by doubt. But the encounter itself is a content. It is not of the order of a rational proof but is a risk.

In this immediate encounter both the mystical experience and the personal encounter are united. It is its union with the one positive content of absolute faith, the divine-human encounter which allows this. Thus, the mystical aspect of faith is able to come to terms with doubt. This means that

the collectivist side of the ontological polarity of courage or faith can be correctly honored, since it is a courage which unites one to the ground of being and not to some limited collectivity. Here the self receives itself back because the ground of being itself does not submerge it within a group but acts through the individual selves. But, the divine-human encounter must be united and transcended as well. Not only will its positive contents be undercut by doubt but in the present situation of doubt it would have to be the church that guarantees such a content by its authority. This would inescapably develop into a collectivist or semi-collectivist system itself. No, the only solution when the God of theism disappears in the anxiety of doubt is this *God above the God of theism* whose sole content involves the immediate awareness of God known through mystical experience in a personal encounter. Faith is not an intellectual proposition but rather the experience of *being accepted even though we feel unacceptable*. This is the only kind of courage or faith which can incorporate doubt and meaninglessness and thus provide the possibility of being both intellectually understandable and existentially powerful in overcoming meaninglessness in the modern world.

Tillich has shown an ingenious solution to the intellectual aspect of the Enlightenment problematic by providing a renewed image of God in the categories and thought forms of existentialism and psychoanalysis. He has thus offered a way for modern humanity to understand and to intellectually accept the idea of revelation. Through his method of correlation he has also identified the essential suffering of Western humanity today and has once again made the gospel relevant. In understanding faith and the action of God in mystical and relational rather than primarily rational terms, as an encounter which gives hope in the midst of despair, he has also provided some

relief to that suffering. In doing so he has once again shown the Christian faith to be existentially powerful.

The existential solution which Tillich provides, though, seems weaker than the intellectual synthesis between the Christian faith and the modern mind. An interpretation of faith as an immediate encounter with the source of being giving the courage to face the anxiety of meaninglessness is a very clever way of seeing transcendence within human history, as contemporary epistemology demands. Faith is seen as understood as an experience that gives meaning even in the situation of doubt. But, one is left wondering whether this reconciliation, as Kierkegaard said of Hegel, exists only in the philosopher's mind. There may be many reasons for this *apparent* weakness. It could be that the intellectual problem of faith and reason was the most urgent issue in Tillich's generation. It no doubt has to do with the fact that Tillich's is clearly a philosophical theologian and it is therefore the philosophical questions which interest him most. The means for making this link stronger may not have been developed in Tillich's time. Later developments reveal that this *apparent* flaw in Tillich's approach is not really a flaw at all but simply represents the outlines of a first stage in the anthropological turn and calls for a further development.

The Roman Catholic theologian, Eugen Drewermann, is well qualified to take the anthropological turn to the next degree and respond to that *apparent* lack in Tillich's program. As a pastoral theologian he is concerned primarily with the gap between a rationalistic presentation of the Christian message and the existential situation. He wants to know the concrete forms anxiety and courage take in the human soul in order to see the Christian message as a

healing message. In order to restore the subject to the hermeneutical process he will rely on the psychoanalytic method. The possibility of devoting himself to this aspect of the problematic, of course, arises only because he can assume and build upon the work done by theologians like Tillich. But, with a solid background in the social sciences, especially psychoanalysis, he is eminently equipped to give a modern interpretation and description of what the Christian church has traditionally called *sin* and *redemption* within the human soul. This explanation reveals how sin and redemption can be seen as more concrete than an idea in the philosopher's mind. It is to Drewermann's program that we now turn.

II

Eugen Drewermann

1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEMATIC AND SOLUTION

The German theologian, Eugen Drewermann, (1940 -) is a Roman Catholic theologian and psychotherapist who currently teaches anthropological theology in Paderborn. Like Tillich and other immanentist theologians before him, Drewermann also offers a way of surmounting the abyss opened up between the Christian message and the modern mind by interpreting doctrine from the starting point of human experience. Drewermann, however, deepens and gives new wind to this immanentist movement by making a systematic appeal to the modern discipline of psychoanalysis on the background of the existentialism of Kierkegaard and the social sciences in general. While theologians of Tillich's generation gave a contemporary rational foundation for revelation and produced a modern image of God in tune with secular sensibilities and categories, psychoanalysis offers the possibility of *a greater understanding of humanity* because of the perspectives it has opened up on the place of the imagination, sentiment and symbolism in the human psyche.

Et je tiens même ce second type de réflexion pour plus essentiel que le premier, car les idées ne sont que secondes: elles sont relatives à tout ce

qui peut surgir dans le domaine de la sensibilité: angoisse, sentiment de détresse, désespoir.³⁶

This second stage of the anthropological conversion, based on a thorough and contemporary understanding of human behavior, including its conscious and unconscious motivations, as described by psychoanalysis, Drewermann believes is able to re-new theology in all its branches, from dogmatics, to ethics, to liturgy and rites, to its catechetical methodology. Because it goes to the deepest level of human experience and describes that experience in the psychological language familiar to modernity, it provides a way of understanding what theology means by sin and redemption when, for a growing number of people, this has become an antiquated and incomprehensible doctrine. Psychoanalysis and existentialism, for instance, understand the experience of the anxiety of meaninglessness to be the deepest root of evil and inauthenticity today and see healing as mediated by concrete archetypal images, received by the psyche, whose structure corresponds to their imaginative presentation of truth. A synthesis between the Christian message and psychoanalysis would see sin as analogous to the psychoanalytic notion of the despair arising from the anxiety of meaninglessness, and redemption as analogous to the healing function concrete images and a relationship of accrued confidence have in the psychoanalytic situation. This turn to the sentiments and the imagination would thus incarnate and provide a phenomenology of what the Church has always meant by sin and redemption.

³⁶*La parole qui guérit, loc. cit., p. 310.*

Thus, Drewermann's first reason for turning to the sentiments and the structure of the imaginary as embodied in psychoanalysis is that humanity is best understood at the level of sentiment and the structure of the imaginary in the human psyche. But, there are other reasons that explain his predilection for the psychoanalytic method. In the first years of his ministry, as a young priest, he was confronted with the inadequacy of the traditional approach in his pastoral work. He then discovered in psychoanalysis a more effective means of responding to the problems, conflicts and tragedies within which people were caught and for which not even six years of theological training had prepared him. Here he became aware that the Christian message had become more and more abstract and intellectual for people and therefore was distant from their daily concerns and experiences. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, seemed to offer a way of beginning with the experiences of the person and was therefore able to adequately respond to their situations.

