A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE VIEWS OF KARL BARTH AND PAUL TILlich ON PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS.

by

James Kincade
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Part I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Karl Barth and Philosophy</td>
<td>I Karl Barth and Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The Basis for Ethics in Barth's Theology</td>
<td>II The Basis for Ethics in Barth's Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Ethics as the Commands of God</td>
<td>III Ethics as the Commands of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Criticism of Barth's Ethical Theory</td>
<td>IV Criticism of Barth's Ethical Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
<td>Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Paul Tillich and Philosophy</td>
<td>V Paul Tillich and Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI The Basis for Ethics in Tillich's Theology</td>
<td>VI The Basis for Ethics in Tillich's Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII The Virtue of Courage</td>
<td>VII The Virtue of Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII The Virtue of Agape</td>
<td>VIII The Virtue of Agape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III</td>
<td>Part III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX Philosophy and Theology</td>
<td>IX Philosophy and Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy</td>
<td>X Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI An Interpretation of Christian Ethics</td>
<td>XI An Interpretation of Christian Ethics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is an age of specialization. We have specialists to assist our entry into the world, and specialists to ease us into the next. We hesitate to read a book or go to the theatre today without the advice of some critic in our Sunday newspaper or esoteric journal. In order to be a specialist in one subject there is little time left for the reading required to enable us to converse with a specialist in another field of study. This is, perhaps, one general reason for the present malaise in what used to be called philosophical theology. The achievements of modern science have necessitated a reassessment of certain philosophical positions, and in this activity there has been a neglect, by the philosopher, of the developments in modern theology. And these latter developments in turn have compelled the theologian to remain within the confines of his own special subject.

Traditionally philosophy was the discipline which collated and collected, and attempted to synthesize the wisdom of others, hoping to achieve in the process a higher wisdom. However philosophy too has become esoteric in its turn. There are few theologians today who read the whole of the latest editions of 'Mind', and, what is worse, there are fewer philosophers who have kept in touch with the work of the modern theologian. Thus it has come about that philosophers
have tended to move closer to the scientists and further from the theologians, although there have been, in very recent years, some signs that the philosophical pendulum is swinging back again. It was to assist this latter movement, in some small measure, that this thesis was written; and if the criticism is made that in the process the pendulum is swung too far in the other direction, I may be permitted to refer to Aristotle:

".... we should force ourselves off in the contrary direction, because we shall find ourselves in the mean after we have removed ourselves far from the other side, exactly as men do in straightening bent timber." Ethics 1109b.

It soon became evident that in Karl Barth and Paul Tillich one had two theologians who were potent influences in their own spheres (including the geographical spheres of Europe and America), and who were, in addition, at opposite poles both in their theological conclusions and in their attitudes to philosophy. Christian theology has always lived in conversation with its environmental culture. At different times it had been either in close rapport with that culture, utilizing its terminology and its categories, or in direct opposition to it - ploughing its own furrow in the light of its own special revelation. The former attitude is evident in the theology of Paul Tillich, for he attempts a synthesis between philosophy and theology: the latter can
be found in the work of Karl Barth, whose attitude is a subtle diastasis in which he is so involved in his theology that he has no interest in philosophy.

Thus I found Tillich affirming that the periphery of the theological circle is extendable, and the centre is changeable: the theologian is not ".... bound to a circle the centre of which is the event of Jesus as the Christ". ('Systematic Theology' Vol. I, p. 45) and Barth contending,

".... there is a way from Christology to anthropology. There is no way from anthropology to Christology." (Kirchliche Dogmatik' I/1, p. 148)

and that Christ is the only possible centre of theology. It appeared that these two were good representatives of the contrasting movements in theology, and suitable for a study of this kind.

The thesis is divided into three main Parts, the first two being devoted to an examination of the works of these two theologians, and the final section goes on to develop certain converging lines of thought which suggested themselves in the course of these separate investigations. In Part I, I have attempted to present Barth's views on philosophy and ethics as clearly, and as sympathetically, as possible. His work proved to be by far the more complex and the more difficult to criticise. Not only does his 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' already extend to some millions of
words, but one finds in reading it that there occurs an hypnotic effect, analogous to that received by watching telephone wires from a well driven train: if one is prepared to accept a ticket on his train of thought (i.e. accepts his initial presuppositions) then it is difficult to alight, for there are few stations and the train is still travelling. Barth's breadth of vision, his scholarship (surely few other Protestant theologians have his knowledge of the Church fathers), and his ability to develop an argument simultaneously on historical, exegetical, and logical planes have a cumulatively persuasive effect which this work could not hope to reproduce, but which must be admitted by anyone who is prepared to read him sympathetically. However, respect has not been permitted to inhibit criticism, and the chief objections to his views are broached in Chapter IV.

By comparison with Barth's magnum et amplum opus, Paul Tillich's 'Systematic Theology' is minuscule. But where the former is concentrated, almost obsessively, with Christological thinking, the latter takes in all kinds of thinking and attempts to find a place for all our activities, both cultural and anti-cultural. The very title of Tillich's main work would be anathema to Barth, for he is opposed to "systems" of every kind; but the philosopher who is acquainted with Greek philosophy and with modern existentialism will find Tillich easy to follow. In this second Part the attempt has been made to extract his attitude to
5.

philosophy and his thinking on ethical topics; the criticism here is incorporated in the exposition.

Inevitably these two Parts reflect the tone of their subject matter. Barth's final position in the history of theology may not yet be determined positively, but it is clear that his thought has been informed and stimulated by Kantian and post-Kantian German philosophy; thus it is in comparison with this genre of philosophical thinking that his reflections have been set. Tillich draws on Greek culture and Greek philosophy for his seminal ideas, and therefore his thought is developed by comparison with what I take to be the Socratic-Platonic view of philosophy.

Both of these Parts are destructive and critical; in general it may be said that Barth appears to limit unduly the concept of the experience of God that is possible for man, and his correspondence theory of theological ethics suffers from the usual defect of all correspondence theories viz. that it is impossible to determine when, and if, correspondence occurs: Tillich extends the concept of man's experience of God to cover practically every experience whatever, and his ethical theory is based upon a faulty metaphysic. Out of the criticism certain positive premisses are evolved and these are explicitly stated in the final two Chapters of Part III; in the latter of these an interpretation of Christian ethics is sketched in outline. In order to establish these
conclusions more firmly I felt constrained to put forward some criticisms of the state of present day moral philosophy in England. These form the basis for Part III, and here the quotations and references are, in the main, taken from recent philosophical literature. As I am neither an academic philosopher nor a theologian I cannot be accused of grinding any particular axes, but my objectivity in this, as in all other matters, is of degree only. My sympathies are with the theologian, but my critical instruments were fashioned by the philosophers. In attempting to place a foot in both camps, it may be that "the attempt and not the deed confounds us", but I have been left with my original opinion that the camps are closer together than a superficial view of the present gulf between them would suggest.

The confession is freely made that I had virtually no prior knowledge of the works of either Karl Barth or Paul Tillich, or indeed of any other theologian. But this too was deliberate in so far as I thought it might be of interest to have the reactions of a philosopher, trained in our modern schools, and prepared to take a close look at some modern theological writing. The resultant naivety with respect to pure theology displayed herein will doubtless be evident to all practising theologians, but the desire to understand and to appreciate what modern theology has to offer in the way of critical thinking about our human situation should be obvious to all. The stimulation which I
personally have received from the writing of Barth and Tillich has been
great, and I can but hope that the debt I owe to them might be repaid in
part if this slight work encourages other specialists to dig in the rich
mines which they have quarried.
PART I

CHAPTER I

KARL BARTH AND PHILOSOPHY

To a philosopher educated in the atmosphere of philosophical analysis as practised in America and in Britain prior to, and after, the Second World War, the critical assessment of Karl Barth's massive and ever growing 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' might seem an invidious and well nigh impossible task. The language is different, the cultural and academic background is virtually unknown, and the whole approach savours of an outmoded metaphysic. One of the distinguishing features of modern analytic philosophy is its intimate connection with logic, and indeed it has been closely tied up with the developments of symbolic logic. Some analytic philosophers - particularly the members of the Viennese circle of positivists ('Wiener Kreis') - went so far as to identify analytic philosophy with the logic of science ('Wissenschaftslogik'), and Bertrand Russell categorically announced that,

"Every philosophic problem, when it is subjected to the necessary analysis and purification, is found either to be not really philosophic at all, or else it is logical."\(^1\)

---

\(^1\) B. Russell, "Our Knowledge of the External World", Ch. 2.
Thus there is a considerable body of philosophers today who are striving more and more to affiliate themselves with their scientific fellows, and the results are becoming apparent in some philosophy courses in some universities. Where formerly philosophy was classed as one of the humanities, with an introduction to the discipline being of a kind with the introduction to history or literature, viz. reading the main texts from Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, etc., today some embryonic philosophers are instructed to read the most up to date books and papers in Philosophical Journals - just as the scientist is directed to the latest non-Euclidian geometries of Lobachevsky and Riemann, or to the theory of quantum-mechanics rather than to Euclid or to Newton. The great philosophical problems of the past are now seen as debates about words and hidden misunderstandings about the meaning of meaning. The reading of ancient texts is a luxury for the analyst, to be reserved for post-graduation when he might perhaps find in Aristotle's discussion of ouσία, or in Berkeley's criticism of abstract ideas fruitful anticipations of the philosophy of analysis. With this background it is small wonder that some present day philosophers boggle at Barth.

There are many well worn distinctions made between philosophical and religious thinking. It has been maintained that religion is more characteristically an emotional experience than that of philosophy - even moral philosophy. This was expressed by Matthew Arnold's
definition of religion as "morality touched by emotion".¹ Just what this emotion is however it is very difficult to discover, and in the examination of this emotion the theologian performs what is virtually a philosophic inquiry.² Furthermore as Barth himself says,

"Theology is traditionally reckoned to be one of the 'intellectual sciences'."³

De Burgh has pointed out that religion implies conduct as well as knowledge (in a wide sense), but for philosophy, knowledge is all important, and action is for the sake of knowledge.⁴ The philosopher should be prepared to examine all preconceptions, and the implication of this is that if he does anything else he is guilty of a kind of treachery. However this is perhaps to confuse religion and theology, the former signifying the pursuit of a way of life, and the latter, etymologically speaking, is thinking or reasoning about God. Theology thus is centred on God, and philosophy in theory should have its centre on truth. When the theologian says that God is truth then the philosopher can find a common ground for discussion and perhaps argument. However Barth does not say this - at least he does not say it in a way which is

¹M. Arnold, "Literature and Dogma", Ch. 1, Section II.
²See e.g. R. Otto, "Idea of the Holy".
³K. Barth, "Dogmatics in Outline", p. 139.
compatible with philosophy. His resistance to natural theology is well known, and it is here that his recalcitrant attitude to philosophy begins.

Philosophy, like logic, by its very nature demands the universal, but Barth's theology of the Word of God points unwaveringly to the particular. Philosophy welcomes facts, events, propositions, etc. — all in the plural — but Barth like Luther, propounds a 'theologia crucis', and he insists on the supreme importance of one event — the absolutely singular. It may well be held there can be no philosophy of unique individuals; they have simply to be accepted; they are irrationals in the sense that reason cannot explain them.

The Barthian view of natural theology is obviously connected with his view of philosophy in general, and at first sight there seems little justification for his attitude. Natural theology obviously exists, why then should not Barth bow to this existence and allow it a place in his 'Dogmatik'? He maintains that there is no point of contact, no 'Anknüpfungspunkt', between the Christian religion and human nature.

"The nature and purpose of all natural theology has always been to analyse man in the light of a revelation of God starting with creation, as the introitus to the inner circle of real theology, based upon revelatlc specialis."¹

¹Kirchliche Dogmatik' 1/1, p. 147.
This is in line with customary view of natural theology; it is in a way the theologia gloriae which Luther castigated in the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 e.g.

"22 That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God as understood through His works altogether puffs up, blinds and hardens."¹

Natural theology is the attempt to reach an understanding of God outside the revelation of the Christian faith and for this Barth has no time. Throughout the Prolegomena to his Dogmatik he is striving to prescribe an adequate method for testing and presenting, in a scientific way, the unique knowledge, by faith, which is professed by Christians.

In his exposition of the "scientific way" of dogmatic theology Barth contends, much as Aristotle does at the beginning of his 'Ethics' that dogmatics is a science in that it has its own "subject matter",² viz., the language the Church uses about God; and also that it has its own "starting point or principle",³ viz., God in Jesus Christ as the essence of the Church; and therefore that the principles by which this study is to be judged should be its own principles, not the principles of any other science. The working out of these principles forms an integral part of Barth's architectonic, and the fidelity to his

---


²c.f. Aristotle 'Ethics' 1098a.

³Ibid. 1098b.
starting point is evident throughout. He admits that in calling itself a "science" theology declares that,

"1. Like all other so-called sciences it is a human effort after a definite object of knowledge. 2. Like all other sciences it follows a definite, self-consistent path of knowledge. 3. Like all other sciences, it is in the position of being accountable for this path to itself and to everyone—everyone who is capable of effort after this object, and therefore of following this path. But it would not make the slightest difference to what it has to do, if it had to rank as something other than just a 'science'. Because it is so ranked and claims so to be ranked, it is by no means obliged to spoil or prejudice itself in its own task, by heeding what 'science' means elsewhere. .... As regards method it has nothing to learn in their school."1

Barth expands these remarks and goes on to reject the view that dogmatic theology, in this sense, is either purely descriptive or purely critical of the past proclamation and previous theology of the Church, and therefore,

"Dogmatics is scientific, not as the exposition of all sorts of material, although it must be that too, but as the movement of this

1*Kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1, p. 7.
material, as this material in motion. So long and so far as this act and this state of movement has not set in, dogmatic work has not yet begun."¹

The test or measure by which dogmatic work is judged is, he maintains, that revelation of God in Jesus Christ which is attested in Holy Scripture, and although any dogmatic theologian obviously works within certain presuppositions of logical coherence and logical proof, the additional requirement he must possess is that he should be,

".... aware of the sign of the divine promise set up in the Church, and (he must be willing) to take this sign so seriously that in this connection its direction takes complete precedence of all directions for which he may have to thank the mental sciences. If and so far as this is the case his work is scientific; if and so far as this is not the case it is unscientific however scientific it may be considered from other standpoints."²

In fact Barth later contends that the scientific method of dogmatic theology which he is advocating moves the theologian nearer to the scientist than to the philosopher. And thus, possibly because of his lack of knowledge of logical and linguistic analysis, we find a modern theologian and the modern philosopher claiming affinities with the modern scientist. Barth notes, in particular,³ that genuine theological

¹Ibid. p. 324.
²Ibid. p. 325.
scholarship (e.g. his own) has at least three points in common with modern science, viz. (i) a rejection of any world view, or world system; both are "content to observe, classify, investigate, understand and describe phenomena"; neither "unfold any ontology of the cosmos". 

(ii) Both recognise the limits of human observation and inference; "Exact science also agrees with the theology of creation in the fact that it too investigates and describes the cosmos only as the cosmos of men."

(iii) Both distinguish between two distinct spheres, namely the sphere in which empirical investigation is possible and the sphere in which it is impossible. (There seems little distinction between points (ii) and (iii).) It is clear that Barth is speaking of philosophy in this section in much the same way as Kierkegaard spoke of "the system". In fact Barth continually refers to philosophy in terms of 'isms', but obviously his attitude does not take account of those movements in modern philosophy which were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. ¹

Thus Barth outlines his procedure and the principles which underlie that procedure. He views his dogmatic work as having the validity and the standards of critical thinking which any science claims, but in addition it must possess the wholesale commitment of its author to faith in Jesus Christ as the truth which it attempts, however imperfectly, to express. As he says,

"On no pretext can theology know a more stringent concern than this, of remaining true to itself and always growing truer as Scripture theology."

He is thus relatively indifferent to the question whether or not theology is a science, but he does want to emphasise certain parallelisms between the method of science and that of dogmatic theology. If in the answer to the question (whether theology is a science), however, there is any compromise about the uniqueness of its subject matter, then Barth would reject such an answer - but in so far as it is a human inquiry into "truth" then it may, he says, be called "scientific".

Implicit in much of what Barth says is a criticism of the whole trend of academic theology from Schleiermacher's theory of feeling through Hegel, Feuerbach, Ritschl and Troeltsch down to Schweitzer. He maintains that a return to the theologia crucis of the Reformation leaders is necessary, and this involves a complete rejection of all natural theology. He roundly asserts that,

"If dogmatics cannot regard itself and cause itself to be regarded as fundamentally Christology, it has assuredly succumbed to some alien sway and is already on the verge of losing its character as church dogmatics."