The most prominent human experience today, what Tillich would probably call the *situation*, consists in the disassociation between thought and feeling resulting from the Cartesian dualism of Western society. The unilateral elevation of rational and intellectual truth at the expense of the sentiments and the imagination has reached a point in our society in which people are threatened with the total annulation of their humanity. The greatest fear of the social philosopher Max Horkheimer, that the very concept of the *person* is about to disappear, is near the point of realization in our large Western cities, where over seventy per cent of the population are in some way psychically ill.³⁷ Western society's penchant for objective,

³⁷ibid., p. 295.

measurable and scientifically verifiable fact has largely eliminated the realm of sentiment, poetry or intuition from the realm of truth. This, however, is the language of the soul and when it is eliminated, as is happening in our modern mass society, in which the individual is banalised and reduced to a replaceable cog in the societal machine, a person becomes sick. Traditional theology is not in a position to adequately respond to this situation and, in fact, aggravates it by its appeal to abstraction in doctrine and obedience in ethics. Therefore Drewermann was drawn to psychoanalysis because it is the best response to this psychic misery. Through its interiority it is able to affirm and awaken the hitherto despised realm of feeling and imagination, give people the taste to live once again, and thus return the modern person to him or herself, able to accept confidence at the root of being and to realize that he or she has the right to exist. Drewermann says that arriving in such a place of unconditional welcome, which encourages the acceptance of this confidence, and acceding to one's true self is the same thing as approaching the God who made him or her.³⁸

Although this pastoral problem of the dissociation between thought and feeling, which threatens the unity and sense of meaning for individuals, remains Drewermann's central concern and his main reason for turning to psychoanalysis, he also sees another crucial contribution psychoanalysis in the way it can help overcoming the historical problem which has faced Christianity since the beginning of the modern period. For instance, the attempt to base the Christian message on historical fact, developed through the modern period, has largely failed and lead to an intellectualized and

³⁸ibid., p. 158.

religiously fruitless exposition of the Christian message. The turn to sentiment and imagination embodied by psychoanalysis, in Drewermann's view, offers the only way beyond this impasse, as well as making the Bible once again fecund and accessible to everyone, not just experts. Rather than reading the Bible analytically and from the perspective of history, the psychoanalytical method, especially that of Jung, permits a certain immediacy for the Biblical message. We thus read it not simply as past history, but as our *own* history, in the same way that psychoanalysis interprets dreams.³⁹ Drewermann is thus able to show the way forward beyond the impasse by calling upon a return to myth which is scientifically founded on the Jungian theory of symbol. Then, a modern reading of the Biblical stories of the fall on which traditional theology's doctrine of sin is based, in terms of anxiety and failure to accept confidence at the basis of life, as existentialism and psychoanalysis would read it, leads to an intellectually acceptable and understandable doctrine of sin.

Theology has much to gain, therefore, in this synthesis with psychoanalysis and it is to a more detailed description of that possibility that I now turn. I will concentrate on a more detailed explanation of the two areas I have briefly mentioned: the conjunction of existentialism and the Freudian theory of neuroses with the Christian doctrine of sin and the conjunction of Jungian symbolism, the return to myth, fairy tale, legends and tales with the Christian doctrine of redemption.

³⁹Ibid., p. 59f.

2. CONCEPT OF ANXIETY IN EXISTENTIALISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS PROVIDES A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SIN

The theoretical framework for this alternative presentation of the Christian message had already been laid in the nineteenth century by the Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard.⁴⁰ Even at this early date Kierkegaard rejected as outdated and irrelevant the traditional view that the myth of origins found in Genesis was a kind of historical hypothesis on the etiology of sin. He favored, instead, the view that it was a diagnostic on the condition of humanity. The traditional view held that pride, hubris and willful disobedience were the most fundamental sources of sin. Kierkegaard, however, realized that while these were elements in the human propensity to sin, it was anxiety that was most basic, and at the heart of the human condition. This insight permitted him at once to do three things which are very important for a modern presentation of the Christian message. First of all, he withdrew from the historical theory which had become incredible. Secondly, he moved from an objective to a subjective metaphysic which has

⁴⁰Largely taken from Eugen Drewermann, *La peur et la faute: Psychanalyse et morale*, Translated by Jean-Pierre Bagot, Paris, Cerf, 1992 (First printing 1982).

become necessary today. This means that an understanding of sin and redemption comes not from an alienating Surmoi but arises from within. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, rather than continually repeating a doctrine which no longer makes sense to anyone, he made it possible to gain insight into the interior mechanism of this inability to accomplish the good.

It is important to realize that this insight, arising from an awareness of the movements of anxiety and despair in the soul, is not to be understood in the sense that Socrates, or Buddha, or even the traditional Christian approach, for that matter, sees knowledge. The problem is much deeper than ignorance which teaching, or force if necessary, can help. In Kierkegaard this insight is essentially self-knowledge about how anxiety leading to despair is a kind of tragedy in which we all participate. This is the human condition and no amount of teaching or exhortation can fundamentally change it and it is important to know this. Perhaps a more detailed examination of Kierkegaard's understanding of anxiety and despair will make this point clearer.

In a world where meaning cannot be simply read from existence, Kierkegaard's ideas about anxiety and despair at the heart of the problem of good and evil are important, for they explain how meaning is lost and how it can be re-discovered. Existentialism interprets the Genesis myth, not as the story of human pride's haughty disobedience against God, but rather, as a tragedy in a world which has lost sight of God and therefore seeks desperately, through an effort to achieve perfection, to support and give meaning to their own existence. Anxiety here has nothing to do with the agitated emotions we sometimes feel, but rather with the sense we all have, sometimes more, sometimes less pronounced, of the fragility and contingency of our own lives.

It speaks of the difficulty for humanity, without God, to admit its radical non-necessity, its superfluous and metaphysically insignificant character, without someone situated above who can bestow an intrinsic and unalienable dignity and worth on them. It describes a certain kind of lostness arising from an ontological insecurity when there is nothing or no one that can give a metaphysical value or dignity to one's being. Humanity is thus pushed by this ontological insecurity to depend entirely upon itself and to see itself as the foundation of its own being.

This attempt to found one's meaning on oneself, however, is destined for tragedy. From fear of being nothing one is driven by anxiety to be more than one actually is, in fact to be God. This hubris arising from anxiety, however, simply leads to despair, which Kierkegaard calls the *sickness unto death*. This is because we are not perfect and we are not God and we know it. Nevertheless, the great temptation is to try to overcome this ontological insecurity by anchoring ourselves in some created thing rather than in God. It is the created thing that then becomes god to us, whether it is a career, marriage, health, money, and a false image of oneself as perfect begins to develop. Such an approach can only end in despair because it is a false relation to oneself. It is an attempt to found one's meaning on oneself and this is impossible.

The despair becomes evident when the false created absolute is lost. But, Kierkegaard points out that the loss would only make evident the despair that was already within. Despair begins from within, as a false relation to self, rather than from without. What Kierkegaard points out is that the aim of life is being, that is living from one's center, and not having, or living from the exterior by means of some false absolute, for this is always a false relation to

self. This false relation to self always means striving, competition and uncertainty as one seeks security in false images of self. The lack of equilibrium which characterizes people as they seek to ground their lives on something solid but find only shifting sand is the picture of humanity who wants to do the good but is prevented from doing it by anxiety.