1 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' I/1, p. 327.
In fact,

"The collapse of church dogmatics in modern times under the devastating inrush of natural theology would not have been possible had the way not been already paved for it in the age of orthodoxy (and even to some extent in mediaeval Scholasticism and among the fathers), because the necessary connection of all theological statements with that of John 1:14 did not receive the obvious attention required at this point, if the construction of subcentres alien to its content was to be avoided."¹

Later in the same volume Barth gives a masterly exposition of the way in which this "inrush" of natural theology took place historically.²

"The Bible as the Word of God surreptitiously became a part of natural knowledge of God, i.e., of that knowledge of God which man can have without the free grace of God, by his own power and with direct insight and assurance."

This, Barth maintains, was chiefly a result of the mistaken seventeenth century doctrine of inspiration, viz., that the Biblical writers were mere manus Dei, indeed calami viventes et scribentes, and led to the opinion that the Bible "was no longer a free and spiritual force, but an instrument of human power", a document like other human documents, and

¹ Kirchliche Dogmatik: 1/2, p. 123.
² Kirchliche Dogmatik: 1/2, p. 522ff.
this led to more and more claims for other means of inspiration and other roads to God. Natural theology thus appeared at the beginning of the movement as a cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, reading into the mystery that this should be a divinely inspired word the view that as such it could be linked with other manifestations of Divine inspiration, and ended by covering the theological sky with the doctrines of Docetism, and of a possible movement from man to God, by e.g. considering man as a moral agent (Kant), or by the theory of analogia entis (Roman Catholicism). Barth's attitude to any and all of these buttresses to natural theology is clear and unequivocal throughout his work - he rejects them completely.

The underlying motive behind this view of Barth's might be traced to two of his other fundamental creeds: (i) that the natural man is wholly evil, in him the imago Dei has been utterly destroyed by sin.

"In this sense as a possibility for God proper to man qua creature the "image of God" is not only, as we say, with the exception of some remnants ruined, but annihilated. What is preserved of the image of God, even in sinful man is recta natura, to which as such a rectitudo cannot be ascribed, even potentialiter."¹

Thus anything natural man can do for, or find out about, himself is completely irrelevant to what is done for him in, and what self-knowledge

¹"Kirchliche Dogmatik" I/1, p. 273.
is manifested by, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Barth's attitude to any unrevealed knowledge becomes intelligible — for him there is an unbridgeable chasm between any "knowledge" of God achieved by man, and the "knowledge" revealed in Jesus Christ. (ii) That if natural theology were possible it would detract from the authenticity of revelation. If two distinct ways to the knowledge of God are admitted there could be no means of proving that they lead to a knowledge of the same God, nor in the end that either of them would yield a valid knowledge of God at all.

"The distinguishing feature of Christian Revelation as distinct from other religions is that it is historical Revelation — i.e. an event 'once for all'."¹

So much for William James' s conclusion,

"We must, therefore, I think, bid a definite good-bye to dogmatic theology."²

Historically philosophy has always had closer ties with natural theology than dogmatic. In very few philosophy text books will the name of Jesus Christ be found, but the question of the existence of God has received attention from philosophers of all kinds. Very few philosophers have been dogmatic theologians; indeed as Barth explicitly says,

¹ 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' I/1, p. 373.
² W. James, 'Varieties of Religious Experience' (32 Imp.) p. 448.
"... from the philosophical standpoint the rise of theological Cartesians, Spinozists, Leibnizians, Kantians and Hegelians was a very dubious matter. Only rarely did the originators of the great philosophical systems have the will or the courage to make plain the possible compatibility of their thought with Christian faith. And when this was attempted, as in the case of Kant and the older Schelling, it was inevitably to the detriment not only of faith, but also of the system of ideas."¹

It is possibly because of this that Barth, in his Dogmatik, and elsewhere, displays what appears to be an ambivalent attitude to philosophy. On the one hand he says,

"Let us not forget that theology in fact, so surely as it avails itself of human speech, is also philosophy or a conglomerate of all sorts of philosophy."²

(It is not clear from the context whether he is thinking of a specific type of theology or not.) On the other hand he states,

"We must beware as Christians, and the Church must beware of establishing itself on the basis of any sort of 'Weltanschauung',"³

and he maintains that in the second edition of the Dogmatik he cut out everything that

¹ Kirchliche Dogmatik® III/2, p. 10.
² Kirchliche Dogmatik® I/1, p. 188.
³ Dogmatics in Outline, p. 59.
"might give the slightest appearance of giving to theology a basis, support, or even a mere justification in the way of existential philosophy."\(^1\)

These two opinions are, of course, not strict contradictories, and it is open to Barth to argue that he mentions existential philosophy specifically, not philosophy in general; yet throughout his magnum opus there are numerous warning notices to the philosophically minded - 'No admittance to philosophers, except on serious business' - the serious business of dogmatic theology based on faith in Jesus Christ.

In the end Barth would seem to concur (for different reasons be it said) with Hume's opinion that, "generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous"\(^2\), and also with Kierkegaard's objection to "modern" philosophy, viz.

"... not that it has a mistaken presupposition, but that it has a comical presupposition, occasioned by its having forgotten, in a sort of world-historical absentmindedness, what it means to be a human being. Not indeed, what it means to be a human being in general, for this is the sort of thing that one might even induce a speculative philosopher to agree to; but what it means that you and I and he are human beings, each one for himself."\(^3\)

---

\(^1\) 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' I/1, p. ix.
In 1935 Barth wrote, regarding his 'Römerbrief',
"I had at that time no other desire than simply to set forth the
meaning of Paul's letter to the Romans. This I did partly in
a remarkable wrapping of Kantian and Platonic conceptions,"¹
and he obviously regretted the "wrappings". However he has no objection
to the use by theology of philosophical concepts (how indeed can he when
he employs them continually himself?), but he does object strongly when
any theologian founds his theology upon any definite philosophy, and in
the later volumes of the Dogmatik there is a clear effort made to rid
himself, so far as is possible, both of philosophical terminology and
philosophical preconceptions. From the very nature of the subject matter
this is an impossible ideal, and, so far as one can judge, throughout the
opus there is the tone, and the accents, if not of Hegelian idealism, at
least of post-Kantian German philosophy.

It is significant however that Barth's polemic (if such it can be
called) against the philosopher is conducted against the philosophy of
the past rather than the present. There is little reference to the
thought of present day philosophy, with one notable exception, viz.
that of existentialism. Thus he admits, e.g. in his chapter on 'The
Creature' (Chapter X) that he has drawn freely on the anthropological

Now existentialism is a philosophy of life rather than a strict philosophy and it is virtually a post-war growth. (Marcel was, it is true, writing long before the war and Sartre published 'la Nausee' in 1938, yet it became popular in the confused ethos of post-war Europe.) The acknowledged founder of existentialism was Kierkegaard, and to Kierkegaard, as has already been suggested, Barth owes a profound debt. He follows Kierkegaard especially in the line of existential thinking in theology, namely that thinking which proceeds on the basis of existential perplexity. The question of the individual Christian faced by God, revealed in Jesus Christ, has to end in a decision (to exist is to choose, to decide, to be "engaged" to use Kierkegaard's word), and this act of God is always a present event, never a given fact - it can only be answered by a decision of the individual man. Man is ever faced by this "either-or" and all theological thinking is involved, not as in an experiment or scientific investigation (for the scientist is only a spectator), but as a man is involved in any moral crisis of his own. The decision requires a whole way of living. The existentialist philosophers as a whole assert the freedom of the individual man against the totality, or any tendency to depersonalisation. But while accepting this Barth goes no further, for he is a protagonist against the general subjectivist trend of neo-Protestantism, in that he maintains that each individual man stands in the place of all men.
"He is responsible for all and everything. His life with all the narrowness of its limits is the theatre of the whole action of sin and salvation. In all its meanness it is the object of the whole judgment and grace of God."

In fact Barth's explicit rejection of philosophic existentialism is due to his continual endeavour to view all the experience of man through the categories of the Incarnation. Existentialism, in placing the emphasis on man - even man in relation to the transcendent (as in Jaspers and Marcel) - is guilty of starting at the wrong place, and of emphasizing the false individual (man). The real man he asserts, is Jesus Christ.

We might go so far as to say that he treads a razor-edged path between the subjectivism of Kierkegaard and the authoritarianism of Roman Catholicism.

Barth accepts a neutral use of philosophical terms by the theologian, but, as has been pointed out, he is opposed to any theology which is founded on a philosophy. Thus his specific objection to Bultmann is that for him existentialism seems to be the basis of his theology; his polemic against Wobbermin, Schaeder and Scholz (among others) is based on their alleged Cartesianism; his criticism of Marheimke and Biedermann

---

1 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' IV/1, p. 756. (My translation)
2 Vid. III/2, 117ff.
3 See e.g. I/2, p. 735.
4 See 'R. Bultmann' by K. Barth, 1952. c.f. K.D. IV/1, pp. 767ff.
5 I/1, p. 222ff.
All this would seem to indicate that Barth is distrustful of Reason, but in fact he seems to cover himself against this charge. At different points in the Dogmatik he feels constrained to defend the intellect against the denigrating tendencies of other theologians, yet in spite of this he contends that,

"The method of theological understanding consists simply in letting the object determine thought and terminology. The Word is not subject to human premises; it is human premises which are subject to the Word."  

Faith, for Barth, transcends the limits of reason, and faith sees mysteries which defy rational inquiry. Like Kierkegaard and Pascal he thinks that abstract thought is unable to deal with the most profound problems of life. The Word of God is beyond the realms of logic - it is in fact revelation, and the most that can be done to explain revelation to the non-Christian is to bear witness to it, for revelation is the movement from God to man - and it is a non-reversible relation. Dogmatics in fact, according to Barth, is

"the scientific test to which the Christian Church puts herself regarding the language about God which is peculiar to her"  
it knows only the Trinitarian God revealed in Jesus Christ.

---

1> I/1, p. 296 and IV/1, p. 378.
2> See esp. I/1, 231f.
3> c.f. I/2, p. 682f, and I/2, p. 720f.
4> I/1, p. 1.
This reference to "the language about God" which is, and has been, used by the Christian Church, echoes faintly a trend in modern philosophy, known as linguistic analysis. About this more will be said in Part XIII, but it is instructive to pursue for a little just what Barth has in mind here. Briefly linguistic analysis is that movement in philosophy which examines the logical relationships between statements in which certain difficult (and philosophical) terms occur. Barth likewise views dogmatic theology as the examination of the proclamation of the Church—it is reflection about proclamation. He says that,

"Proclamation is human language in and through which God Himself speaks, like a king through the mouth of his herald, which moreover is meant to be heard and apprehended as language in and through which God Himself speaks."¹

Thus it is clear that no man can, of himself, utter the Word of God, but it is Barth's central contention that the Word of God can take up the utterances of man, and in using those utterances, can reveal itself. Thus,

"As a statement of faith every statement in dogmatics, in view of its peculiar object, must be ventured upon in the certainty that it expresses not human, but divine truth."²

¹Kirchliche Dogmatik  I/1, p. 57.
²Ibid. I/1, p. 12.
hence his allegiance to "dogmatics" as a science, and his reiterated view that the Word of God is quite literally language - the communication from God to man. A man must, however, if he is "elected", make the Word of God heard in his own time, and this means that there must be continual and continuous interpretation of the Biblical kerugma in the language of the day.

In a sense therefore Barth's whole project in his 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' is the unceasing attempt to uncover, with the aid of the Word of God, just when and where the Word of God speaks and has spoken. This occurs in "true" language, which is God's language, and cannot be confined or bound to the language of man; further, as God's Word is the Person of Jesus Christ, it cannot be reproduced in any general formula or principle. In this sense it is "event" and it is God's mystery. Thus he contends,

".... the dogma after which dogmatics inquires is not a truth of revelation, but it is on the way to the truth of revelation. That will also be said about the dogmas of the Church to which at this point we make no approach as yet. They are propositions which grasp and reproduce the truth of revelation only so far as they strive toward it." ¹

¹Ibid. I/1, p. 307.
In the course of his working out Barth gives various linguistic analyses after the manner of linguistic analysis, but it must always be remembered that he sees these only as preliminary surface excavations which are undertaken in order to reach towards that true language which is the Word of God revealed, viz. the person of Jesus Christ: or to put it more accurately, in the process of these excavations of Church dogma, the Word of God may reach towards human language in order to reveal itself. It is not human language which grasps revelation, but revelation which grasps human language.

Yet with all his concentration upon revelation and faith there does seem to be a tendency for him not to be concerned with what this means in terms of reason. Philosophy has, it is patent, no monopoly of rationality, and Barth's constant refusal to apply the basic analytic axiom of a thoroughgoing examination of terms and concepts might well have received corrective treatment if he had paid even cursory attention to e.g. Wittgenstein. However Barth claims absolute autonomy for dogmatic theology, and the philosopher cannot require anyone to speak the same language as himself; to do so would be both bad logic and bad manners. Nevertheless the fact remains that problems of philosophy and of theology (as contrasted with religion) are bound up with language in a way in which a scientific problem is not. "In the beginning was the Word ...." would be agreed to by both Barth and Carnap, the difference lies chiefly in the supreme importance Barth attaches to the following words.
However in the end Barth is distrustful of all and every philosophy, and Dr. N.H.G. Robinson, in his book 'Faith and Duty'\(^1\) sees in this distrust an affinity between Barth's position and that of the schools of Logical Analysis and Logical Positivism, as exemplified in the work of Russell, Wittgenstein and Carnap. Dr. Robinson admits that the points of resemblance may be external and superficial, and it might be more fruitful (for the philosopher at least) to trace an affinity between Barth's approach to dogmatic theology and Kant's approach to the metaphysic of experience.

(1) "Dogmatics", says Barth, "is the testing of Church doctrine and proclamation, not an arbitrary testing from a freely chosen standpoint, but from the standpoint of the Church, which in this case is the solely relevant standpoint."\(^2\)

it is the self-testing of her peculiar language about God (dogma) to which the Christian Church puts herself. The 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft', for Kant, was the self-testing to which the intellect put itself in respect of the content of its "Knowledge" about the world and about the transcendent. In neither case can there be an outer criterion by which to judge. Kant assumes the unity of the understanding; Barth assumes the unity of revelation. In the Prolegomena to Dogmatics Barth notes that it is only prolegomena in the sense of what must be said first - he

\(^1\) p. 9ff and c.f. D.M. Mackinnon's paper in 'Essays in Christology', p. 286ff.

is already doing dogmatics; we "are giving ourselves an account of the path we tread". In this first critique Kant uses the intellect to investigate its own bounds, and he gives an account of the path reason follows in its self-investigation. It is of interest to find that both of these procedures lead to an emphatic denial of natural theology, and both men seem at one in that they abolish knowledge (in one sense) to make way for faith — and for both, of course, faith is not another kind of knowledge.

(ii) Kant's Copernican revolution is well known, and opinions are divided as to the suitability of the term. By his proposed revolution in metaphysics Kant makes the human mind the centre of the universe, so that things must conform to mind rather than mind to things. It is in the necessity supplied by mind (not any particular mind) that Kant finds the essence of objectivity. The title Copernican might appear inappropriate, because while Copernicus ended the anthropocentric character of astronomy Kant rather made philosophy anthropocentric. However it is more suitable than it seems at first sight: Copernicus explained the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies as due to the motion of the observer; Kant similarly explains the apparent characteristics of the world as due to the mind of the observer.

1I/1, p. 46.
Barth's Copernican revolution is to replace anthropocentric theology with Christocentric Theology (an awkward phrase, but theocentric is insufficient). The emphasis is always and ever upon the complete otherness of God.

"It depends from time to time upon God and not upon us, whether our hearing is real hearing, our obedience real obedience, whether our dogmatics is blessed and hallowed as knowledge of the proper content of Christian language or is idle speculation."¹

and

"There can be no question of a substance of the Christian religion which is their (the Christians') own, which antedates their election and can play a part as a motive or criterion for electing the name of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, its decision has no independent validity. It is simply the recognition of a decision already made concerning them."²

Barth is here saying that the apparent character of revelation and of faith (which hitherto has been viewed anthropomorphically) is simply and solely the gift of God, and for this, man has no explanation. It is God's search for man which is important - not man's search for God.

¹I/1, p. 19.