It is thus anxiety which prevents humanity from truly living an authentic life and pushes to dis-equilibrium in clinging to false securities. For Kierkegaard the only way out of his situation is to recognize that humanity is a spiritual being and therefore characterized by freedom. This freedom, however, is not ultimate, since humanity is not God. Humanity is a being which is constituted of spirit but related to finitude, and humanity's liberty therefore, consists in finding its just place between the infinite and finite. Discovering one's true self, one's just measure, is the discovery of this just place between extremes. From this first pair of opposites arises the second, necessity and possibility, which humanity must operate a synthesis between, so that they do not sacrifice liberty to necessity, nor in possibility. Humanity's liberty is found in the synthesis of the two opposing pairs of opposites. It is in a successful unification of himself with these opposites that one is able to adjust to one's proper reality and realize oneself and live an authentic life from the center of one's being. The force within that can impede this synthesis is anxiety and the danger accompanying liberty is the temptation to flee it in becoming part of the mass, or in denying one's autonomy to conform to the conceptions of the collectivity. In fleeing one pole one thinks that one needn't fear in attaching to the other pole. But, the forms of resolving the tension of existence by fleeing to one pole or the other leads only to a false relation to self, since they are false solutions to existential

anxiety and therefore open to a form of despair which destroys the authentic life.

A short description of each of these poles might clarify Kierkegaard's idea. There is, first of all, the despair of necessity which he calls a *lack of possibility* in which the spirit of humanity feels desperate and strangled. Here one finds oneself eternally caught in a circle of obligation, without any space to spread or grow. Here one flees into constraint, into the alibi of the necessary. It is not really life which constrains one here, though, so much as one's choice to flee to the pole of necessity. The second is what Kierkegaard calls the *despair of the possible*. Here the flight is in the opposite direction as one tries to keep all one's options open and never make a clear commitment. The third form he calls *despair of the eternal* and describes the person who never ceases to flee finitude and its limitations. This personality formation is characterized by a latent anxiety which prevents one from expressing one's own desires. One is, rather, driven to be in perpetual motion at the service of others. The final form is one in which one flees an existence marked by finitude, not into the other, but away from the other and into a cold, distant, flat attitude towards life.

Each of these false images of self has great problems which develop from it, which I won't develop here. It should be mentioned, though, finally with Kierkegaard, that it is because humanity is a spiritual being and therefore capable of choice that the way opens for humanity to escape the abyss of despair. Anxiety pushes us to decision and our inherent liberty allows to choose. The choice is whether we will be chased into false solutions by

anxiety or into the belief that there is a power which sustains and bestows value and significance on our being so that we are not forced to flee into false securities in order to assuage ontological insecurities. And so the choice for faith, an authentic relation with God, is the only way of having a truly authentic relation with oneself, the only way to cure the ontological sickness. It hinges on the recognition that there is someone or something which can supply, independently of our striving or achievements, a value and a dignity on our being.

The recognition of this ontological acceptance and dignity exists, not in the realm of objective, rational proofs, but rather is a subjective experience, which carries its own power of conviction. It is a kind of subjective knowing which corresponds to religion and differs from objective, scientific knowledge in the same way that a person would know his or her spouse in a different way than would her or his doctor. Anxiety comes with existence because we are free beings. The question for Kierkegaard, therefore, comes down to the choice of whether we believe that life, or God, is favorable to us and values our existence, thus allowing us the confidence to find the just measure between the opposites in life, and in doing this, to find our true selves, or whether, being driven by the anxiety of our insignificance, that we may be just dust, we are going to be pushed to a dis-equilibrium and seek to anchor our lives in some false image. Faith is to realize that we have a foundation and therefore don't have to make ourselves our own foundation, which is an impossible task.

As I said earlier, Kierkegaard, in diagnosing the doctrine of original sin as a tragedy arising from anxiety, is a precursor to modern existentialism and

psychoanalysis. The point at which Drewermann gives a further elan to the immanentist movement, and especially to Tillich's work, which consists in a re-statement of the Christian message in existentialist terms, is by developing an anthropology which goes beyond a simple analysis of anxiety by putting it in relation with psychoanalysis.

It is just at this point that we can see the possibility of conjugating theology and psychoanalysis. For Kierkegaard says that despair is a sin against God. The problem is the disbelief in relation to the belief that is possible. Here we will have to remember also the mechanisms that Kierkegaard described regarding the working out of this idea of sin in existence. This description that Kierkegaard gives of sin, though, is similar to what psychoanalysis has discovered in the etiology of neuroses. The four types of false relation to oneself is also very similar to the Freudian theory of neuroses in which they are called the obsessional neurosis, the neurosis of hysteria, the depressive neurosis and the schizoid neurosis.

When put together with this existentialist theory, psychoanalysis can further the understanding that existentialism has opened up by bringing a valuable, concrete empirical knowledge of this abyss which opens up when anxiety pushes people to depend entirely upon themselves and to see themselves as the foundation of their own being. For, psychoanalysis has also recognized that it is this kind of exaggeration and dis-equilibrium which leads to tragedy. This, in fact, is exactly what the Freudian theory of neurosis tries to describe. We might thus say that psychoanalysis provides us with a deeper understanding of the real human condition by providing us with this phenomenology of sin. Furthermore, psychoanalysis can also be helpful in

describing the means of grace, as well, since it has discovered the importance of confidence in healing. In the psychoanalytic relationship this confidence is not something that is earned but freely given and therefore might allow us a new way of explaining how salvation and grace act within the human person.

In its diagnosis, psychoanalysis has also recognized and given an explanation of the dis-equilibrium to which humanity is pushed by anxiety. Freud knew, as well as the author of Genesis, that it is anxiety, fear at having lost one's security and one's love, that drives a person to swell up and that is behind pride. He realized early that it was anxiety that pushed men and women to lose all equilibrium and seek to be more than they really were. By fear of being nothing was born the desire to be God. In psychoanalytic language, this is understood as anxiety which is the center producing the fear of a loss of the object, followed by the sentiment of inferiority and then a desperate search for compensation. This is the core of the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis which can help us understand the problem of good and evil and the best way to deal with it today.

In order to conjugate theology and psychoanalysis, then, and present an alternative contemporary vision of reality, Drewermann draws upon the existentialist re-definition of sin as the *sickness unto death* which he believes has been deepened by psychoanalytic discoveries, and which consists in despairing of God, and puts it in relation to the most profound definition of St. Thomas that sin consists in turning away from the Creator and towards the

created.⁴¹ While it is true that the tradition has usually understood Thomas' definition of sin in purely moral and forensic terms, Drewermann sees that this is a reductive approach, which evacuates the idea of a personal relation with God involved in faith. The loss of this relation results in being closed up in the living death of despair. As I have already mentioned, this is very similar to the etiology of neuroses which psychoanalysis has discovered. This anthropological knowledge can be helpful to Christianity.

Where theology can help psychoanalysis, however, is in demonstrating that this sense of insecurity which pushes people towards neuroses is not simply something that can be completely healed, but that it is rather a part of existence, it is ontological and an essential part of humanity. Our false relation to self can be deeply healed only by the choice, which is always open, of an ontological security.

⁴¹ibid., p. 93.