²I/2, p. 352.
Finally both Kant and Barth refuse to base their ethical systems upon any general theory of anthropology. Kant, for example, wrote,

"... just as in the metaphysics of natural philosophy there must be principles touching the application to objects of experience of those supreme universal laws of a physical system generally; so also a metaphysics of morals cannot dispense with similar principles; and we shall often have to take the special nature of man, which can only be known by our experience, as our object, in order to exhibit in it the consequences of the universal moral principles; but this will not detract from the purity of the latter nor cast any doubt on their a priori origin - that is to say, a Metaphysic of Morals cannot be founded on anthropology, but may be applied to it."¹

Kant rejected any anthropological foundation for ethics because he believed that the moral law was both universal and a priori, and therefore could not be derived from experience - laws prescribing what ought to be done cannot be derived from what is done.

Barth, in holding that whatever study begins with the human self cannot end with a knowledge of God, rejects any, and every independent anthropology: his anthropology, and Christian ethics, are founded upon Christology.²

¹ Introduction to the Metaphysic of Morals¹, Abbott's Translation, p. 272.
² Vide e.g. II/2, p. 44 et passim.
"In its true and strict historical sense, the γνώσις σελήνου, and an ethics concerned and developed in the practice of this imperative, is shown - post Christum natum - to be illegitimate and impossible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In so far as an ethics derives from this source, in so far as it carries out in the background an apotheosis of the self or the self-given answer or the self-undertaken enquiry, in so far as it tries at best (if it does not prefer to be atheistic) to understand God decisively from man instead of man decisively from God, it cannot be regarded by theological ethics as legitimate or possible. 1

Of course the resemblances between Barth and Kant cannot be stretched very far. They differ fundamentally over the idea of a moral theology, and especially in their attitude to ethics. But there are grounds for thinking that the turn which Barth gives to the Christocentric theology of e.g. Schleiermacher and Ritschl will have as much effect on future theological thinking as Kant had on subsequent philosophy. It may well be that (as has been said in a philosophical context about Kant) Barth's failures will be more important than the successes of most other theologians.

In view of this very sketchy summary it is clear that the non-Christian philosopher will have as little patience with Barth as Barth has with him. But the question must be put by, and to, the Christian

1 II/2, p. 541.
philosopher (if this indeed is not a contradiction in terms) how far can one go with Barth, and what sympathy, what point of contact, is there between the thinking in the Dogmatik and the thinking of the philosopher? Obviously Barth will never engage the philosopher on his own field, yet philosophy is after all not a creed or a doctrine, but an enterprise, and the philosopher who is also a Christian cannot discard either his background or his critical instruments, and engage in dogmatics on a different level. Where then can he find a common meeting place with the dogmatic theologian of the Barthian type? Granted that some modern philosophy is obsessed by the power of mathematical logic, by the advance of science and by the ubiquity of language, and because of this it is said that it no longer seeks either to explain the world or to change it (as some philosophers in the past claimed to do), still the positive claim is made that it does provide us with sharper and cleaner tools for thinking. If this is all it can do it makes one wonder if philosophy is not concentrating too much on the bridle, the bit and the harness while the horse has disappeared. There are certainly signs that she is not altogether content with her state, and it may be that the theologian of the future will not be alone in proclaiming the meaning of life - the philosopher ought to come into the arena also on his proper mount; for philosophy can illuminate recesses of the mind which cannot be reached by any other discipline. This is also the function of the theologian, and here there is a common ground for meeting together.
The Christian philosopher may ask Barth how their respective knowledge of God and of their fellow men differ. He can accept some premisses of dogmatic thinking in so far as he has arrived at the belief in the unique position of the man Jesus Christ in relation to his individual salvation, and he might agree that it is time that philosophy paid more attention to the remarkable and unique fact of Jesus Christ. He may however, and must, investigate the Barthian position with regard to this historical fact - just as there is one kind of evidence which is admitted to the bar of logic and the intellect, is there not another kind which comes from personal encounter, and how does the encounter with Christ differ from the encounter, say, with the thought of Plato? Can this historical fact really not be subsumed under any principle? - is this the Truth, and not one truth among others? Does this fact mean that philosophy may scrap all her theories of truth as so much water spilt upon the sand - and simply point to Christ? This involves a radical review of our language, and indeed bearing witness is more difficult for the philosopher than for others. Philosophers, at present, are interested above all in language - here in Barth and in dogmatic theology generally there is a whole universe of discourse to which they have paid insufficient attention as yet. Indeed an analogy might be established between Barth's dogmatic theology and the philosophical study of aesthetic taste which recognizes the "authority" of aesthetic enjoyment, and does no more than exhibit the principles latent therein;
although of course for the Christian who follows Barth completely there is only one true object of enjoyment. And on a more fundamental level the philosopher reading Barth for the first time could receive lightning flashes from the thinking of this man which might involve a rethinking of certain philosophical categories. The interaction of theology, even dogmatic theology, and Christian philosophy could prove of benefit to both sides.

Finally it is open to the philosopher to investigate Barth's attitude to ethical thinking. Barth himself has done much to alienate the philosopher, but the present gulf between Christian ethics and moral philosophy has meant (i) that the former deprived of analytical criticism and assessment, has become increasingly dogmatic and authoritarian, and (ii) that the latter has become so obsessed with the seemingly sterile analysis of the language used in moral situations that people turn away from it to, for example, the presentation of moral problems as given in the literature of existentialism; it seems to have lost its contact with the flesh and blood of life.

It is this final course which is adopted in the remainder of Part I, and it demands some research into the background of Barth's ethical thinking. If the exposition of, and quotation from, this background seems excessively long, it must be said, on the one hand, that Barth's
work is not so well known that it may be taken as read, and also that
the genre of writing which he adopts is very different from that to which
the modern philosopher is accustomed. This poses problems of explication
and meaning which do not arise, to the same extent, when we move to the
examination of the work of Paul Tillich in Part II.
1. The Doctrine of God

It could be said that few theologians have more consistently and continuously emphasised the Divine transcendence than Barth. This emphasis has led some of his critics to think that the only conclusion one can draw from the Barthian premisses is that God can have little significance for us or be experienced by us. And it is true that there are many passages in his writings which give strong grounds for this impression. He maintains (passim) that God alone can know Himself: that there is no way from man to God, not even a via dialectica: that human ideas and impressions, in so far as they constitute our knowledge of objects (here Barth is very Kantian¹), are completely inadequate to know God; if we think we can conceive of God, or image God, this is simply "a projection of our own glory", for our ideas are completely incapable of grasping Him. We do not, he says, reach a knowledge of God by speaking of man with a loud voice. *Finitum non capax infiniti.*

It is at this point, this moment of the realization that God is forever hidden from man because of man's finitude, that faith steps in and discloses to us (or rather it is disclosed to us) that this hiddenness and mystery of God is the formal beginning of our appreciation that God

¹ Vide II/1, p. 181.
alone knows God. If we take this proposition seriously it means that, as humans, we are unable either to establish the existence, or define the being, of God; and this, Barth maintains, differentiates the Christian view of the hiddenness of God from Plato's, Plotinus's or Kant's view of the incomprehensibility of the supreme being. Here indeed we seem to have the flight from reason, for it was by reason that these three, along with countless others, reached their positions. Here too is Barth's intransigence to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the knowledge of God as Creator and Lord by virtue of the natural light of reason. There is an unbridgeable gap between man and God.

Barth argues for this, sic:- (i) When we understand something, e.g. a geometric theorem, the workings of the internal combustion engine, a Shakespearean tragedy, in one sense of "possess" we may be said to possess it. But God can never be mastered or possessed like this. (ii) When we comprehend something we are at one with it - but as created beings we can never be at one with God; therefore God can never be comprehended by us.

Although this piece of reasoning occurs near the beginning of Barth's interpretation of the doctrine of God, his true starting point is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ; and he argues from this to the hiddenness of God, and to His incomprehensibility. Man can know God only in being permitted by God to participate in some measure (which
cannot indeed be measured by man), in God's knowledge of Himself: only, in fact, because God makes Himself known to man in Jesus Christ. This is the basic dogma of Christendom, and of Barth's 'Kirchliche Dogmatik'; "God is revealed in Jesus Christ"; and Barth adds we cannot go beyond this revelation to further, or additional, knowledge of God. Thus, while insisting on the hiddenness of God, Barth equally insists on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

He avoids the extremes of both Ebionitism and Docetism in maintaining that,

"The New Testament statement about the unity of the Son with the Father, i.e. about the divinity of Christ, cannot possibly be interpreted on the assumption that the original outlook and declaration of the New Testament witnesses concerned a human being who subsequently was either exalted as such to divinity, or appeared among us as the personification and symbol of a divine being."¹ Thus for Barth the statement, "Jesus Christ is God", is analytic, not synthetic - it is the witness to revelation. If Christ reveals God, He must Himself be God, for only God can reveal Himself.

Thus when we try to think of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, of ourselves we can get nowhere, but, Barth maintains, by the grace of God reaching down God takes our place, and, with His power to reveal Himself,
"He does not ignore or eliminate but fills up the void of our impotence to view and conceive Him." ¹

"When we are obedient, according to our capacity or even incapacity, we have the promise that God Himself will acknowledge our obedience, in spite of our capacity or even incapacity, and this means that He will confer upon our viewing and conceiving and speaking His own veracity. The obedience to the grace of God, in which man acknowledges that he is entirely wrong, thus acknowledging that God alone is entirely right, is the obedience which has this promise." ²

The whole of Vol. II of Barth's 'Church Dogmatics', comprising in English almost 1,500 pages with about 800,000 words is concerned with the doctrine of God, and it is obviously impossible to give anything like an adequate summary of this vast edifice. However, for an understanding of Barth's interpretation of Christian ethics, his path must be outlined a little farther. If one is going to argue that the true justification of moral beliefs is based on Dogmatic Theology, then it must be maintained that the God worshipped in that theology is the God who sustains these ethical notions. From the merely Deist position that God is, no ethical principles can be derived. ³ How then does Barth develop the implications of the statement that God is? In the answer to this

¹ II/1, p. 212.
² II/1, p. 213.
³ The Deist believes in God - the Theist in a living God.
question there may be found the basis of his ethical system, and he indicates that he is well aware of the difficulties and of the magnitude of the task set by dogmatics.\footnote{ Vide e.g. II/1, p. 257ff. }

In the revelation of God in Jesus Christ we have to do with the act of God - and this act, of course, took place in historical time and is finished. But this event is unlike all other events in that it is happening also here and now, in the present - and, in addition, it is also in the future, in so far as it has not yet happened, but simply comes upon us. Here Barth seems to be talking in riddles, but the strangeness of this sort of language is mitigated somewhat if one is prepared to accept his view of the nature of history and his doctrine of meaning. History, for Barth, includes past and present and points to the future, and he sees all history as made by the Word of God. The Word of God in its perfect form is Jesus Christ, but He is not to be explained historically as a human personality appearing in space and time. Thus historical science cannot cope with revelation, because revelation is an "ingressio", a breaking into the temporal world of something new. He says, e.g.,

"Of course the question of some sort of historical understanding always arises when the Word of God is manifest to us in its contemporaneousness. But it is not that sort
of historical understanding as such which signifies the hearing, and is the basis of the proclamation, of the Word of God. Where the Word of God is heard and proclaimed, something happens which in spite of all interpretative skill cannot be brought about by interpretative skill."

With respect to Barth's doctrine of meaning, it may well be asked what do terms such as "act" and "life" mean when they are applied to God. We may also inquire how far we are falling into the pit of anthropomorphism when we apply terms like "father" or "wise" or "omnipotent" to God. Do we mean the same thing when we use the same word in respect to a man and in respect to God? Obviously if we can, and do, do this then we are denying the hiddenness of God. On the other hand if we say that these terms mean something different when applied to God, we are led to an impasse, the impasse of scepticism, and we must say that we know not God - the "divine inscientia".

"For if we know Him, we know Him by the means given us; otherwise we do not know Him at all. The fact that we know Him must mean that, with our views, concepts and words, we do not describe and express something quite different from Himself, but that in and by these means of ours - the only ones we have - we describe and express God Himself."
Here Barth, albeit reluctantly, has to accept the concept of analogical talk. He is naturally averse to doing this because of the strong analogical arguments of natural theology, and his argument here seems very thin indeed. When we apply anthropomorphic terms to God - and Barth is careful to point out that spiritual and abstract concepts are just as anthropomorphic as material and concrete ones - we do so as partakers in God's own description and proclamation about Himself. God is our creator and is therefore the creator of our words and concepts, and He graciously permits us to use these words and concepts. Their original meaning is God's meaning and when we apply them to the creature rather than the creator we use them in a secondary fashion. Thus the words "father" and "son" have their primary meaning (their logically prior meaning he seems to say) in God and in the doctrine of the Trinity.

"In a way which is incomprehensible and concealed from us, but in the incontestable priority of the Creator over the creature, God Himself is the Father and the Son. If we apply these words to God, we do not withdraw them from their original meaning, nor do we speak 'as if'. On the contrary, we speak in the original truth of these words."¹

¹I/2, p. 229f.
Thus Barth turns upside down the analogical doctrines of natural theology; but there is a theological arbitrariness here of which mention is made later on. Suffice it to say that, on Barth's view, when we apply terms to God, on the basis of His revelation, their meaning and their truth is guaranteed only by God Himself.

"Man has not arrogated anything to himself when he speaks of God. He just speaks what is given to him."¹

It is God who places these terms at our disposal; this is how He knows about Himself, and the way in which He describes Himself. For Barth, grace, not being, is the criterion of truth, and in his doctrine of God, i.e. in the doctrine of the knowledge of God in and through Jesus Christ, he argues from (i) the revealed Word of God as known from the Scripture adopted by Church proclamation, (ii) the written Word of God as known only through that revelation upon which proclamation is based, and (iii) the proclaimed Work of God known only through the Scripture which attests revelation.²

It is because Barth accepts as a presupposition that the fact of God's act in revelation is an event different in kind from all other acts or events whatever, that he propounds this sophistic-sounding theory of meaning, but he is aware that the Church speaks with a double meaning when it describes God as "event", "act" and "life".

¹I/2, p. 232.
²c.f. I/1, p. 136.
"We cannot speak of 'personalising' in reference to God's being, but only in reference to ours. The real person is not man but God. It is not God who is a person by extension, but we. God exists in His act. God is His own. God lives from and by Himself."¹

and the inevitable conclusion is that we live, "really live" as Barth puts it, only when we are grasped, or elected by God. Yet there is no necessity for God to grasp man; that He does so is part of the Divine mystery. Creation itself is a seeking and creating of a fellowship between God and man, it implies no common essence, and this seeking and creating is confirmed and ratified in Jesus Christ. It is in this sense that we must go on to say that this act is the act of the One who loves.

"God is the One who loves, and as such the blessing and the sum of all good things."²

From a philosophical viewpoint Barth may seem to be indulging in some terminological callisthenics. It will be said by many modern philosophers that this whole doctrine of God savours rather of Descartes' device of sweeping everything from the board until one reaches a checkmate in say, "cogito ergo sum", and then surreptitiously replacing all

¹¹/₂, p. 272.
²¹/₂, p. 276.
the pieces exactly as they were at the beginning - a piece of rocking horse philosophy in fact shaking backwards and forwards and reaching nowhere. Barth seems to be saying, on the one hand, that "finitum non capax infiniti", and on the other that "finitum capax infiniti": that God is utterly transcendent, and yet that for some it is possible to know that He is Lord, He is Living, loving, wise, etc. He seems to oppose orthodox Christianity at its roots, and yet in the end he finds that content in theological talk which it had traditionally. God is the Father, the Lord, the Son and so on, yet not in the ordinary meaning of these terms. These concepts when applied to God do have a meaning, but only by a kind of inverted analogy with their normal meaning. Why then it will be asked, does he bother to retain these terms at all? Or if he maintains, as he does, that these are the best we can do, why does he insist that they have been pressed upon the true Christian by the Holy Ghost?

It would be natural and facile for the modern linguistic philosopher to quibble about Barth's strange theory of meaning. Meaning is indeed a highly ambiguous term in any case, and it has been brought to the forefront of modern linguistic analysis by the father of the school, L. Wittgenstein. Do not ask for the meaning, we are now told, look for the use, and you will avoid most of the dangers of phenomenology and
metaphysics. We may find out the meaning of a sentence by investigating what the utterance of that sentence enables us to do; and to say, as Barth does, that meaning in the primary sense is "God given" is simply to resort to Spinoza's "asylum of ignorance". Barth's paradoxes then will be put down to his prevarication, and his arbitrary use of ordinary language.

The kind of answer a follower of Barth might give to this is, that, of course, if you are not a Christian then what is being talked about in "Church Dogmatics" is nonsense, both in the technical sense of that word, and also in the ordinary sense, for the language used is that of sinful man and completely unfitted for its task. But what Barth has said is that although it is impossible and illogical for us to attempt to speak about God, yet God, for whom all things are possible, comes to our aid, and, taking our words and concepts, makes them carry His meaning - God speaks for us and through us.

Of course there can be no meeting here, for the analytic philosopher and the follower of Barth are like bishops on two different coloured squares on a chess board. Yet it does seem that Barth is striving to come to grips with a tremendous topic: if it is true that God did reveal Himself in Jesus Christ, then there is nothing in our feeble human

---

1 This further cryptic reference to modern linguistic philosophy is considerably amplified in Part III.
reasoning to compare with this event. Even if one is not a Christian one must be aware of the complexity of the subject and the problem that is set the theologian who is ever thinking about God. The limitations of our language and our concepts can never be so painful as here. Given these limitations, and realising the inadequacy of our words, the theologian cannot help conceiving of God in terms of his conception of human minds, because he has no other material out of which to form his conceptions of Him. Man's idea of God is incurably and necessarily anthropomorphic. Surely too a Christian knows far better than a philosopher with atheistic views how a given religious expression is used, and knowing this is no small part of being able to interpret and analyse its meaning. To dismiss Barth's doctrine of God as so much nonsense is to admit to some extent that one has not been confronted by God.

It may be added that when Barth reaches the point where he can say, "God is the One who loves", then he has erected at least one pillar in a foundation for a theory of Christian ethics. We may derive principles of morality (although Barth does not do this) from the conception of a living, loving and good God, in a way which we could not do from the idea of an absolutely transcendent God.
A second column in any ethical system would be a doctrine of freedom—what freedom does man possess? It is to an exposition of Barth's view of this vital topic in Christian ethics that the next section addresses itself.

2. The Doctrine of Election and Freedom

A full discussion of the problem of freewill might seem to require an exposition of a theory of the universe, a complete metaphysic in fact. In dealing with the presuppositions of morality it might well be held that there can be no morality, nor indeed any moral theory, unless this metaphysic is such that the acts of the individual can, in some real sense, be ascribed to a freely acting self. This means that, before dealing with Barth's interpretation of Christian ethics, something must be said about his treatment of the ancient problems of predestination and election.

St. Paul himself seems to have been uneasy about the apparent waywardness of God in regard to the lucky elect, compared with the rest of humanity, and his statement of predestination is trenchant:

Romans 9 v. 11ff,

"For (the children) without their having been yet born, or having done anything good or ill, that the purpose of God according to (His) election may abide (the A.V. says 'might stand', but the Greek is ἵνα ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν ἐπώθησις τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναλύεται i.e. the purpose
is treated as one in all time, which would be nullified if once thwarted), not of works, but of Him that calleth — as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then? Is there any unrighteousness with God? Let it not be; for He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whomsoever I have mercy, and will compassionate whomsoever I compassionate ...... Therefore whom He will, He hath mercy on, and whom He will He hardeneth."

Luther, in his polemic against Erasmus' Diatribe, says, typically, "If you do not think this topic (i.e. freedom of the will), a necessary concern for Christians, kindly withdraw from the lists; we have no common ground; I think it vital. If it is 'irreligious', 'idle', 'superfluous' — your words — to know whether or not God foreknows anything contingently; whether our will is in any way active in matters relating to eternal salvation, or whether it is merely the passive subject of the work of grace; whether we do our good and evil deeds of mere necessity — whether, that is, we are not rather passive while they are wrought in us — then may I ask, what does constitute godly, serious, useful knowledge?" ¹

The question at hand for Luther was how to reconcile the sovereign election of God with our free will. His solution of the problem, in

¹De Servo Arbitrio, 1525, § 609 iii, W.A.
brief, was to say that man does not act independently of God's necessitating purpose - only God has "free will", and therefore for man "free will" is an "empty name" and cannot be truly predicated of us. It is, of course, true that Luther was concerned, as against Erasmus, to point unflinchingly to the free decision of God, by which man is elected to salvation, and in comparison with which our wills are in bondage; he was not concerned with the philosophical problem of free will, which has to do with human choices and decisions and the causal law of nature. Luther maintained that these choices and decisions could be free - in a sense.¹

In essence this too is Barth's solution, but he departs in a radical way from Luther here, and it is instructive to follow his reasoning, (i) because it also illuminates, and indeed is an integral part of, his doctrine of God, and (ii) because it gives one a wider perspective within which his interpretation of Christian ethics can be seen.

Just as in his interpretation of the proposition "God is", Barth says that we cannot go behind and beyond the act of God in Jesus Christ to a "deus absconditus", so here he maintains that we must not interpret the election of God as the arbitrary or capricious decree of a God completely transcendent and completely unknown - a decretum absolutum in the face of which we must simply offer up a sacrificium intellectus.

¹Ibid. 8 634-635.
In spite of the customary practice of other theologians, including his exemplars Luther and Calvin, in subordinating the doctrine of election to the doctrine of God's omnipotence and God's omnicausality, or to the doctrine of reconciliation, Barth says we must view the divine choice or election as that primal decision which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That decision of God is made with a view to the life and death of Christ - and this, says Barth, is the "sum of the gospel."¹ This is perhaps where Barth's Christology makes its most striking and original contribution to dogmatic theology.

The mystery of predestination consists simply in the fact that God, in His freedom and overflowing love, chose this particular way to move towards man: to determine Himself (which, following Kant, Barth says is true freedom) by electing Himself in Jesus Christ to be rejected instead of us. The whole relationship between God and man is expressed in this. "And yet," says Barth, "the light shed by this understanding is not a natural light. It is not the light of the logical or ethical deliberation of the human reason engaged in self discussion. It is the light of revelation, the light of God. It is not something close to us but worlds removed. It is not something given to man by his own capacities and energies. Of all ideas, it is the one which is itself unthinkable, the one which is thinkable only in faith and by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost ...."²

¹II/2, p. 34.
²II/2, p. 159.
Because of his consistently Christological thinking Barth sees predestination, not as a byproduct, so to speak, of the doctrine of reconciliation, but as the primal decree of God about Himself: it is the self-determining, the self-ordaining, of God, and hence it must have its position in the doctrine of God. Calvin and others erred by considering that what was in the beginning with God (however we interpret that phrase), was something other than Jesus Christ. There can be no separation between God and Jesus Christ because in the last analysis (and here Barth offers a powerful exegesis of John 1, verses 1 and 2), the subject of predestination is God, and the object of predestination is the Son of God as determined in Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Christ is the electing God and the elected man. That is predestination."²

Thus Barth never tries to seek knowledge of God (or indeed of man) except in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Other theologians - the Infracalapsarians and Supracalapsarians alike - had been able to expound a doctrine of predestination or election with no mention of Jesus Christ. On Barthian principles this is impossible. If Jesus Christ is really the God-man then we must think of predestination as something which takes place in Him and through Him.

¹See e.g. II/2, p. 95ff.
²II/2, p. 145.
Predestination means that man is accepted by God, because it is the rejection of the Son of God. God willed His rejection instead of ours. He decided upon the acquittal of man at a price paid by Himself.

By means of this doctrine of predestination as the predestination of God by God, Barth believes that he has escaped from the horns of the ancient dilemma. On the one hand we have no need to read into it the arbitrariness or capriciousness of a deus absconditus - the relationship is not that of the fickleness of a child with a plaything or a puppet, but the free decision and decree of God in Jesus Christ working with a purpose. And on the other hand there can be no question of a limiting of the freedom of God depending on a human decision. There is no question of synergism, because the original decision of God was concerned with Himself - the self-determining of God. But of course in so far as Jesus Christ was both God and man, man is involved.

Thus there are passages in this Chapter (VII) of "Church Dogmatics" which seem to imply the universal salvation of man. For example, Barth writes,

"If the teachers of predestination were right (and Barth says they were), when they spoke always of a duality of election and reprobation, of predestination to salvation or perdition, to life or death, then we may say already that in the election of Jesus Christ, which
is the eternal will of God, God has ascribed to man the former, election, salvation and life, and to Himself He has ascribed the latter, reprobation, perdition and death."¹

Again,

"The justification of the sinner in Jesus Christ is the content of predestination in so far as predestination is a No and signifies rejection. On this side, too, it is eternal. It cannot be overthrown or reversed. Rejection cannot again become the portion or the affair of man."²

Again, and most significantly,

"Is it only for those who have recognised their election, and not also for those who have not yet recognised it, that the lordship of Satan was broken by the divine-human perseverance which took place in Jesus Christ as decreed at the beginning of all God's ways and works? Was this to be effectual for some and not for others? Is He the kingdom of God in person, the αὐτοβασιλεία, only for some and not for others? Who may dare to speak in this way about election when election is absolutely election of Jesus Christ, with no decretum absolutum either before or after?"³

¹II/2, p. 162-163.
²II/2, p. 167.
³II/2, p. 333.
Thus Barth's interpretation of predestination is that there is only one person rejected by God, and that person is Jesus Christ. Among men all are elected in Him. It may then be asked, what is the difference between the elected and the rejected? — among men that is.

In the section (35) on the election of the individual Barth seems to be saying that the selection (possibly a better translation of ἐξελέγα in Ephesians 1 v. 4, than "elected" as in the A.V. — it gives the middle sense), of the elect is realised in their faith in Jesus Christ; which entails that faith is in some form the cause or coefficient of election. Here then, perhaps, the individual has freedom of choice. Not so, says Barth, because faith is,

".... a determination of the believing man by the God who deals with him according to His eternal will, and the orientation of man to Him .... Faith is the opening of man for God as brought about by God Himself."¹

And Barth points out that as depicted in the Scripture the election of the individual is evident when a man, often in spite of himself, becomes the witness to the will of God.

In the final analysis, both the believers in Jesus Christ and the others who disbelieve, are all objectively elected in Him — the former in so far as they,

¹II/2, p. 326f.
"manifest and reproduce and reflect the life of this one elect, Jesus Christ."
the latter in so far as
"by their false witness to man’s rejection they manifest and reproduce and reflect the death of the one rejected, Jesus Christ." 

In Him, therefore, are all both rejected and elected, and the believers must recognise that they have no claim upon the grace of God, any more than the unbelievers. Thus too,

"..... the godless can be only potentially rejected. They may indeed conduct themselves as rejected, but even if they deserved it a thousand times they have no power to bring down on themselves a second time the sword of God’s wrath now that it has fallen. They are godless, liars, and they will not escape the rod of divine wrath." 

The distinction Barth makes here between the "sword", and the "scourge" (Rute) of God’s wrath is not a very clear one. He is saying that, because of Christ, man’s portion is chastisement not death, and he approaches very close to the Roman Catholic notion of Purgatory. But this is a peripheral problem in this discussion, and his main point is that the distinction between the elect among men and the others is a

1II/2, p. 347.
2II/2, p. 347.
3II/2, p. 349, c.f. II/2, p. 613.
distinction of degree not of kind - and for us to distinguish between these two groups is impossible; only God can do this. In fact every individual combines the two parts in his own being, of believer and unbeliever, as many have witnessed and all could witness.

It is at this point, however, that Barth steps away from his examination of the theological problem, and poses the question as a practical one for men, viz., how do we recognise the elect? His answer is an empirical test. The elect, he says, are different because they have been called by God, and this difference is manifested in their lives. He implies that we can recognise the elect in their works and ways, because they act under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

"He and he alone possesses the Holy Spirit who knows continually that the grace of Jesus Christ is the only basis, not only of his election, but also of his calling."¹

The elected individual is chosen in order to enjoy God - to be grateful to Him - to be loved by Him. This is the highest good for man - to be loved by God. The unbeliever¹'s destiny is to hear the truth and have faith, to become elected in fact.

Even from this incomplete resume of his position with regard to the doctrine of predestination it will be clear that Barth is barely interested in the problem of free will as it is posed by the philosopher. This latter problem is set because on the one hand the assumption of free will

¹II/2, p. 349.
in man is alleged to be inconsistent with certain scientific and
epistemological doctrines, while on the other hand the denial of this
assumption strikes at the very centre of certain doctrines of morality
and jurisprudence. Barth is as insistent as Luther that only God has
"free will", and his interest here is in the elect and the Church -
the human membership of these being of course coterminous. But he also
wants to say that the elect share in God's freedom in so far as they are
in the power of, and live under obedience to, the will of Christ. The
man who does not so live is, ipso facto, living under a delusion of
freedom. Thus Barth's view, surprisingly, comes close to Kant's theory
that although freedom cannot be proved or explained it must be accepted
as a presupposition of moral experience. The self-considered as a
member of the noumenal world is free, but as a member of the phenomenal
world every action is necessitated. It is true that Kant regarded
reason as itself the author of its own principles independently of
other influences, and in this respect completely free, and for this view
Barth's doctrine has no time. But in saying that the elect share in the
freedom of God, through grace, and that when a man disobeys the Word of
God he is not free, then in effect he is accepting a two aspect theory
of freedom similar to Kant's. For him perfect service is perfect
freedom, and this is an ideal which was only once visible among men.
Barth's theory is thus specifically theological (indeed Christological) and it is assumed when he proceeds to develop explicitly his interpretation of Christian ethics.
CHAPTER III

ETHICS AS THE COMMANDS OF GOD

If Barth's point that Christology is the touchstone of all knowledge of God in the Christian sense is granted then his doctrines of predestination and freedom might be taken as bold and legitimate inferences. The structural order of his exposition in Chapter VII - the Election of Jesus Christ, the Election of the Community, the Election of the Individual - is the inevitable reproduction of the movement of his thought, and is revealing in its placing of the individual on the circumference of the Christocentric circle. Because of his view that theology is the representation of the Word of God turned towards man, he believes that it must include the reality of the man to whom the Word is turned, and therefore dogmatics must include ethics. On Barthian premisses, because dogmatics has to do with the Word of God it must also contain an account of human existence and its problems - that is ethics. Thus Chapter VIII of 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' gives us Barth's mature reflections on the general problem of ethics. Here we find an exposition of what he takes to be the basis for the special problems of ethics, and these are discussed in later chapters. As this chapter, 'The Command of God', establishes the foundations for ethics, it and its implications, must now be examined in some detail.
It might seem strange that Barth should place this discussion within the context of the doctrine of God, but when one remembers that Jesus Christ, the God-Man, belongs here it can be appreciated that in order to round off this doctrine a place has to be made for general ethics - for the action of God in the affairs of man. Furthermore, having seen the implications of the election of man by God, the question of what is demanded of the elected man becomes paramount. It is to this question that Barth addresses himself in this chapter.

Thus his interpretation of Christian ethics is that it is an ethics of Grace, that is, it is concerned with what God requires of man, and it is only secondarily an ethic of man's responsibilities to other men. To the moral philosopher indeed Barth's whole discussion of ethics must seem something if not rich at least strange. Where the key words in an ethical treatise by a philosopher are likely to be "duty", "good", "right", "virtue", those in Barth are "command", "obedience", "claim", "decision" and "judgment". Where the moral philosopher is concerned, perhaps, to establish the autonomy of ethics or to investigate the language used about the ultimate ends of human conduct, Barth is out to demonstrate that apparent moral categorical imperatives are for the Christian specific divine commands; that in fact the whole Dogmatik is a sustained treatise on ethics, especially the doctrine of God, because it is from here that human modes of action are demanded and judged. In
fact Barth states specifically that he is not interested in, or concerned with, the ordinary conception or definition of ethics as generally understood.

He contends that the ethical question of conduct - viz. "What shall I do?" - is the inevitable, existential and supremely critical question of man's whole existence. Man exists in so far as he acts.

"The question whether and how far he acts rightly is the question whether and how far he exists rightly. And so it is no more and no less than the problem of man's existence which theology or dogmatics makes its own when it raises the ethical question, or rather recognises and treats it as its most characteristic problem. Neither theology nor dogmatics can be true to itself if it is not genuinely ready at the same time to be ethics. Dogmatics has no option: it has to be ethics as well. Its dialectics and its whole attitude necessarily has to be 'existential', i.e. because it refers to the Word of God it must also refer to human existence."¹

It is in the election of Jesus Christ that Barth sees THE Good. Only God is good, and what God does in Jesus Christ is what Barth primarily understands by ethics. All other apparently good actions are dependent on this good action. Barth admits that this view runs counter to all

¹/², p. 784.
other accepted ethical systems but he substantiates it with some 200 pages of argumentation, exhortation and exegesis.