3. THE RETURN TO SYMBOL AND MYTH PROVIDES A PHENOMENOLOGY OF REDEMPTION

In the previous section I have attempted to show how Drewermann tries to give new life to what has now become an antiquated view of sin, by interpreting it according to the existentialist and psychoanalytic notion that evil finds its source in an anxiety which refuses to accept confidence at the root of life. In a similar way, he calls on the new perspectives opened by psychoanalysis and other modern disciplines on the structure of the imaginary, sentiments and symbolism to modernize and communicate the message of redemption. For the abyss of fear is overcome through the confidence generated as the great symbolic productions found in the deep recesses of each person are activated.⁴²

This return to myth and symbol is necessary for a number of reasons. The main reason is that while science has in some cases reduced, and in others abolished, the possibility of believing in our founding myths literally as historical fact, the need for the life-supporting nature of myth does remain.

⁴²*La parole qui guérit, loc. cit., p.310.*

Anthropologists have studied the destructive effects of Western civilization on aboriginal communities which tragically disintegrate when the old taboos are discredited. A very similar thing is now happening to our modern society. The religious view of the origins and history of humankind, as well as its view of the cosmos, has completely gone to pieces today along with the other foundational myths of Western society. They are no longer believable as literal fact. The loss of these meaning-giving myths brings uncertainty, and with uncertainty, anxiety and disequilibrium. There is eventually nothing to hold onto: no moral law, nothing firm, no longer any pre-existent meaning. The moral order hangs on our myths, and when science began to question their historical factuality, this order began to crumble and the anxiety of meaninglessness resulted. Since, on one hand, it has always been on myth that the moral orders of societies have been founded and, on the other hand, the impact of science on these ancient myths has ended in disequilibrium, it has become necessary to seek a *scientific* understanding of the life-supporting nature of myth. Drewermann does this by appealing to modern studies in comparative mythology, symbolism and especially psychoanalysis. It is in examining the source and structure of myth that we will find, as Joseph Campbell once called it, *the facts of the mind* which will establish scientifically the myths whose function is to orient and give meaning to human life.⁴³

Drewermann is convinced that this symbolic discourse is the way forward for the Christian message in today's world. Following a review of the theological quest for the historical Jesus which ended, he believes, with the

⁴³Cf. Joseph Campbell, *Myths To Live By*, New York, Bantam Books, 4th reprint 1978.

result that the Christian faith cannot be founded historically, he says that the only way is to redefine the relation between symbol and reality. This would allow us to read religious symbols analogously to the way psychoanalysis works with the psychology of dreams:

A mon avis, c'est la seule voie qui permette de continuer à développer positivement et de rendre religieusement fécond le fait du discours symbolique dans la Bible, tout en respectant les acquis majeurs (avec tout ce qu'ils comportent d'historiquement négatif) de la critique historique, telle qu'elle s'est développée dans le cadre de l'histoire des formes et de l'histoire de la rédaction. Ce que je souhaite, ce n'est pas un retour en deçà de Bultmann, mais la poursuite et *l'élargissement de l'herméneutique existentielle*, de façon que, s'appuyant sur la méthodologie de la psychanalyse, elle puisse ouvrir à l'intelligence de la langue symbolique concrète de la Bible. En d'autres termes, je voudrais introduire une nouvelle synthèse de la foi et de la pensée, de l'intelligence et de la sensibilité, de la vie et de l'interprétation, de la science et de la mystique.⁴⁴

Drewermann appeals to the understanding of myth and symbol represented by Carl Jung, who saw that in a world governed by outward fact and objectivity, we were in danger of losing touch with our inward forces and that myths, correctly read, are the means to bring us back in touch with ourselves. It is the wisdom of the species shown to us in images which is able to nourish a society from the soundest, richest strata of the human spirit. Drewermann sees symbolism as expressed in legends, popular tales, the old religious myths and the dreams of humanity. He uses Jungian theory to show the fundamental unity and profound meaning of these symbolic productions which speak of death and life, the abyss and resurrection, the division among creatures and the re-discovered unity.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Cf. *La parole qui guérit*, loc. cit., p. 21f.

⁴⁵ibid., p. 10.

Thus the return to myth and symbol is able to re-orient an increasingly anxious and dis-oriented Western world and provide a *structure of inner fact* that is able to sustain and help restore the lost sense of meaning. Myth and symbol can provide this inner structure to support meaning because, according to Drewermann, it fills the three essential functions of 1) connecting the conscious to the unconscious, 2) re-connecting men and women to their history, the traditions of their race and culture and 3) permitting the re-integration of humanity into the nature which surrounds them. In other words, it allows people to find their true place and re-orient themselves in a world that would have become meaningful.⁴⁶

These three functions of myth work out into ways that can make it particularly important for the Christian message of salvation to be communicated in the modern world in symbolic and mythical terms, according to Drewermann.

A return to myth, for instance, because it creates a link between the conscious and the unconscious allows a certain self-knowledge that would otherwise not be available. Keeping the door *slightly ajar* between the conscious and the unconscious is the way this is done. The access to the images and myths of the unconscious permits an awareness and a confrontation with the unknown forces of the psyche, which would otherwise go unrecognized, as they were, for instance, during the Third Reich.⁴⁷ The return to myth is necessary because the exterior view of life taken in the West is reductionist and makes us psychically ill. Drewermann says that

⁴⁶ibid., p. 177.

⁴⁷ibid., p. 176.

psychoanalyst's waiting rooms today are full of women who live with men whose entire life is lived on an exterior and superficial level. This makes both them and those around them sick.

Ils subissent les conséquences de cette parodie du réel qu'implique notre idée moderne de la réalité. On ne leur a jamais appris ni à percevoir ni à exprimer leurs sentiments, à s'observer eux-mêmes profondément, à se laisser pénétrer de réalités humaines. On ne leur a enseigné qu'une chose: ce qui existe *réellement*, ce qui agit effectivement, ce sont les ingrédients physiques, chimiques. Celui qui admet cette vision des choses finit un jour ou l'autre par passer à côté de sa propre vie, et il sombre alors dans la maladie psychique.⁴⁸

Such people are out of touch with the deepest level of their beings and it is only through symbols that they will come to understand their inner realities. For, it is only at that level that they will find reflected their character, their state of health, an understanding of their reactions to the events of the day.

The return to symbolism also answers to the reductionism in Western society which has reduced the Christian message to a kind of rationalism that has become increasingly difficult to understand. The return to myth and symbol recognizes the fullness of humanity by recognizing that truth also passes by way of the imagination. This re-constitution of the Christian message should make its communication easier and more powerful in the modern world.

Drewermann believes that there is something of eternity in each of us and we contact this eternity through the images and symbols that arise from

⁴⁸ibid., p. 61f.

within to help us face the despair and hopelessness of the abyss. If we listen to them they can help us recover our equilibrium and be healed. God speaks to us from the interior and if we are attentive to these images of eternity it can even liberate the Bible to be once again a living book. That is, symbols can provide an immediacy to Scripture so that we can read our own stories in the stories found there and not simply understand a historical situation from our reading. Through a symbolic reading, we could but actually understand our own situation. Drewermann says that even the historico-critical method has shown that the Bible is written this way and that is the way it should be read. The connecting link is that these biblical images have similar meaning and effect on twentieth century men and women as they did on those of the first century. The other main reason Drewermann turns to symbol and myth is because it is through concrete symbols and not rational discourse that healing always comes in psychoanalysis. In our time of psychic malady, it is the best response to psychic suffering.