Initially however he indicates his awareness of these contrary views of the nature of ethical inquiry, and he lists his objections to them under three heads sic:

(i) The view (of, for example, Schleiermacher, De Witte, Hagenbach, Herman and Wünsch) that Christian ethics can be justified at a bar of philosophical ethics; that is, when Christian ethics is seen as the natural corner stone of general philosophical ethics. Barth rejects this position chiefly because it seems to him to be measuring theological ethics against a yardstick of a general ethic.

"Here as elsewhere, we cannot concede to any other authority the competence to decide in a way which is binding even for theology what may or may not be a principle in matters of human knowledge and science."¹

The contention is that for the man who hears the command of God there can be no other principle from which this command is derived. The hearing of the command of God is itself its own authentication. Christian ethics, as interpreted by Barth, will have no commerce with general philosophical ethics whatever, and any attempt even to compare and contrast the two is not only abortive but sinful. It in itself is a proof that the philosopher has not understood the command as the command of God.

¹ΙΙ/2, p. 522.
Obviously it is impossible to argue with someone who refuses to argue, but if one takes this sort of language at a superficial level, one must protest that any dogmatics - however divinely inspired - is still man made (with this, of course, Barth would agree), and it could be that in the making distortion has taken place. Surely dialectic, even with the heathen, is as good for dogmatics as it is for the soul; even Christ Himself was willing to listen to the arguments of the devil. To say, as Barth does, that "there must be no armistice with the people of Canaan and their culture and their cultus", seems not only high-handed but positively authoritarian. No Christian philosopher wants to say that any command of God can be derived from, or compressed to accommodate, any ethical principle. But any command, in order to be obeyed correctly, must be understood correctly, and man's chief problem is perhaps not to question the fact that there are commands of God, but rather to ask seriously first, what sort of commands does God give, and secondly, how we mere mortals, the ephemeral creatures of an hour, may understand, recognise and obey such commands when they are given to us.

Barth may be sure when he receives God's commands, but most of us are very unsure, not of the reality of Jesus Christ, but of our own capacities. As Butler put it, reason "is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself".  

\footnote{Analogy, II/3.}
God has given us both the Revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ and the faculties by which to comprehend that revelation. If Barth is not prepared to argue with the philosopher then he misuses one of God’s gifts. His explicit case against apologetics is by no means convincing. However this kind of objection is based upon an over-simplification of Barth’s position. A closer reading reveals that he agrees, to some extent, with Butler, and, in fact, he also finds a place for apologetics within the ‘Kirchliche Dogmatik’. He writes,

"The Word of God remains the Word of God even as that which gives itself to be, and is, appropriated by us. ..... It will certainly be the case that we on our side encounter the Word of God with all kinds of specific wishes and needs, hopes and fears. Not man alone in respect of his thinking, but each of us in virtue of our own fate and character, is a specific system of presuppositions, expectations and restraints. When we assimilate something, this implies that we make it a part of this system. We consume it. We assimilate it to ourselves. We begin to do something with it. We utilise it in accordance with what we are and what we are not, with what we like and what we do not like."^1

In other words, as the Word is communicated through human words its apprehension is by the only means we have, i.e. in terms of our human understanding. When a theologian reflects on what is said in, e.g. a

^1I/2, p. 737.
biblical text, he makes use of the system of thought which he brings with him to the task; and that means in effect that he approaches it in the light of some preconceived philosophy or other. However Barth departs from Butler in taking that reason with which revelation is truly accepted as the reason imparted by the Word of God itself. He will not, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, permit any autonomy to any philosophical system, because in the end,

"Every philosophy which is posited absolutely leads to a falsification of Scripture (i.e. the Word of God as Scripture), because to posit absolutely what is man's own and is brought by him to the Word is an act of unbelief, which makes impossible the insights of faith, and therefore a true interpretation of the Word."¹

He will admit no priority to philosophy, although he is aware that in every theologian there lurks a philosopher; in a sense his theology of the Word of God is a sustained fight against the fascination which philosophy has for the natural man. And granting his own presuppositions he is logically bound to say this.

Of greater moment in this connection is the placing of apologetics in Barth's system, for it is presumably here, if anywhere, that the philosopher who professes Christianity can converse with Barth. In

¹Ibid. p. 732, my interpolation.
this connection Professor J. McIntyre points out illuminatingly the great determining influence Anselm had upon Barth's methodology, and indeed upon the content of that methodology. The relationship between fides and intellectus is here in question, and Barth's position would seem to be very close to what he takes to be that of Anselm. He indicates clearly just where he finds Anselm so congenial to his own way of thinking when he says, e.g.

"Anselm pledged himself .... to give satisfaction to Jews and heathen with his theological proofs sola ratione ("Cur Deus homo" 1, 20; 11, 11, 22, c.f. also Monol. 1) .... he especially wants to explain the necessitas of the reconciling work of Christ. But the ratio as well as the necessitas of which Anselm speaks is that of the veritas of God, which is for him identical with the divine Word and with the content of the Christian creed. Since he believes it, he wants to know it and prove it; he wants ratione (by means of his human reason) to make clear its rationem (its divine reasonableness); or necessitate (thinking fundamentally) to make clear its necessitatem (its divine basis) - in concreto the reasonableness and the basis of this or that article of faith (e.g. that of the reconciling work of Christ). Under the presupposition that this article of faith is true, Anselm examines and shows how far it is true."²

¹St. Anselm and his Critics', J. McIntyre, p. 25ff.
²II/1, p. 92.
Like Anselm, Barth is opposed to any apologetic position which would grant equal rights to faith and non-faith. Both theologians are agreed that faith has its own authority and its own basis: it is beyond the intellect in so far as the Christian intellectus is founded upon it. For Barth, apologetics can only remain implicit in Church Dogmatics because the Christian finds himself in the position of faith without his own choosing, and he says, rather bitingly,

"An apologetics which is conscious of its tasks and limitations as an account of what happens when God is known will as soon undertake this demonstration outside or above the constraint of the Word of God as it will the demonstration of the truth of God Himself."¹

In short Barth is more subtle than the objector above has appreciated. He says that when we begin with the event of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ then apologetics, as commonly understood, has no place, and the intellectus, as commonly understood can provide no buttress for natural theology: but both have their place, and their proper function, within dogmatic theology. To say, therefore, that Barth is unwilling, or unable, to argue with the philosopher is to disregard the potency of this fundamental dogma. His position, in some ways, can only be challenged in a wider critique than is adopted by the objector above, and this wider view is attempted in Chapter IV infra.

¹Ibid. p. 8.
(ii) A second view of general ethics is to attempt a diastasis between itself and theological ethics, delimiting the spheres within which each may legitimately move. The latter may be distinguished according to its source, its subjects, its presuppositions or its subject matter, and ultimately implies that its statements are designed only for Church members. This in fact is the view that any specifically Christian ethic there may be is an ethic binding only on Christians and not on other men. Barth’s chief objection here is put in the form of a series of questions:

"Is God's revelation revelation of the truth, or is it only the source of certain religious ideas and obligations, alongside which there are very different ones in other spheres? Outside and alongside the kingdom of Jesus Christ are there other respectable kingdoms? Can and should theology of all things be content to speak not with universal validity, but only esoterically? Is it, or is it not, serious in its alleged knowledge knowledge of a Whence? and Whither? of all ethical enquiry and reply, which are superior to all reason, experience and self-determination? If it is serious about this, how can it, even if only for a moment, take seriously and accept the validity of an ethics which lacks, or even disavows, this knowledge?"¹

¹ II/2, p. 526.
Barth's contention is that true theological ethics cannot admit that there is any facet of human activity which is not related to the command of God, and therefore there can be no demarcation of a domain of general ethics as distinct from Christian ethics. But the Christian philosopher might ask whether there are not certain duties imposed upon those who profess Christianity which are not duties for the rest of mankind, and if so could not the investigation of these duties in itself be a specific task of Christian ethics? There are undoubtedly other rules of conduct, rules of games, of cookery etc., and the question of how to distinguish moral rules from others is obviously an ethical inquiry. In Plato's 'Parmenides' the young Socrates professes himself certain that there are forms corresponding to the fundamental notions of ethics - Right, Good, Noble; he is doubtful about forms of organisms and physical things - Man, Fire, Water; in the case of such things as mud, dirt and hair he is inclined to think that there are no forms. But he is aware that consistency would demand forms of these too, and the general question is at once raised, "What sort of relation is it which holds between instances and what they are instances of?". Similarly the question might be put to Barth - Are there not certain activities of man which are not answers to the commands of God (e.g. eating, excreting, hair-cutting) and if so, what distinguishes these activities from those which can be counted as replies to the commands of God?
(iii) Of greater significance is the third account of a possible relationship between theological ethics in the Barthian sense and other ethics, viz., the Roman Catholic exposition, which, Barth says, warrants the closest attention of all. Roman Catholicism, following Augustine and Aquinas, sees the relationship as one of juxtaposition, or rather as a superstructure finishing and completing the lower story of one and the same building. Above the four "natural" virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice, they place the "supernatural" or "theological" virtues of faith, hope and charity. The province of the former is explored by moral philosophy, and that of the latter by moral theology - and the slogan of this approach is, "Gratia non destructit, sed supponit et perfectit naturam."

The neatness of this division, with its provision both for the Platonic cardinal virtues and for the biblical cardinal graces, makes it an attractive one for the philosopher. In addition the pre-eminence it gives to theological ethics, permitting no other ethic to judge it, makes it preferable, in Barth's eyes, to the piecemeal attempts of Neo-Protestant Christian ethics to solve the same problem. But of course this solution is but a reflection and an extension of the distinction between Natural and Revealed Religion - between natural theology and a theology of Grace, and, as we have seen, Barth will have nothing to do with this. Natural theology, for him, is the invention of the Anti-Christ,
and his critique of the Roman Catholic position here is based once again on his own view that there is no validity in natural theology. In short he attacks the whole concept of a general philosophical ethic, the whole basis, as he puts it, of this theory.

He begins by pouring scorn on the idea of a metaphysic of "being" (the very concept which is basic in Tillich's 'Systematic Theology'), contending that such a metaphysic can have nothing to do with,

"the God who is the basis and Lord of the Church. If this God is He who in Jesus Christ, became man, revealing Himself, and reconciling the world with Himself, it follows that the relationship between Him and man consists in the event in which God accepted man out of pure, free compassion, in which He drew him to Himself out of pure kindness, but first and last in the eternal decree of the covenant of grace, in God's eternal predestination. It is not with the theory of this divine praxis, with the consideration and conception of this divine act, of its eternal decree and its temporal execution, that theology, and therefore theological ethics, must deal. ...... Grace which has from the start to share its power with a force of nature is no longer grace. ...... The concepts of grace and revelation and God as they derive from the knowledge of the will and act of God in Jesus Christ are not adapted to be applied as they are in the Roman Catholic system. They burst through this system."¹

¹Il/2, p. 531.
In order to combat Barth at this point it would be necessary to challenge his whole position with regard to Natural Theology, and this will be done in a general criticism of his position (see pp. 102f). But in passing it should be noted that even if Barth is wrong about this it cannot therefore be contended that the Roman Catholic doctrine with regard to theological ethics is correct. To do so would be to commit the fallacy, extra dictionem, of the consequent, or as Aristotle termed it παρὰ τὸ ἐπορευόντα. It can still be said that Barth is correct in rejecting this position, but mistaken in the reasons he gives. It will be argued later that the Platonic and Pauline catalogues are not supplementary but are rather inimical, each claiming to cover the whole field of ethical inquiry in themselves. We are not meant either to dovetail them or to demarcate their domains, but to decide between them, and this, in effect, is Barth's solution also - but for different reasons.

With these preliminaries we may now proceed to outline Barth's positive thesis. He maintains that there is only one ethics, theological ethics, which takes as its starting point, not the question of human behaviour as such, but the apprehension of the grace of God, the decree of God in the Election of Jesus Christ. Hence the right action investigated by, or rather attested by, theological ethics is the action of God
in Christ. This has two immediate implications: (a) that the "good" has been said to man by God and all man can do is to repeat what God has said; and (b) when theological ethics asks about right action it is asking not about the action of man but about the action of God in Jesus Christ for man.

"When we say: What ought we to do? we are asking about Him, for it is in Him that this question of ours is answered. In Him the obedience demanded of us men has already been rendered. In Him the realisation of the good corresponding to divine election has already taken place - and so completely that we, for our part, have actually nothing to add, but have only to endorse this event by our action. The ethical problem of Church Dogmatics can consist only in the question whether and to what extent human action is a glorification of the grace of Jesus Christ."¹

Thus for Barth theological ethics understands man only as he is addressed by God. Its subject is the Work of God as it is addressed to, and claims, man. The concern of the ethics of the Dogmatik is not with man and his life, but with the command of God.

We may ask: What then is the command of God? If I have read Barth correctly it means that God commands man in Jesus Christ to hear that in Him God's decision about man has been revealed. In the hearing, in the confrontation of man with Jesus Christ, is the sole good for man.

¹II/2, p. 540.
In himself man is capable of nothing - either good or bad. Human action in itself however is impossible, because of God's action it is never ethically neutral. According to Barth's interpretation it is either a hearing and an obeying of God's command (and as the latter is good then the act of obedience is derivatively good) or it is not, and therefore it is bad.

Barth strives to express this in three different ways. First he says,

"The goodness of human action consists in the goodness with which God acts toward man. But God deals with man through His Word. His Word is the sum and plenitude of all good because God Himself is good."

Secondly,

"Man does good in so far as he acts as one who is called by God to responsibility. To act in and from responsibility to God means to act in commitment. Our action is free in so far as it is our own answer, the answer which we ourselves give to what is said to us by God. But as an answer it is bound. It is a good answer when it takes place in this commitment. Therefore its good consists always in its responsibility. Responsible action is good because the divine address is good, because God Himself is good."
Thirdly,

"Man does good in so far as his action is Christian. A Christian is one who knows that God has accepted him in Jesus Christ, that a decision has been made concerning him in Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God spoken in time. When he knows this, when he is 'judged' by God through confrontation and fellowship with Jesus Christ, his action too becomes a 'judged' action. It is in the fact that it is 'judged' that its goodness consists. Therefore its goodness derives from this confrontation and fellowship. His action is good because the divine address, which is an eternal and temporal event in Jesus Christ, is good, because God Himself is good."

About these three formulations at least three comments may be made at this point. Barth's contentions are that a man does good in obedience to the command of God, or in recognising the authority of that command, or in the fact that as an elect of God his actions are judged. (i) This would seem to indicate the only "derived" good is hearing the Word of God, and saying "I believe that Jesus is the Christ" - but this says Barth (see p. 57) is only possible as the gift of God (faith), and therefore as an action it is instigated by God's action, and is not a "derived" good at all. (ii) We may ask then: What is man's responsibility here? - again it seems that any apparent derived good is God's, and, without

---

1 'Kirchliche Dogmatik', II/2, p. 546f.
being blasphemous, on Barthian premises the responsibility for commitment to the command of God is God's, not man's, and the good is God's alone.

(iii) Furthermore, following Barth, the Christian is one who obeys God; but all so-called Christians (if they are elected in fact, and only God can say when and if they are elected) obey, if ever, only on occasion. Barth himself, in some sound exegesis (II/2, p. 436ff), points out that even the disciples did not obey the commands of Christ all the time. Were they then not Christians at those moments when they did not obey? It would appear so — and therefore the only true Christian was Christ, and only He can say when and where a man is a Christian. The word "know" which Barth uses here is a dispositional word — that is, it signifies a propensity to act rather than an existential act of knowing at a particular moment. But used in this way it is of no practical help to a man who desires, and desires passionately, to do the will of God.

How can I know that I am acting as Christ would have me act? To this question — and it is perhaps the supreme ethical question for the Christian — Barth has no reply, except — Obey the command of God. But to obey is to have faith, and faith is given us by God, therefore obedience is also God given. Barth seems to be providing a sort of jackpot type of ethic — we tender a coin to the Almighty (our action), and if He wills then we act rightly. It would appear that Barth has landed himself in a cul-de-sac out of which nothing practical can emerge.
One might concur with one of the implications of Barth's account - viz. that only God's actions are good - without at the same time accepting the view that man is completely impotent. It will be argued later that Christian ethics do in fact maintain just this, but that man has the power to strive to ascertain what God requires of him, and in addition he has the power to do wrong. In concentrating on the command of God, Barth seems to neglect the fact that God's command is only directed to His created beings, and as such He only addresses those humans who are capable of hearing, understanding and obeying His commands.

If we agree with Barth (and as Christians we must) that God commands and as we reverence the One who issues those commands (and reverence, in spite of Kant, cannot be given to a mere Categorical Imperative or a Moral Law per se, but only to something which at the minimum is personal), so by the same token, a command issued by a person will only be directed to something which is at least also personal. To adapt Locke (who be it noted was not disparaging the work of Aristotle), it could be said that God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Barth to make them automatons.

Having established ethics as the doctrine of God's command, Barth goes on to examine (a) the command as the claim of God, (b) the command as the decision of God, and (c) the command as the judgment of God.
Under (a) his chief contention is that we learn from what God has done for us in the life and death of Jesus Christ what God requires from us. To ask what this is, is to ask what God wills and has done for us — and God wills Jesus Christ, so we must be obedient to His commands; that is,

"Nothing that we can do in fulfilment of the will of God is higher and deeper than to love Jesus, and therefore to keep His commandments just because they are His, just because we cannot love Him without keeping His commandments. We definitely fulfil the will of God when we do this. And whatever is done in line with and in the sense of this action, even where Jesus is no longer or is not yet known: whatever bears in itself something in the nature of this action, and is therefore an actual witness to the fact that Jesus lives and reigns and conquers, is definitely a fulfilment of the will of God. In all ages the will of God has been fulfilled outside the Church as well. Indeed, to the shame of the Church, it has often been better fulfilled outside the Church than in it."

But of course Barth will not have it that this is due either to any natural goodness in man, or to any primary awareness in the being created by God. There is no similarity between the being of God and the being of man — nor is there any question of God using a man as his instrument to do His will.

1'Kirchliche Dogmatik', II/2, p. 569.
He goes on to say that we must remember that whatever is required of us it will always be our own human action - it is never the action of God.

"It will be our creaturely action, and here and now it will always be an action conditioned and indeed perverted by our sin. That is, in so far as it is done out of respect for that pattern (the life of Christ) in so far as that pattern is given to it, it will be righteous and holy; but in so far as it is regarded alone; in so far as it is questioned and investigated according to its own inner content, it will be unrighteous and unholy. This action is a good action only in virtue of its correspondence with God's grace. In so far as it is good in this correspondence, it will not wish to be freed from this correspondence, or to claim for itself any immanent goodness." 1

"In the last resort, the Apostles had only one answer to the question, 'What are men to do?' This was simply that they should believe, believe in Jesus Christ." 2

Here again Barth appears to be advocating an "in and out" theory of ethics. Any action, considered from a creaturely point of view, is wrong and tainted with sin - but if it "corresponds" to the will of God then, from the divine point of view, it is good. But this savours rather

1 II/2, p. 578.
2 II/2, p. 583.
of Kant's theory of freedom, in which he conceives of a solution in terms of the phenomenal and noumenal selves; regarded from the former point of view all our actions are conditioned, but from the latter some can be free; and Barth's theory is open to similar objections. Either man is able to do the will of God, or he is not. If he is not then the problem of the relation between God's will and man's action remains where it was. But if he is able so to act, then the problem of how it comes to appear to him as the Will of God arises at once, and to this problem Barth has, so far, given no effective answer.

It might also be noted here that "belief" in the sense used by the Apostles is also used in a dispositional sense, whereas an action is an occurrence, and the answer quoted by Barth can be interpreted as the contention that behind all our actions there should be the disposition of belief in Jesus Christ. When one asks in a certain existential situation, What shall I do? - shall I send my children to this school or that? - behind all my motives should be the abiding faith in Jesus Christ. Obviously we believe many things when we are not thinking about them - in fact almost every belief is subconscious throughout the greater part of its life history. Perhaps, as a provisional definition of belief, it could be said that it is a persistent state or disposition, brought into existence by an act of assenting, and it further manifests itself in further acts of assenting - though whether Barth would accept
this as a possible explication I cannot quite determine. Undoubtedly he would agree that belief in Jesus Christ is manifested not only in verbal propositions but in a way of living, but he says, explicitly, "To live at all it is essential that we should never cease to hear the Word of God and see the ground and object of the promise, nor grow weary in faith, nor fail to recollect the spiritual nature of the command (Rom. 7:14, 8:2)."¹

This seems to indicate that he takes belief simply as an occurrence. If this is the case then his attempt to view man through the magnifying glass of Christology has led him to postulate an "a priori" theory of belief which simply does not square with the facts of human psychology.

(b) In the elaboration of this topic - the command as the claim of God - Barth gives an interesting review of the specific commands of Christ as enumerated in the New Testament, but his thesis on the command as the decision of God has possibly greater interest for the ethical writer, for it is in this section that he expounds his own interpretation of the apparently general commands of the Sermon on the Mount. His topic here is the responsibility which is the lot of our human condition, because of God's decision concerning man.

".... each of our decisions and responsibilities as such is an anticipation in miniature of the total responsibility which, with our whole life we fulfil before God and in which, at the close of our existence in time, we stand before God as our Judge."²

¹II/2, p. 604.
²II/2, p. 642.
Barth agrees with Kant in rejecting any identification of morality either with rules of skill or counsels of prudence, and in distinguishing the question of a person's duty from that which seems subjectively right or even good. Kant's remarks in his 'Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten' (pages 34-35) could be repeated with one significant change by Barth. Kant says,

"For the pure conception of duty, unmixed with any foreign addition of empirical attractions, and, in a word, the conception of the moral law, exercises on the human heart, by way of reason alone (which first becomes aware with this that it can of itself be practical), an influence so much more powerful than all other springs which may be derived from the field of experience, that in the consciousness of its worth, it despises the latter, and can by degrees become their master; whereas a mixed ethics, compounded partly of motives drawn from feelings and inclinations, and partly also of conceptions of reason, must make the mind waver between motives which cannot be brought under any principle, which lead to good only by mere accident and very often also to evil."

Barth would substitute the person of Jesus Christ in the place of Kant's word "reason", and he would admit no degrees in the overcoming by Christ of all other factors. For Kant, of course, the moral law appears to humans, living under the conditions of mortal beings, as a command or
imperative, because in us reason has not full control over our desires; but this characteristic does not belong to the moral law as such. This means that the moral law holds for us solely because of our rationality, and not because, as creatures of time and space, we have to desire certain ends. The objective principle of ethics appears as a command, but in its pristine state it is a law of practical reason, and this accounts to some extent for the difficulties in which Kant finds himself with regard to the feeling of reverence or respect ('Achtung') for the moral law. (He compares his emotion towards the moral law with his emotion towards the starry heavens - 'Kritik der praktischen Vernunft', pp. 161-312; and in 'Kritik der Urteilskraft' he connects Achtung with our feeling for the sublime.) But he invariably rejects the view that morality is obedience to the commands of God, and it is precisely this which Barth asserts here. As he says,

"A command which transcends our actions cannot in the last analysis be merely a command which I have given myself on the basis of what I myself have seen and experienced and felt and judged of the good and the true and the beautiful. It must come to me as something alien, as the command of another, demanding as such that I should make its content the law of my life. If there is an ought, it must not be the product of my own will, but
touch from outside the whole area of what I can will of myself. It must lay upon me the obligation of unconditional truth - truth which is not conditioned by myself."

It is at this point that the full significance of the word 'Kirchliche' in 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' becomes evident. As if in answer to the charge that his interpretation is an atomisation of God's command, making it relative to each individual in each and every situation of his life, Barth stresses the point that, as there is one God, so there is one character and quality at all times in His command; and that although the ethical question is our personal question, as the grace of God concerns us personally, still the form of the question is actually, "What ought we to do?", and not "What ought I to do?".

"I am invited and made responsible and enabled to fulfil my responsibility, not merely as the specimen of a natural or historical collective, nor as a so-called personality or individual or special case, but as this particular man, i.e. this one beloved of God and therefore a responsible partner in the divine covenant. Even the claim which is addressed to me is not for me alone, but of universal validity. ... There is an overwhelming possibility that those who pose the ethical question only in individual terms will try to use this possibility.

\[1\] II/2, p. 651.
of affirming the exceptional character of their case over against the claim and judgment of the divine command. And this is the very thing which must not happen."\(^1\)

Here we have Barth's version of Kant's conception of the universal validity of the moral law and its implication of the kingdom of ends. The "we" of the question are in fact the elect - in so far as they alone can rightly ask the question. An in so far as the elect have the spirit of the Holy Ghost there can be only one spirit in the true Church and one answer to the question.

It might have been expected that Barth here would put in a word about the fallibility and transience of the individual's solitary experience, indicating that the individual is limited in his perception and understanding. The collective view of the Church, the co-operation of minds and the community of instinct and sentiment which might be expected to link the members of the true Church together seem to be implied. Barth himself draws on the theological thinking of the great theologians, but he does not draw this inference. He might have said here that the grace of Jesus Christ is not grasped in an abstract vision or formula but in a way of living and a communal wisdom. But presumably this inference is barred because of his Christological thinking, and instead he retreats into paradox - it is and it is not. It is the individual who asks the ethical question, and the answer is only given

\(^1\)II/2, pp. 655-656.
to him in the community. The community does not assist the individual to obey or to hear the command, but, in hearing and obeying, the individual is in the community. In fact he can only hear and obey as and when he is in the community.

"We can say Credimus in Jesus Christ only when and as the I says Credo, and when the I says Credo, he does so with all the responsibility of the Credimus." ¹

Barth goes on to maintain that the command of God is definite and specific in every situation, and he points out in a piece of persuasive exegesis how the "ethics" of the Bible consists not of general rules or moral principles but of commands or demands directed to individuals in a particular time and place by God.

"For, as the lord of this history, God seems hardly to be interested at all in general and universally valid rules, but properly only in certain particular actions and achievements and attitudes, and this in the extremely simple and direct way of desiring from man (as a father from his child, or a master from his servant) that this or that must or must not happen." ²

He contends that any attempt to interpret these specific commands as universally valid principles will be a distortion, because they were addressed to a particular individual in a specific situation. Yet Barth

¹ II/2, p. 657.
² II/2, p. 672.
also wants to say that this does not entail any capriciousness on the part of what God demands from man. Thus his exegesis of those sections of Holy Writ which do seem to contain ethical principles and precepts is of especial interest. These too Barth regards as specific commands to be understood only historically and concretely - they are, as it were, only summaries or collections of commands.

Here we have Barth vacillating and, by means of an imprecise terminology, concealing from himself the very real problem involved. He says on the one hand that although the particular commands of God to individuals may seem fortuitous this is not so because God is faithful (or good) as the God of this election of grace. Thus the true theme of the Bible is not the proclamation of ethical principles. We are not to look for the will of God other than His will in Jesus Christ. But on the other hand he is forced to assert that these summaries or collections of commands,

"... remind us of the obligation which God has undertaken with regard to each of the individuals who belong to Him, and which each of these individuals must accept in relation to God. They affect, in some sense, all the individuals to whom God belongs and who belong to God, who form this people or community.

..... As God speaks in the events of these summaries, He will always and in all circumstances speak to each individual and the
one who is now men as the object addressed in these summaries will always and in all circumstances be face to face with God, whoever he may be. ..... They (the summaries) reveal the background against which the dealings of God with man are always unconditionally transacted with the urgency and immediacy which characterises them; the presuppositions on both sides; the series of divine attributes and human obligations which form the framework of the particular events of divine commanding and forbidding, of the actual encounters between God and man, of the events in the history of the divine covenant of Grace. ¹

In short Barth says, firstly, that the Bible gives us a picture of God issuing specific commands to particular individuals and it is not concerned with general moral principles at all. And he also wants to say that those passages which most theologians read as being concerned with general rules (e.g. the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount) are in fact giving us merely a delineation of the sphere within which God's command is heard. They form the basis or the "framework" of the life of the elect of God. Thus in the Sermon on the Mount Barth sees "the immoveable framework and objective order" in which the life of the elect must be lived, but that life is, he insists, one of existential obedience to the command of God in each and every individual

¹II/2, pp. 682-683. My italics.
action, and the exegesis confirms his view that on the evidence of the Bible, scriptura sacra, the divine command is always a concrete command.

For the moral philosopher, and indeed for most writers on Christian ethics, it is precisely this framework within which, or these presuppositions upon which, the true life may be lived which are important. But because of his extreme Christomonism Barth has no interest in these principles - the gospel is inevitably prior to the law. His interest is solely and simply the command of God and the primary task of Christian ethics as he understands it, "is to bear witness to the grace of God in so far as this is the saving engagement and commitment of man."

The presuppositions upon which Barth relies here will have to be examined in greater detail later, but one point must be made. For a man to hear and obey the command of God in a situation he must already - even on Barthian premisses - be within the framework which governs his hearing. The presuppositions of a man's ethical experience are vital in his assessment of the situation. If he knows not the law then his obedience to the Judge who issues a particular edict will be either an irrational or an unworthy obedience. If Barth intends to imply that this is precisely what is meant by faith, which is by no means unworthy, then it would appear that he is detracting from the concept of the obedience that is possible for man, and this in turn detracts from the conception

\[^{1}\text{Ibid. p. 699.}\]
of the lordship of God, and the justice of God. A god who demands blind obedience to an arbitrary edict is not the God who gave His Son for the disobedience of man. Barth forgets that a command in order to be obeyed has to be understood and this understanding presupposes a framework of a common language. In his concentration upon the concrete command Barth has neglected the true ethical framework within which God had placed man before He sent His Son.

Barth's ethics of grace has much that is worthy of commendation, but to base it upon an a priori exegetical approach to the Scriptures is surely a mistake. It could perhaps be contended in opposition to Barth's exegesis that the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount is a genuine ethic, in that it is concerned with universally valid moral principles, but at the same time it is an impossible one for man as he is in space and time. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect", is a general ethical principle, as is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind ..... and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.", but their purpose is not to place us within a certain framework, nor to show us that we are in a certain sphere of reference, but rather to drive us away from our own natural (and therefore naturalistic) ethics to God. We are not only irrational, as Barth insists, and we see through a glass darkly, but we are sinful; and it is not our ignorance which forces us
to Christ but our sin; and be it said also the failure of all naturalistic systems to be ultimately satisfying. Conventional morality may be explained, or even explained away, by reference to psychology or sociology or anthropology, but the consciousness of the objectivity of certain moral principles cannot be so simply dismissed.

Where Kant says that our supreme duty is to act morally, otherwise we should have no particular duties, Barth says that we should obey the command of God in particular situations, and there are no principles to guide us. In his attempts to establish the autonomy of ethics, the former concentrated his attention upon the duty of acting for the sake of the law or duty as such, not for the sake of a particular law or a particular duty. The latter, on the other hand, has concentrated his attention upon the specific command of God, not the duty of acting in accordance with God's law. It may be that the via media between these extremes will lead to a more practical, concrete and still universally applicable ethic. Alternatively, it might be said that in his concentration upon the formal aspects of the Categorical Imperative - its universal validity - Kant has emptied it of all concrete content; while in his concentration upon the concrete commands Barth has left them with no claim to universal validity. What is required is an ethic which takes account of the concrete action in a situation and of the formal principle of the action. To neglect the first is to lay oneself
open to the charge of empty formalism: and to neglect the latter is to
open the way to ethical capriciousness and a reliance upon arbitrary
edicts of an arbitrary will.

Lest all this may seem abstract and nebulous to one who keeps
asking, How can I know what God commands me to do here and now?, Barth
ends his section on the Definiteness of the Command on an empirical note.
We find out what God demands of us by searching the Scriptures. He
devotes some space to emphasise the fact that this does not mean that we
should use the Bible as a sort of card index of commands, which may be
picked out when the appropriate situation turns up, nor as a kind of
crystal ball to be consulted in times of emergency, but rather that, by
reading and study, we may be orientated to the ethical sphere; and it
is implied that when this is done we will know definitely what God
requires of us in each and every situation.

Once again this is not altogether satisfactory. But if one attempts
to argue against this by describing a moral problem in which two, or more,
apparent duties clash, then the Barthian reply would no doubt be that
one has not really been properly orientated otherwise there would be no
problem. If I believe that a certain action would be in accordance with
God’s will then I should act upon it in faith. But the problem for the
ordinary man remains. Few men are saints, and perhaps none of us have
been completely orientated to the ethical sphere - most men have been
faced with two contradictory possible courses of action, both of which seem to be in accord with God's will as attested in the Bible. How does one act here? This is perhaps the crucial ethical problem, and to this question Barth has no proper reply. His answer, in fact, is reminiscent of the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue, and like that principle it opposes man with an impossible ideal of reason.