With all of this, though, we are left wondering about the link between myth and history. Christianity and Judaism see themselves in distinction from the mythic religions which make no historic claims for their symbols and myth. It is here, I believe, that Drewermann parts company with Jung. Drewermann finds that Jung is still in the Gnostic cycle and speaks of religious realities simply as an empiricist. It is the center and source of psychic energy that he calls God.⁴⁹ Drewermann, on the other hand, recognizes that myth and symbol are not in themselves redemptive. Redemption comes only *in a place of confidence related to a word, to a person*

⁴⁹ibid., p. 322.

to history. Jesus is this unique person who can bring confidence and paradoxically provide a key to the archetypes:

... ceci à l'encontre de toutes les formes de gnose ou de syncrétisme. Je le (Jésus) considère comme la condition nécessaire pour résoudre l'ambivalence des archétypes et des symboles en leur permettant de déboucher sur une véritable histoire de confiance. Et c'est bien la fin de tous les syncrétismes. Pour parler par paradoxe c'est le caractère exclusif du Christ qui rend possible le syncrétisme, qui permet le symbolisme.⁵⁰

It seems fairly clear that Drewermann does not take Jesus as a kind of empty vessel into which he can pour all of his existential understanding of the world. He sees Jesus as an actual historical person who brings to the world an ontological salvation, not simply a psychological one, and whose passion and resurrection changed the world objectively.⁵¹ This, of course, differs from those such as Jung and Campbell who would see the history of Jesus as a completely a-historical myth, as well. So, since Drewermann accepts much of the scientific criticism of religion and even, as we saw, that the quest for the historical Jesus cannot find the life of Jesus in history, I am not quite sure how he can here re-introduce Jesus as an historical figure who is able to resolve the ambiguities of archetypes. Perhaps, it is enough to have been touched by the scriptural descriptions of him. But this seems to be a lacuna in his system.

⁵⁰ibid., p. 314.

⁵¹ibid., pp. 188-191.

III
Evaluation

1. THE KERYGMATIC CRITICISM AND THE CRITERION FOR EVALUATION

Tillich himself provides us with the central criterion for evaluating his work, and by implication, the work of any theologian who attempts to be relevant to culture, when he says that in order to be adequate, theology must be both *apologetic* and *kerygmatic*. The apologetic side of the Christian message assumes that there is common ground between the Christian message and culture and attempts to communicate in a relevant way on that basis. This, as we have seen, is the main thrust of the first two sections of this paper. The kerygmatic side, however, has a claim which must be satisfied. The Christian message "loses itself if it is not based on the kerygma as the substance and criterion of each of its statements."⁵² The perennial question over the past two centuries, which have been determined by the apologetic problem, has been: "Can the Christian message be adapted to the modern mind without losing its essential and unique character?"⁵³ This is the habitual question posed to the apologetic theology of Tillich and Drewermann by those who continue to favor either a rationalistic or super naturalistic objectivism as the

⁵²Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

⁵³*ibid.*, p. 7.

best means of communicating the Christian message. Many assume that Tillich and Drewermann, and almost any theology that starts from a *metaphysic of the subject* finish by accommodating to culture and losing the "essential and unique" character of the Christian message. I believe, personally, as do Tillich and Drewermann, that this is a criterion which must be satisfied. There is an essential and unique character to the Christian message and if it is lost, no matter how relevant to culture it was, I would think that it had nothing particularly important or new to bring to culture, and would therefore abandon it. Let us, then, look at some of the most common charges laid against their theology in order to see whether these criticisms are compelling.

Kerygmatic theologians often suspect this kind of experiential theology, which gains knowledge of God through immediacy and inwardness from the depths of one's experience, of a kind of subjectivism and relativism which has abandoned the objective and essentially communal nature of the Christian message and indeed, all concern for truth, in its search for cultural relevance. The result, they believe, is that in becoming detached from objective truth, the objective historical nature of the gospels, the objective kerygma of the early Church and the objective dogmatic pronouncements of the later councils, modern Christians have become "in thrall to theological ideas, moral values, and social practices emanating from contemporary post-Christian culture rather than from its own revelation-based doctrines and traditions" ⁵⁴ In short, they have been co-opted by the culture and no longer

⁵⁴Cf. Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson, editors, *Either/Or: The Gospel or Neopaganism*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmanns1995, p. 18. Jean-Claude Petit in an article published in *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, 50, 2 (Juin 1994), pp. 305-316, has gathered examples of

faithfully reflect the traditional Christian message. This is seen as a form of self-salvation which has no real need of the historical Jesus, the dogmatic tradition, or the Church which transmits it. Even the very idea of conceptual, objective truth has been dissolved in the acids of this subjectivism, they say.

Carl Braaten, a former student of Tillich and editor of his *History of Christian Thought*, seems to indiscriminately describe all experiential theology as a modern variation of the ancient Gnostic heresy which posited a divine spark or seed as innate in the individual human soul and viewed salvation as turning inward to liberate this divine essence from all that prevents its true expression. He approvingly quotes Ernst Troeltsch who, in his *The social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, called this inward subjectivism "The secret religion of the educated classes."⁵⁵ That someone of the perceptivity of Troeltsch would arrive at this analysis indicates that there may be some substance to this criticism. Tillich recognized himself, of course, that there was always this danger in the apologetic approach, but thought that in order to be understandable and existentially powerful it is a risk that must be taken. A risk is not an inevitability, however, and in all fairness, every theology should be judged upon its own merits and not dismissed under the general category of *experiential theology*. For instance, Tillich and Drewermann, although they are certainly taking risks, have important reasons for taking them, and do not fall into *another gospel*. Even though I cannot hope to be exhaustive here, I will give the broad lines of the issues involved in the general kerygmatic criticisms of experiential theology and try

similar criticisms made from the Roman Catholic side: Jean-Claude Petit, *La portée théologique d'un principe herméneutique*, pp. 307ff.

⁵⁵Either / Or, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

to show that Tillich and Drewermann basically remain true to the traditional Christian message.

This appeal to experience in theology is usually seen by the kerygmatic theologians under the following categories: 1) as a denunciation of the very idea of conceptual truth 2) as drawing the individual to try to find in the human soul that which can be had only from God and 3) as a flight from the Church and all that implies.

A) Rejection of the Very Idea of Conceptual Truth

It is sometimes said that experiential theologians like Tillich and Drewermann destroy the framework of conceptual reason and that truth, in any form, doesn't really matter to them, leaving the door wide open to a subjectivist relativism, as Petit shows is the fear of some in the Church.⁵⁶ I don't believe that either Tillich or Drewermann deny the validity of conceptual reason; they rather attempt to balance and supplement it and respond to the mental and existential climate of our time by appealing to subjective truth.