Furthermore Barth's rather vague remarks about "the delimitation of the sphere in which the life of the divine community will be fulfilled", or "the basis, the immovable framework and objective order within which this life may and will be lived", are really no help to one who accepts his main thesis that one must obey the divine command in each specific situation. There are times when to the man of God the specific command runs counter to the "immovable framework" of both the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Kierkegaard faced this implication of occurrential acts of obedience much more directly than does Barth, and the latter's theory, in spite of these oblique references to the sphere of the ethical, comes in the end to explicit existentialism. Thus in 'Fear and Trembling', in the section in which the question is asked whether "there is such a thing as a teleological suspension of the ethical?", Kierkegaard finds that to the man of God this is precisely what does happen. He writes, e.g.,

"The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is clearly evident. The tragic hero still remains within the ethical."
He lets one expression of the ethical find its telos in a higher expression of the ethical; the ethical relation between father and son, or daughter and father, he reduces to a sentiment which has its dialectic in the idea of morality. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical. With Abraham the situation was different. By his act he overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher telos outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former. In Abraham's life there is no higher expression than this, that the father shall love the son. Of the ethical in the sense of morality there can be no question in this instance.¹

Kierkegaard's position, like Barth's, really comes to this, "Obey God in spite of the law."

The story of Samson might be cited as a further appropriate illustration. Presumably one piece of the scaffolding which Barth has in mind is the injunction against suicide, but this Samson contravenes. The orthodox answer to this problem is given by St. Augustine, in the De Civitatis Dei, "Nec Samson aliter excusatur quod seipsum cum hostibus ruina domus oppressit, nisi quia Spiritus latentur hoc insserat, qui per illum miracula faciebat." For Milton the interest in the situation came from the thought of God as directly commanding man to do certain things,

¹'A Kierkegaard Anthology', pp. 132-133.
which in "the objective moral order" are forbidden. Samson is required to play before the Lords and People,

"He at first refuses, dismissing the public Officer with absolute denial to come; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him; the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of joyful hope to procure ere long his Son's deliverance; in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste; confusedly at first and afterwards more distinctly relating the Catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the Tragedy ends."¹

God's right to exempt chosen individuals from moral prescripts is thus the theme of the first Choral song in Milton's 'Samson Agonistes', which begins,

"Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to Men;" and goes on,

"Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whomsoever it pleases him by choice
From National obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense."²

¹'Samson Agonistes'. The Argument.
²Ibid. lines 293-294 and lines 309-314.
To this sentiment Barth must perforce agree. But if he does agree then there can be no justification for saying, as he does,

"Man can be obedient to the Sermon on the Mount only in so far as he is ready and prepared for acts of the most specific obedience on the lines it indicates and as God demands them from every man in his own hour and situation; only in so far that is, as man is content to fill the position it requires and therefore to feel that he has no other choice but to direct his life according to its claims."\(^1\)

(c) However Barth might reply that this sort of objection is answered in his final section on the "Command as the Judgment of God", and in his dissertation on "agape" at the end of his book on the Doctrine of Reconciliation. Here he contends that everything God has to say to the individual is said to the God-Man Jesus Christ, and everything the individual has to say to God is said by Him.

"Ethics as the doctrine of God's command, and therefore as the doctrine of the sanctification given to man by God, is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It can be attained and developed only as the knowledge of Jesus Christ."\(^2\)

His voice demands our faith, and when we really hear it Barth says every other choice but obedience is excluded.

\(^1\) Kirchliche Dogmatik, II/2, p. 699.

\(^2\) II/2, p. 777.
"If we hear it, this is definitely the case. Only as we listen to other voices can we think that we can choose between good and evil ... When we obey we do the only thing that we are free to do; the thing that we can do only in real freedom. We can be disobedient only as we are not free. Disobedience is not a choice, but the incapacity of the man who is no longer or not yet able to choose in real freedom. ......

In this faith we are holy; we are sanctified for God and eternal life. In this faith we live the life of those who are judged by God - that life which is the purpose of the divine judgment. In this faith Jesus Christ Himself lives in us - the Head in His members, the 'author of faith' in His followers."¹

However this does not mean that Christ lives in man and uses man as an instrument. Barth rejects entirely the view that God uses man as a vessel or pipe through which the stream of God's "agape" will pass to others. God is still God and man still man even after his election.

"When the love of God establishes fellowship between God and man it makes man free to imitate His divine action in the sphere and within the limits of human action, and thus to love in human fashion as God does in divine."²

And later,

"The one who loves God cannot then be solitary. He cannot be a religious individual with his individual concerns and joys and

¹II/2, p. 779.
²IV/1, p. 778.
wishes and achievements. As one who has an active part in the history of salvation he is accompanied from the very outset, by those who belong with him to the people of God, by fellow partners in the covenant, by the 'household of faith' (Gal. 6: v 10). He does not love God on the basis of a revelation directly vouchsafed to him or in a private relationship. He began to love Him as there was in the world - even before he himself was, or loved God - the community which, called and gathered by the Holy Spirit, attested the love of God to him, and summoned him by its ministry to love God in return."

The implications of this are that in the community of the true Church the commands of God are not arbitrary because they are directed to all men alike by the one God, and in any specific situation the individual will know how to obey because he is within this community - though it is only because he does obey that he becomes a member of the community.

The law is within the gospel, and as such it is not arbitrary, nor can our hearing of the law be merely a matter of our own caprice. This however strikes at the very roots of orthodox ethical theory, and any criticism must begin with a view of Barth's own presuppositions. In the next chapter therefore I shall attempt to give two main lines of thought which seem to me to make Barth's interpretation of Christian ethics untenable.

\[1\text{IV/II, p. 306.}\]
CHAPTER IV
CRITICISM OF BARTH'S ETHICAL THEORY

1. In Chapter I Barth's attitude to Natural Theology was presented as sympathetically as possible, because no understanding of his attitude to philosophy can be achieved unless this is held in the forefront. This is indeed a central feature of his architectonic in the 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' and it is basic to his interpretation of Christian ethics. Because of his Christology in the doctrine of God he is led to the rejection of all philosophical ethics as such. It is natural and inevitable then that any philosopher will attempt to strike at the very roots of this doctrine. And even if one is neither a naturalist or a deontologist in the Kantian sense one might feel a little uneasy about some of Barth's mental callisthenics when he attempts to interpret the "imago Dei" in Christological terms.

Of course Barth's view that,

"A church dogmatics must .... be christologically determined as a whole and in all its parts."

has been disputed by many other theologians. Barth's friend and co-worker Emil Brunner split with him over this very point. Paul Althaus also disagrees with Barth here and contends for a two-fold revelation. Paul Tillich writes,

---
1 Kirchliche Dogmatik', I/2, p. 123.
2 Vide e.g. 'Natur und Gnade', 1934, p. 4ff.
3 Paul Althaus, 'Die Christliche Wahrheit'.
---
"Universal revelation includes not only mystical (and prophetic) reactions against distorted sacramental forms and systems. It also includes rational reactions, separated from or united with mysticism and prophetism. In the light of this situation, any theology which in terms of a general proposition excludes the creations of reason, that is, man's cultural life, from an indirect participation in the history of revelation, must be rejected."¹ and these are but three names among many other theologians who have reacted against Barth.

If Barth's interpretation of the sole revelation of God in Christ is accepted then it would appear that all our philosophical theories of ethics must be rejected - rejected in fact even before they begin, because on this interpretation even to attempt such a theory is in itself a form of blasphemy - a denial of the Christological dogma. However, given Barth's presuppositions, this is not surprising, because it appears that man's good is evil throughout, and the crime of humanity is that it is human and not divine. Because God is God and man is man, the only possible meeting place (and it is "impossible" in terms of pure logic) is in Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that no amount of argumentation will convince Barth that he has swung the theological pendulum too far away from the activity

of God in creation to the activity of God in Jesus Christ. But could it not be said, in a partial contradiction to this, that it was because God gave natural man so much, not because He gave him nothing, in placing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden, that He sent His Son to pay for our evil? Granted that natural theology is insufficient for knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, still there appears no ground for Barth's view that there is no natural knowledge of God of any kind. If Barth contends further that in the judgment of God upon man at the Cross the apparent ground for a natural theology was destroyed, and that therefore all that went before, as told in the Old Testament (e.g. by the prophets) was so much unanchored material, (like a thread which only achieved its function when knotted at the end by the revelation in Christ), it may be replied that there must also be taken into account the creative work of God as described elsewhere than in the New Testament - e.g. in the first two chapters of Genesis, the "saga of creation" as Barth calls it (the thread must be knotted at both ends in order to function properly, and in viewing the knot tied in 33 A.D. as all important Barth is neglecting the importance of the other knot). Here we move closer to Tillich, and away from Barth when we contend that we should look not only at the knowledge (or lack of knowledge) which man has of God, but rather at his sense of guilt - and it is here we find the true basis for a natural theology. Because man
knows when he acts wrongly, and because he remains unsatisfied by all the explanations of naturalistic ethics, he is driven to seek the transcendent power which gives him this awareness of guilt. It is not our ignorance which forces us to manufacture a natural theology, but in our wrong doing we are aware of it; and it is not our ignorance which drives us to Christ, but our awareness that the best we are capable of is still not the good or indeed good enough. It is not that we can ascend from our moral acts to an awareness of God, but rather that in moral action God is found in the realisation that the action is His.

This is but a first glance at some points contended for in Part III, and in order properly to do justice to Barth's view it would be necessary to engage in some rather involved exegetical dialectic. But this is neither in my power, nor is it necessary for the general point I wish to make. Other theologians have engaged Barth on his own ground, and an excellent summary of their views is given in G.C. Berkouwer's book 'General Revelation'. One of his general conclusions is that Barth was wrong to conjoin general revelation and natural theology: there is, he believes, a place for general revelation in addition to special revelation, but, like Barth, he also rejects natural theology as such, and in effect general revelation is subordinated to special revelation, so that he is not far from Barth in this matter.
Berkouwer's exegesis is concerned chiefly with the difficult passages in Romans 1 and 2, with which Barth also has wrestled long and often (see e.g. IV/2, p. 392ff; II/2, p. 484ff). It is however curious to note the manner in which Barth interprets the creation story of Genesis in Chapter IX of 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' - 'The Work of Creation'. He does indeed confess in the preface to this chapter that this is a sphere in which he feels much less confident, and it might seem that his critical presuppositions about natural theology have inhibited his undoubted powers of exegesis especially at this point. It is interesting, for example, to compare some of his remarks here with those, say of Hegel, on the same topic. The former represents the extreme left of the theological position, and the latter the extreme right.

The crucial texts in this connection are:-

Genesis 1.26: "And God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.'"

Genesis 1.27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Genesis 3.22: "And the Lord God said, 'Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil.'"

Barth interprets the first two texts in the sense of God's grace to man.
"Man is no more solitary than God. But as God is One, and He alone is God, so man as man is one and alone, and two only in the duality of his kind, i.e. in the duality of man and woman. In this way he is a copy and imitation of God. Man can and will always be man before God and among his fellows only as he is man in relationship to woman and woman in relationship to man."¹

Barth goes on to say that in virtue of this divine likeness - i.e. in his existence as man and woman - the distinctively human is directed to hear the Word of God. This is man's destiny. The divine likeness consists merely in man's existence as male and female. This is a dissipation of the doctrine of "imago Dei" with a vengeance, and Barth's meaning is not by any means absolutely clear. He seems to mean by this that as there is a differentiation and relationship between the I and the Thou in God (viewed Christologically) so the divine likeness in man is a copy of this relationship - man is created as a Thou addressed by God and as an I responsible to God; and in the distinction between man and woman in which there is also, by way of analogy, an I-Thou relation. He says, for example,

"The special feature of human existence in virtue of which man is capable of action in relation to God; his nature as a Thou which can be addressed by God and an I which is responsible to Him; his

¹III/1, p. 186.
character as an I and Thou in the co-existence of man and man, of male and female - all this, and therefore the divine likeness, cannot be transmitted by the father to the son merely because he is the cause of his physical life."¹

Throughout Barth sees the image of God as exclusively the affair of God Himself - it is a gift which man hopes is given to each individual in so far as he is male and female.

This is surely a strange reading of the doctrine of "imago Dei", and Barth is led to it because he cannot view the creation saga except through the categories of Christology. Some of the implications of this interpretation are very strange - e.g. may it then be argued that the ideal for humanity is bi-sexuality because in the hermaphrodite the analogy with the I-Thou relationship, mirrored, imperfectly, in the relationship between man and woman, is closest? To produce premises for this sort of conclusion is as bad as to argue on the basis of the same texts that man was originally created bi-sexual, and that the present division into male and female was a result of the fall.

In his exegesis of the third text Barth is driven to a similar desperate expedient. He contends that the good and evil mentioned is not a knowledge of moral values - only God really knows good and evil, therefore man cannot.

¹III/1, p. 199.
"Both good as good and evil as evil receive their nature from Him and are subjected to Him in the realisation of their disposition which then also becomes their judgment. .... To transgress the Word of the Lord means to do good or evil after one's own will. But this is something which must not be done, because it is God who must decide concerning good and evil, commanding the one and prohibiting the other, whereas man, choosing after his own heart cannot attain good but will do evil."¹

In short it seems that man has no knowledge of the real good (or evil) until it has been revealed to him in Jesus Christ. Man's existence is condemned because of the "imago Dei" - man's chief fault, according to Barth, seems to be that he is man not God. Human beings who are not elected have no option but to do wrong.

Hegel of course held the same opinion about original sin, but his interpretation of the 'Mosaic Legend' is very different. He sees the divine likeness in man as an element of God Himself in His eternal being, so that the nature of man is divine.² And he comments about the fall,

"Childlike innocence no doubt has in it something fascinating and attractive: but only because it reminds us of what the spirit must win for itself. The harmoniousness of childhood is a gift from the hand of nature: the second harmony must spring from the

¹III/1, p. 287.
²Vide e.g. 'Phil. de Rel.', Part 3, ed. Lassen, p. 102.
labour and culture of the spirit. And so the words of Christ
"Except ye become as little children" etc. are very far from
telling us that we must always remain children."¹

And on the third text Hegel comments thus,

"Knowledge is now spoken of as divine, and not, as before, as
something wrong and forbidden. Such words contain a confutation
of the idle talk that philosophy pertains only to the finitude
of the mind. Philosophy is knowledge, and it is through
knowledge that man first realizes his original vocation, to be
the image of God. When the record adds that God drove men out
of the Garden of Eden to prevent their eating of the tree of life,
it only means that on his natural side certainly man is finite
and mortal, but in knowledge infinite."²

No brief is being held here in favour of Hegel. He approached the
creation sagas with certain philosophical presuppositions, just as Barth
did with theological presuppositions. Both men are overtly concerned
with man's knowledge of God. Hegel views this through the telescope
of Reason, and Barth through "faith in Jesus Christ" as the only true
knowledge given to man. Personally I find Barth extremely diffuse in
this Chapter IX. When he says, for example, that,

²Ibid.
"Man is one and alone and two only in the duality of his kind, i.e. in the duality of man and woman."¹

he seems to be adopting an extremely fundamentalist position in his exegesis of the first few chapters of Genesis, but at the same time he is dressing up his view in high sounding theological jargon. Out of the welter of words the summary given on page 107 can, I believe, be distilled, but if this is a correct reading then Barth seems to be granting to God in his creation of man less than he grants in the creation of other forms of life. Man finally is condemned by God for being man, and as such cannot know God. And in the final analysis is this so very far from the Hegelian view that original sin is due to the irrational factors to which all men are condemned (except perhaps the true Hegelian)? When Hegel, in his attempt to interpret human history as the self-development under the form of time of the Absolute Idea, encounters events that run counter to this movement or defy rationalisation, he simply ignores them; so Barth, in his attempt to interpret our knowledge of God in purely Christological categories, must reject all the experience of mystics and saints and other religions. In opposition to both a quotation from De Burgh is apposite,

"To explain how the act of creation gives birth to a manifold in time would mean to share in the timeless thought of God. We can but comprehend the fact of its incomprehensibility and,

¹III/1, p. 186.
renouncing the quest for a theodicy, content ourselves with tracing the footprints (vestigia) of the Creator, in the world of experience, among the things of time.\footnote{W.G. De Burgh, 'From Morality to Religion', pp. 204-205.}

The footprints of the Creator, be it added, may be found leading toward, and away from, the Incarnation, and to concentrate exclusively upon the latter is to neglect the many and diverse evidences of His touch upon the lives of many human individuals who, perhaps, have had no apparent contact with His Word. Barth's interpretation inevitably must minimise this and must therefore neglect the fact that the Christian ideal represents much ethical teaching not explicitly to be found in the teaching of Christ. In concentrating his theological acumen upon the fountain head he forgets the stream which has received not unimportant accessions by the way. On ethical grounds alone it must be said that the doctrine of the Son requires also a doctrine of the Holy Ghost.