It is clear that traditional theology has been influenced by a Cartesian epistemological ideal, which is today increasingly seen as itself culturally conditioned and inadequate to reality. In its attempt to completely expunge the subjective in its search for rational certainty, the Cartesian method has been shown to be, first of all, impossible, secondly, reductionist in its view of reality, especially the reality of human beings, and thirdly, destructive to both

⁵⁶Cf. *La portée théologique, loc. cit.*, p. 308.

the individual and society. It is not a question of rejection so much as an attempt to legitimize the historically despised subjective knowledge and attempt to find a healthy balance between the two forms of knowledge.

Through this *restorative* side of their task they hope to re-establish a balance between the head and the heart, thereby not rejecting rationality but re-integrating the deeper conception of rationality which existed before the Enlightenment. I believe the criticisms presented by existentialism, psychoanalysis and other modern disciplines justify this re-balancing.

Perhaps also important is the recognition that conceptual reason actually *derives* from experience rather than preceding it. Tillich and Drewermann are not denying the importance of dogma and theory but rather underlining their derivative and secondary nature. This is especially important today when doubt has made it impossible for many to believe. The experience of being redeemed, however, cannot be doubted. At one point when Tillich was being accused of presenting an abstract and non-personal theology that bears no similarity to the gospel, he said that this was only the starting point and that one would have to work from there back to the historical and kerygmatic witness in the Bible and the dogmatic statements of the Church to enlarge the picture today.

If we assume the legitimacy of subjective forms of knowledge, and I see no good reason to continue the resistance that theology has exerted against it, it seems reasonable to begin where the culture begins. A theology which takes seriously the experience of people will want to start from that experience in order to respond to the intellectual and existential climate of the

times. Today this means recognizing that the intellectual climate of modernity prevents large numbers of our contemporaries from even understanding a conceptual or dogmatic formulation of the Christian message. It recognizes that conceptual and dogmatic language such as *Son of God* is largely meaningless and incomprehensible to the modern mind. A better approach in the intellectual climate of modernity is to attempt to show Jesus' transcendence in history. It is not necessarily a rejection of the dogma as it is, rather, a realization that today we must approach it from the subjective side. The intellectual climate of today also recognizes, thanks to the discovery of the unconscious by psychoanalysis, that humanity is not actually as rational as was once thought, and therefore something other than intellect and ethics is needed. Related to this discovery is the realization that it is not simply conceptual knowledge or certainty that is needed in the religious sphere but, rather, existential certainty. The modern disciplines have recognized that this kind of certainty arises largely through personal, subjective knowledge, knowledge that makes use of sentiment and imagination and speaks in the language of myth and symbol. It is often thought that the return to myth and symbol is a retreat to irrationalism, but it has been shown that the interpretation of myth and symbol is not nearly so arbitrary as is often thought. These forms of knowledge have their own logic which must be received and obeyed.

This intellectual situation of modernity is, in a way, also part of the existential situation of modernity. But, there are yet deeper existential reasons for emphasizing the subjective aspect of knowledge. Drewermann points out, of course, that the dominance of rationalism in Western society has created an imbalance which is the greatest source of psychic illness in our society. The

antidote to that illness, the anxiety of meaninglessness, is to nurture and encourage the subjective side which has been despised and rejected. This is the way to find equilibrium and balance once again. Objective rules and dogma may have their place but it isn't the first thing that someone who is completely dis-oriented needs to hear. For instance, as Drewermann says, rather than drawing a hard line on sexuality, the Church would be better in this situation to speak of the importance and characteristics of personal love and speak about how to cultivate the virtues of personal friendship. That is not to deny sexual mores but rather to speak about them in a concrete, historical situation rather than conceptually and dogmatically.⁵⁷

Certainly, any theology which incorporates experience as a necessary element of revelation will demonstrate a certain degree of relativity. I don't believe that a recognition of the relative nature of truth, however, throws us into a morass of subjectivity where each person becomes his or her own judge and pope. It simply recognizes a certain diversity of time and place which must be taken into account to reach the fullness of truth. Dogmatic or conceptual statements certainly reflect the experience of those who have gone before us and hopefully they represent a consensus that has been reached over a period of time rather than the fiat of a small group. But, they are also human pronouncements, as well as possibly divine, and are therefore open to criticism. We need to say that the criticism arising from the recognition that truth is related to our historical situation is good.

⁵⁷*La parole qui guérit, loc. cit., p. 295.*

B) *Self-salvation*

The essence of the kind of subjectivism which is usually criticized involves a complete self-relatedness which amounts, in effect, to a self-salvation. As Braaten says, this theology of experience seeks from the human soul only what God can give.⁵⁸ I have no doubt that modern forms of Gnostic self-salvation exist in the Church today. But, I don't believe this criticism accurately describes the theology of either Tillich or Drewermann. For Tillich, this seems most clear to me in his *Courage To Be* where he points out the problem facing the existentialists for whom he wrote. He claimed that their self-relatedness was too great a burden for a human being to carry and would result in either turning to some collectivism as a secure refuge from uncertainty or being crushed under the unbearable weight and responsibility. Only God, he said, contained in Himself the necessary *asciety* or, power to be His own ground.⁵⁹

Similarly, Drewermann refutes the charge of Gnosticism. And it is not that he doesn't understand what Gnosticism is. At one point he notes, for instance, that Jung had not moved beyond Gnosticism to an ontologically grounded faith. God, for Jung, he says, is simply a symbol used to describe the source of psychic activity within the human being. There is, however, an "other" for Drewermann. It is not a matter of *seeking from the human soul only what God can give*. This comes out most clearly when he says that mythology finds its key in the myth which became history. It is, in fact, the myth or archetype become history in Jesus that permits the archetypes to

⁵⁸Cf. *Either/Or*, *loc. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁹*The Courage To Be*, *loc. cit.*, p. 152ff.

function in a meaningful way. This is also clear in the section in which he says that the essential element of healing is not symbol or archetype but, rather, a relationship of confidence. Here he says clearly that the healing of existential anxiety through the relationship with Jesus, who himself conquered anxiety and can therefore offer us the same possibility, is not simply a psychological, but an ontological reality.⁶⁰

The charge of Gnosticism is usually made against Drewermann and Tillich, I believe, because it is thought that the importance they give to human experience draws them to allow the culture to set the agenda for the Church and, especially in the case of Drewermann, allow the gospel to become captive to psychology. Braaten, for instance, charges that theologies of experience allow culture to ask the questions to which theology must respond. This kind of thing certainly is happening today. What comes to mind particularly are the various Church Growth movements which attempt to discover the preferences of groups, like for instance, the Baby Boomers, and to look for techniques which will draw them. Tillich and Drewermann's analysis is much deeper than this, however, and allows the theologian, in consultation with all aspects of culture, to choose the question with which to respond. It is not every preference to which they respond, trying to create a kind of *religion à la carte* which will give people what they think they need and want in order to fill up empty Churches but, rather, a compassionate attempt to meet the deepest cry of the heart with the gospel.

⁶⁰*La parole qui guérit, loc. cit., p. 322ff.*

Critics think that Drewermann and Tillich have become enthralled and captive to psychological ideas and confuse psychological terminology with the Christian message. They think, for example, that they confuse the psychological idea of self-fulfillment "épanouissement" with salvation. Thus, in assuming the norms of mental health of a certain society, they would see people as having reached a kind of perfection, when the gospel really speaks of salvation, not as something achieved but as a continual quest. They are also accused of undermining the moral seriousness of Christian categories such as sin, for instance, by attributing it entirely to unconscious motives over which we have no control, or to the influence of our environment.

These latter criticisms, of course, apply more to Drewermann. It is true that the idea of self-fulfillment is an extremely important concept to him. But, again we must look at it in context. The context today is one in which the word *salvation* is incomprehensible to many people. In using the term of self-fulfillment, Drewermann is simply trying to *show* modern men and women what salvation might look like in this world. This idea that *man fully alive is the glory of God* is certainly not a new idea to the Christian message, even if it is clothed now in psychological terms. It is difficult to find a place in his writing where Drewermann refutes the idea that the self-realized person has arrived, and presumably by the treasures within, and therefore has no more need of God and grace. But, I don't get the sense that this is his position. Perhaps, one area where he speaks, generally, about the absurdity of thinking one has arrived can be found in his sermons where he quotes the familiar Buddhist adage, *If you see the Buddha on the road kill him.*

There may be a little more truth in the criticisms of Drewermann's understanding of sin. I should say right away, however, that Drewermann believes that in giving us a kind of phenomenology of sin, psychoanalysis helps us to deepen our understanding. He may be a little imbalanced in demonstrating the involuntary nature of unconscious motivations and the importance of tragic and conditioning factors. This, however, must be seen against the background of the Church's voluntaristic and intellectualist approach, which tends to deny these aspects. I don't believe Drewermann falls into this error, although he has to stress one side more than the other, however, because of the context.

C) The Rejection of the Church

The charge here is that this move toward experience in theology concentrates on the individual's experience and forgets that Christianity is essentially communal and not individualistic. The result is seen as a modernistic parody of Christian spirituality which sees no need for obedience to authority, and therefore rejects the dogma of the Church councils and the teaching authority of the Church and has no ethic of self-denial, discipline or sacrifice. Religion, here, would be purely and simply the realization of the individual self "épanouissement".⁶¹

This raises a number of issues that are delicate in that they are more a matter of emphasis than a strict either/or. One such issue is the question of dogma which raises the question of the teaching authority of the Church and the individual Christian's relation to that authority. If each person functions

⁶¹Cf. *ibid.*, p. 15.

as a private authority, as his or her own pope, as it were, the fear is that there would be complete disunity and the Church would be unable to go forward in a united way and with a common purpose and objective. The reality today is that dogmatic statements from authority carry little weight. One could say, of course, that dogmatic statements based on authority in science are still valid currency. But, whether it is true or not, people have the idea that there is still a great difference between the two. Scientific dogma are thought to have been proven empirically while theological dogma appear to be simply armchair speculation. Worse, they are seen today as an ideological construction which proved useful for a certain group to gain and hold power. In an era of doubt it is impossible to accept dogmatic statements from another era without criticism. This is probably a positive side of the current situation.

Just as they have no desire to accept dogmatic statements uncritically, neither do Tillich and Drewermann want to simply reject them outright. In the modern world, and there will be no going back, the individual must him or herself test the dogma. There is no longer any question of obediently accepting them on authority. These theologians call, therefore, for a relationship between the individual and the teaching authority of the Church. This means that, for instance, regarding the dogma of sin and redemption it is important to have an existential, subjective awareness of sin and redemption. This existential awareness of actually being redeemed may go a long way to correcting the intellectualist and ethical distortions and reductionism which have plagued the communication of the Christian message since the Enlightenment.

It is altogether likely, in fact, that the traditional understanding of the teaching authority of the Church has itself fallen under the influence of Enlightenment ideals of rational and moral certainty and can profit by the balance that subjective knowledge can bring.

As long ago as, at least, the First Vatican council, the importance of this relationship between the individual and the teaching authority of the Church and the danger that could arise if it was not recognized was seen clearly by Cardinal John Henry Newman. Newman was extremely conservative and even suggested that the authority of the Church was so important that anyone who wanted to challenge it should willingly be prepared to suffer. This, so that no one would undertake this task lightly. Despite this conservatism, however, he recognized that truth needed to be debated and slowly discerned and not suddenly pronounced by an infallible authority.

The wisdom of the Church has provided many courts for theological questions, one higher than another, and with an appeal from the lower to the higher. I suppose, in the middle ages . . . a question was debated in a University; then in one University against another; or by one order of friars against another; then perhaps it came before a theological faculty; then it went before the metropolitan; and by various stages and after many examinations and judgments, it came before the Holy See. But now . . . all courts are superseded. . . .⁶²

Newman was speaking about the special situation existing in England at that time, but his criticisms apply generally to the question of the relation between the individual or the theologian and the teaching authority. If the Church failed to carry out this consultative approach and instead moved

⁶² A quote from *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Charles Stephen Dessain et al., vol. xx (London, 1960-72) pp. 390ff, in Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography*, Oxford University Press. Oxford. 1988, p. 519.

forward by fiat, Newman feared, it would turn the faithful into silent skeptics of dogma, since they had seen dogma they could not accept promulgated as truth. The only real authority the Church has is the goodwill of the faithful and if that is alienated there is no expedient available to return it.

In summary we can say that there is a strong tendency for those who promote a kerygmatic theology to suspect that the apologetic attempt to find common ground with culture means the surrender of the immovable truth and that theology loses its own ground when it tries to enter the cultural situation. Theologians such as Tillich and Drewermann recognize the danger of cultural accommodation and for that reason recognize the importance and the claims of the kerygma.⁶³ The conservative tendency inherent in this theology can mean, however, that the Christian message will be "thrown like a stone" in the garden of humanity's existence, as Tillich phrased his essential criticism of Karl Barth's theology.⁶⁴ Consequently, the Christian message will make no connection with the culture and, as Drewermann says of this type of theologian: << Vous avez toutes sortes de réponses à des questions qui ne sont pas les nôtres.>>⁶⁵ In remaining distant from the cultural situation it would, itself, fail as an adequate theology. Aside from this, as Tillich points out, it is impossible for any theology not to be in some way involved in the cultural situation:

Even kerygmatic theology must use the conceptual tools of its period. It cannot simply repeat biblical passages. Even when it does, it cannot escape the conceptual situation of the different biblical writers. Since

⁶³Cf. *Systematic Theology*, I, *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁴*La philosophie de la religion de Paul Tillich*, *loc. cit.*, p. 111; Cf. *Systematic Theology*, I, *loc. cit.*, p. 7

⁶⁵Quoted in *La réception de l'oeuvre d'Eugen Drewermann*, *loc. cit.*, p. 103.

language is the basic and all-pervasive expression of every situation, theology cannot escape the problem of the "situation."⁶⁶

The difficulty, then, is that there is not, nor has there ever been, an abstract "Christian message". It is now, and always has been, anchored in a particular culture and consequently, to a certain degree, conditioned by that culture. The synthesis between faith and culture which theologians such as Tillich and Drewermann attempt is therefore essential. There are grave consequence for not taking the risk inherent in this synthesis:

Without them (the various attempts at synthesis in the history of Christianity) traditional Christianity would have become narrow and superstitious, and the general cultural movement would have proceeded without "the thorn in the flesh" which it needed, namely, an honest theology of cultural high standing.⁶⁷

It seems clear that theology must proceed with an attempt at synthesis, despite the inherent risks, or it will never prove itself relevant in each new era but remain tied to a formulation which comes from another time and place, with a different mental horizon. Certainly it must allow the kerygmatic side to act as both guide and critic. And we must realize that it is as erroneous to canonize experience as it is to canonize reason.⁶⁸ But, recognizing that all doctrinal formulations and even the Bible are culturally conditioned means that we cannot set up an abstract truth as the criterion. The way that tradition and scripture act as a guide and corrective is, rather, in *dialectic* with the current situation. This dialectical synthesis between the Christian message and the culture, I am convinced, carries the only possibility of making the

⁶⁶*Systematic Theology*, I, *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁷*ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁸Cf. Jean-Claude Petit, *Théologie et expérience. L'expérience comme lieu théologique*. (Coll. Héritage et projet, 26), Montréal, Fides, 1981, pp. 13-30.

Christian message intelligible and existentially powerful as well as well as guarding its essential and unique character. In the conclusion which follows I hope to outline at least briefly the importance of this paradigm shift from objective to subjective metaphysics for faith education.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this essay has been that a traditional rationalistic theology finds itself today increasingly drawn into a cul-de-sac and that the inevitable and indispensable way forward involves an anthropological turn towards a *metaphysics of the subject* in which transcendence is experienced in the midst of the world and within human experience. This is not only because the disappearance of religious presuppositions have issued in radical doubt but, also because all pretensions to a universal and unifying truth are viewed suspiciously as either impossible or an ideological mask hiding the quest for power. By taking this context seriously as the situation of our day and re-interpreting the concept of religion to correspond to these objections Paul Tillich and Eugen Drewermann have succeeded in showing how the Christian message can provide an answer to the quest for personal and social unity while remaining open to change with each cultural situation. Since my interest in this question began in the pastoral realm it seems only fitting that I should in concluding attempt to at least sketch an outline of what this turn to human experience might mean in the pastoral realm as well as the theological.

Paul Tillich has said that the Christian doctrinal formulations, especially the doctrine of justification by faith, are in need of re-formulation today because they are no longer understood, even by theologians and pastors.⁶⁹ Although it may seem incredible to say that after three or four years of theological training that it is possible that the meaning of a doctrine as central as justification by faith remains unintelligible but, I believe Tillich is right. This situation can be extremely debilitating for one responsible for faith education and I believe that one of the most basic acquisitions from the employment of this method is that the pastor or teacher begins to clearly understand what his or her message actually is.

I remember going to great difficulties in my first parish to demonstrate the meaning of the justification by faith from the book of Romans. While I drew upon all the authorities possible to convince the congregation of this truth and what it should mean for our lives, I could see that it had little real effect on them. My first reaction was to blame them for being uninterested. But, in the end I began to see the fault lying at my own door. Increasingly I began to see my communication of the Christian message as simply a series of empty words signifying nothing. I believe that whether it is consciously realized or not this is a very common reality in religious education. When one discovers, however, that this doctrine actually affects us today one really has a message to teach and preach. The realization of this positive content, which is relevant to the actual life that people live, can certainly undercut this sense of

⁶⁹Cf. *The Courage To Be*, *loc. cit.*, p. 3.

despair and discouragement which seems always sitting at the door of religious educators, waiting to devour.

Just the recognition that we live in a situation of radical doubt allows us to approach the task of Christian education differently. If we understand this sufficiently we will realize that this is not a situation in which people are personally culpable but one in which the atmosphere of our times is what produces this. The Christian educator will then be free to respond in an open way in a common search rather than the imputation of guilt. This changed attitude can make an enormous difference in attempting to communicate the Christian message.

The re-formulation of the concept of religion as an experience in the situation radical doubt also means that we are freed to communicate the Christian message in more contemporary and therefore understandable terminology. This is extremely important in an era when most people have no Christian background and don't understand or, worse, misunderstand Christian terminology, such as sin and salvation. Even though these terms are not used people can be helped to see that what has always been understood by the Church as sin and salvation can be concretely seen, if not called that, in humanity's brokenness and healing. The actual experiencing of these realities can be convincing when no doctrine about them is believable. But, this discovery of transcendence, the movements of sin and grace within the human situation, can also deepen and make comprehensible these realities for the Church. When modern psychoanalysis, for instance, explains more fully the mechanisms of sin as often having unconscious motivations, this knowledge can only deepen the Christian understanding of sin and make the

pastoral response, therefore, more adequate in terms of compassion rather than judgment.

The concretization of the idea of grace may, perhaps, help to give the Christian faith a high cultural standing, thereby being acceptable and comprehensible to people, than anything else. In the Post-modern world in which we live in there are indications that all aspects of society are searching in this area to find a way beyond the conundrums into which rationalism is perceived to have lead us and finds a new way towards significant truth.

This new approach also has possibilities for the realm of ecumenism, which should also be part of the pastoral mandate, if we take seriously the commandment to seek unity and avoid the scandal of division. There is an older, rationalistic approach in this field exemplified, perhaps, by someone like Cardinal John Henry Newman, who believed that truth resided in one particular confession and error in the other. The Protestant side has its own versions of this position. In our days ecumenism has more or less lost its steam and has become a kind of mutual toleration. Drewermann's suggestion that Protestantism and Catholicism participate in the generalized Cartesian split in Western society may here provide new wind. Just as it is necessary to re-integrate the emotional and intellectual life of the individual in order to achieve wholeness, these two confessions need to have a real exchange concerning their real essence. Protestantism being the religion of modernity, which means that faith must pass through the individual and cannot really be received by authority and the depth and breath of substance and sacramental image and symbol which the Roman Catholic Church contains.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this turn, though, is the affirmation of the human subject. The recognition of the value of the individual is the power that overcomes the sense of meaninglessness and insignificance so prevalent today. The inclusion of the human being into the hermeneutic means that the richness and fullness of the human person can once again come to the fore. The fragmented view of humanity, which sees only one faculty, either the intellect, the will or the emotions as the locus for knowing God is being replaced by a much more vibrant and complete conception. The recognition of subjective knowledge also recognizes the importance of intuitive and symbolic knowledge, which passes by the imagination and the heart, rather than the intellect, is very important because it re-establishes the importance of these faculties for knowing God. And this is how God has been and is primarily known. This movement should allow the blossoming of the arts and other symbolic representations and the recognition that this is also an expression of what it means to be human and to know God.

Finally, this recognition of the importance of the subject should have ramifications on the life of the church as well as the individual. For, when people become subjects of their own faith they will tend to take more responsibility for their faith and for church structures. All the possibilities cannot even be conceived at this early point but I believe we can be encouraged that this theological movement towards a synthesis with culture holds great possibilities to give the Christian message a high cultural standing in future generations, so that it can be then experienced as it always has been, a healing word.

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