This contention must in no way be taken as any disparagement of the life and teaching of Christ. Barth sees His life and teaching as the refutation of all natural theology - in the sense of man's unaided knowledge of God. It is contended here that this life, and death, was necessary, not because of the emptiness of this knowledge, but because in Him God paid the penalty for the neglect of that knowledge man had
of His Creator - in other words for man's guilt. Natural Theology is perhaps better viewed as the attempt to express that awareness of error, guilt and insufficiency in mankind which forces it to an awareness of the objectivity of truth, goodness and beauty. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God in His continual and continuous revelation - but such revelation comes when, and only when, the individual, be he theologian, moral philosopher or artist, is living and acting in awareness of his error, his guilt or his insufficiency.

At the end of his survey of 18th century optimism in Chapter IX Barth says,

"To set that which is human, worldly and rational alongside that which is Christian is inevitably to expel the latter. No man can serve two masters. And if we once serve another master alongside Christ, as will always be the effect of this procedure, we must not be surprised to see bad fruit growing on the bad tree. A choice is thus demanded in respect of the knowledge of the justification of existence. It can be achieved as the knowledge of Him cui omnis potestas data est in coelo et in terra. But it cannot be achieved if it does not really find a place for confessing Him."\(^1\)

\(^1\)III/1, p. 414.
But in contending for a natural theology which is "human, worldly and rational", we are not trying to serve two masters. In the serious search for God, which is the lot of all mankind, man is serving the one Master, and he is obeying the first command of Christ. Ultimately all art, all morality and all philosophy is natural theology in so far as it is prescribed by the nature given to man by God the Creator. In his total rejection of natural theology Barth detracts from the activity of God in creation and forgets that it is only on this basis that a true Christology is erected.

2. This leads directly to the second point of general criticism of Barth's interpretation of Christian ethics. Although he contends repeatedly that what is important is not man's knowledge of God, but rather God's knowledge of man, his practice belies his principle. It is because he sees in the Incarnation a proof of man's lack of knowledge of God that he is concerned, throughout the 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' so far published, with what knowledge man can have of God in the Revelation of His Word.

Kant's problem in his first Critique was how to account for the kind of knowledge we have of the world - specifically, How are a priori synthetic judgments possible? - and very generally his answer is that in order to account for the kind of knowledge we have the intellect has both a "real" and a "logical" function to perform - i.e. it not only
brings to light from the given an order which is implicit in it, but it also imposes upon it a very general order of its own. The mind therefore brings certain principles of its own to bear in constructing the world as we know it - the categories are in a way the presuppositions of the sort of experience we have. Perhaps unconsciously Barth is influenced by this Critique beyond the others. As was pointed out in Chapter I, Barth's doctrine of God bears some resemblance to this. His problem in the 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' is really to account for man's knowledge of God, and he very generally says that the presupposition for this knowledge is to be found in the Incarnation. Kant bases his transcendental deduction of the categories not on the nature of formal logic alone, nor on empirical observation alone, but on the premiss that whatever falls within experience must conform to certain rules if it is to be called objective experience at all. The necessity which is inherent in any objective experience depends on the fact that we impose on the manifold certain general forms. Similarly Barth bases his doctrine of God not on the nature of individual experiences of God nor on the validity of the theistic arguments of natural theology but on the fact that whatever can be counted as Christian experience must be bound to the Word of God if it is to be counted as objective at all - one might almost say that his transcendental deduction of our knowledge of God is that we know God because God creates the capacity for knowing Him.
through Christ. The necessity of faith depends on the fact that it is God who imposes on our knowledge this specific form. Ultimately therefore it seems that Barth is chiefly concerned with the intellectual outrageousness of the Incarnation, not with the moral outrageousness of it (in so far as the one concerns the being of God in Christ, and the other the perfection of God in being born and crucified).

Furthermore Kant insists that moral principles, if they are going to be genuine moral principles, must be universal and necessary i.e. a priori. A moral law, he says, must carry with it absolute necessity. In theoretical knowledge Kant finds his universal and necessary principles in the contribution made by mind, i.e. in pure reason itself. But he believes that besides the theoretical employment of reason in discovering facts there is the practical employment of reason in conduct, and it is this which is the business of ethics. If then we want to discover universal and necessary principles in ethics here too we must search for them in reason itself - but this time as practical reason. Barth similarly argues that moral commands if they are going to be genuine moral commands, must be individual and necessary, and he finds these specific commands in the Word of God. And just as Kant implies that it is no more the business of ethics to provide rules of conduct than it is the business of logic to provide arguments, so Barth contends that the business of theological ethics is not to specify particular commands of
God to particular men. For Kant the function of the categorical imperative is to provide a test for rules of conduct, just as it is the business of logic to provide a test for arguments; and for Barth the function of theological ethics is to examine the form of God's command where it is addressed to man in the Word of God, just as it is the function of dogmatics to investigate the language which the Christian church uses in speaking about God.

The chief objection to Kant's theory is not, perhaps, to his introduction of the thing-in-itself, nor to his dialectical callisthenics in the transcendental deduction of the categories, but to the fact that the experience which his metaphysic was intended to explain was an experience geared to Newtonian physics and Cartesian mechanism. He assumed one science of nature and one kind of causality, and it is precisely this assumption which is challenged by the Quantum physics of today.

"Kant did not foresee the possible forms of physical laws:
by laying too much stress on the scheme of causality, by claiming for it an 'a priori' status, he unduly narrowed the field of research."

In short the experience of the Newtonian physicist is not the only possible experience - even in physics. Similarly it must be said that

---

Berth's formulation of Christian dogmatics is a narrowing of the experience of the revelation of God, and his fundamental premiss that the only knowledge of God possible in this world is in the hearts of regenerate Christian believers is at once a denial of the absolute power of God, and an admission that man of himself can do nothing - not even evil. He deprives man of any knowledge of God whatever in order to explain the presence on earth of the revealed Word. But surely here is the heart of the Christian mystery - this Presence requires no explanation, in fact it can have no explanation; it can only be accepted (or rejected).

For Barth there can be no argument with the philosopher because there is no "real" knowledge other than the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. But the flaw here is that the humanity which Barth rejects keeps creeping in - the philosopher and the Barthian are both men, the creatures of God, and as such are more than mere thinkers: the pure theologian or philosopher does not exist, any more than the final theology or final philosophy exists. "We are all here", as Paul said to his gaoler, and primarily perhaps we are here not to theorize or to reason but to live. It is in living, not in philosophising, and in a sense of our shame, that we are driven to seek God. The revelation comes only after the awareness of sin becomes overwhelming, not vice versa, as Barth, on his original premisses, supposes.
Barth does indeed face this objection in Chapter XIV. He contends explicitly that only when man knows Jesus Christ does he really understand what sin is and what it means for man. But it must be pointed out again that he is here concerned not with the consciousness of sin as such, but with the knowledge of sin. The distinction may seem a fine one, but it is patent that a man can have a consciousness of dread without a knowledge either of dread or of what he dreads—in fact when full knowledge is obtained the original consciousness is frequently dissipated. Barth states that only in the knowledge of Jesus Christ do we have knowledge of real sin, and the addition of the adjective "real" is of course more than expedient, it is tendentious. His fear is explicitly stated once again that if the awareness of sin apart from the message of Jesus Christ is admitted then the thin end of the wedge of Natural Theology is admitted into the well ordered room of dogmatic theology. As he says,

"... this conception of sin, which is so acceptable in its basic perversion, is the fatal fruit of that arbitrary act as such in which man himself undertakes to set up a criterion for the knowledge of sin, in which this knowledge is simply a matter of self-communing, and man becomes his own law giver and accuser and judge. Is it not inevitable that the man who has arbitrarily
attained to these offices, will be able, and will certainly be ready, to acquit himself, to pronounce himself, if not holy, at any rate relatively just? And the self-enthronement which produces this result is always an arbitrary act, even when it is done with an appeal to and the help of the Bible, even when care is taken to arrest the process, and not to allow its final consequences to be at once or perhaps for a long time apparent. But if we do not want the consequences we must not want the presupposition.¹

But the presupposition here is that knowledge (true knowledge) is only given in Jesus Christ, and therefore this includes the knowledge of sin. However sin is the unbelief in Jesus Christ so presumably when a man believes (has faith) he is without sin. Here is a paradox indeed. At the moment when a man is completely sinless (and completely believing — and this per definiendi is impossible) he has the complete knowledge of sin. Therefore only Jesus Christ had this knowledge. If complete knowledge of sin is impossible then complete knowledge of the Christ is also.

In concentrating his intellectual powers to explain the Incarnation Barth has neglected the base upon which those powers depend. He poises

¹IV/1, p. 386ff.
man on a continual knife edge of existential decision in the immediate present, and forgets that the present, like a note of music, has relevance not only to what is past and what is to come, but also to the theme which is being played. It is with such a theme that ethics, both philosophical and theological, is truly concerned, and his interpretation of Christian ethics is deficient precisely in its neglect of the moral framework within which the drama of human existence is enacted.
PART II
CHAPTER V

PAUL TILlich AND PHILOSOPHY

When the modern philosopher moves from Barth's 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' to study the first few chapters of Paul Tillich's 'Systematic Theology' his bewilderment and dismay at the state of modern theology might well be considerably increased. Here is a professed philosopher-cum-theologian who seems to write as if no philosophy, other than Existentialism, had been written since the beginning of this Century. Almost every page of his work contains the outmoded technical terms of a bygone metaphysics. Tillich himself says frankly,

"I once said to a Logical Positivist that I would like him to attend my lectures, and to raise his finger if something is said which lacks rationality. He answered that he could not accept this task because he would have to raise his finger throughout the whole lecture."\(^1\)

Tillich considers that the Logical Positivist answered in this way because he felt that the material being discussed was not subject to the strict canons of logic. This may have been what was said at the time, but the chief criticism I feel that any modern analytical philosopher would be likely to bring against Tillich is not that his

\(^1\) The Theology of Paul Tillich', p. 350, ed. Kegley and Bretall.
material is logically inconsistent, but rather that he (like many other writers in the Idealist tradition of Western philosophy) has not really examined his terms properly. In short Tillich's theories depend for their plausibility, and their coherence, entirely upon the known uses of ordinary words. But illegitimate extrapolations have been made from these ordinary uses to a technical (philosophical or theological) use, which entails in fact that Tillich combines familiar words in an unfamiliar way, and at the same time he is trading on their familiar meanings. However this is the analytic view, and a more sympathetic reading of Tillich can be obtained if one tries first of all to delineate his position in the traditional field of the theologically minded philosopher, or of the philosophical theologian, and sees him as a man who has an extensive knowledge of, and feeling for, the perennial philosophy.

Tillich held the chair of Philosophical Theology at the Union Theological Seminary, New York for twenty years and he maintains that his life's work has been along the boundary line between philosophy and theology. As he sees it there can neither be a conflict, nor a synthesis, between philosophy and theology, for the simple reason that there is no common basis for either contradiction or agreement. He states categorically at the beginning of Book 1 of his 'Systematic Theology',
"Philosophy and theology ask the question of being. But they ask it from different perspectives. Philosophy deals with the structure of being in itself; theology deals with the meaning of being for us. From this difference convergent and divergent trends emerge in the relation of theology and philosophy."¹ and in an earlier paper Tillich explains the nature of philosophy, as he sees it, in its relations to theology:

"Philosophy asks the ultimate question that can be asked, namely, the question as to what being, simply being, means. Whatever the object of thought may be, it is always something that is, and not not is. But what does this word 'is' mean? ...... Philosophy asks the question concerning being itself. This implies that philosophy primarily does not ask about the special character of the beings, the things and events, the ideas and values, the souls and bodies which share being. Philosophy asks what about this being itself. Therefore all philosophers have developed a 'first philosophy' as Aristotle calls it, namely an interpretation of being. And from this they go on to the description of the different classes of beings and to the system of their interdependence, the world. It is easy to make a simple division between philosophy and theology if philosophy deals only with the

¹'Systematic Theology', Vol. I, p. 32.
second realm, with sciences, and attempts to unite their last results in a picture of the world. But philosophy, before attempting a description of the world in unity with all kinds of scientific and non-scientific experience, tries to understand being itself, and the categories and structures which are common to all kinds of beings. This makes the division between philosophy and theology impossible, for, whatever the relation of God, world and man may be, it lies in the frame of being; and any interpretation of the meaning and the structure of being as being, unavoidably has consequences for the interpenetration of God, man, and the world in their interrelations.^[1]

Tillich is well aware of the aroma of metaphysics which surrounds this kind of language, and he proposes to rename metaphysics, as traditionally understood, "ontology": so he views philosophy primarily as a search for, and an establishment of, an ontology, i.e. the inquiry into the nature and structure of reality, or being, as such. However theology must ask the same questions of being, for, he says,

"that which concerns us ultimately must belong to reality as a whole; it must belong to being."^[2]

Thus the function of philosophy is seen to be the development of an ontological analysis of the structure of being, while theology is to concern itself with the meaning that being has for us.

---

1. The Protestant Era', pp. 35-36.
He maintains that philosophy and theology diverge, firstly in the cognitive attitude of their respective practitioners - the philosopher strives for abstraction and an objective approach; the theologian is continually "involved" in his material, his attitude is necessarily existential; secondly in the source of their material; the philosopher finds his in the λόγος or pure reason; the theologian finds his in the λόγος made flesh, or Jesus Christ; thirdly in their content; the philosopher deals with the conditions of all possible experiences, while the theologian deals with the conditions for a new experience - the experience of "the new being in Christ".

However philosophy and theology also converge; both the philosopher and the theologian are in the situation of existence, and both are in the power of an ultimate concern.

"Every creative philosopher is a hidden theologian .... in the degree to which his existential situation and his ultimate concern shape his philosophic vision." ¹

Likewise,

"the detachment required in honest theological work can destroy the necessary involvement of faith."²

Thus, Tillich concludes, there can neither be a conflict nor a synthesis between theology and philosophy, because conflicts or agreements are only

¹Ibid. I, p. 25.
possible on the level of an existential theology or of an ontological philosophy - but there are no crossovers between these two disciplines.

This is a neat solution to an ancient problem, but one wonders if it is ultimately satisfying. In the first place if one examines closely the notion of "being", as used by Tillich, and which has come down to us from the Greeks it would appear that just as Aristotle seemed to vacillate in his interpretation of $\tau \circ \delta \nu \varepsilon \delta \nu \circ \nu$ so also does Tillich in this passage. On the one hand Aristotle says (Metaphysics, 1005a 3),

$\phiανέρων \circ \nu \kappaά \varepsilon \kappa τουτών \circ \tau μίς \varepsilon \piσ\tau \mu\nuς \tau \circ \circ \nu \varepsilon \delta \nu \thetaσ\varepsilon\sigma\nu\iota$.

(It is clear from these considerations therefore that it belongs to one science to examine being qua being), and

$\deltaυ\tauο ε κ τ\circ \circ \uvt \varepsilon \delta \nu \tau ινα \varepsilon \delta \nu$, και τουτ' ε\varepsilon\tau \iota \πε\r\iota \varepsilon \nu θ\iotaο \ phi\lo\s\o\f\o \iota \varepsilon \pi\nu\s\k\e\v\w\u\r\o\s\a\i$.

(So too there are certain properties peculiar to being as such, and it is about these that the philosopher has to investigate the truth.) (Metaphysics, 1004b 15)

However Aristotle did not hold consistently to the view that philosophy is the science of pure being. The universal of pure being represents the limiting case of a process of abstraction. But even if all the particular sciences are abstractive in one sense it does not
follow that another science will be possible beyond the limit at which Aristotle here seems to suggest that First Philosophy begins. If everything is abstracted then there is nothing to be investigated. This is, of course, what Kant said in effect when he maintained that being is not a predicate; and also Hegel when he said "pure being is the same as nothing".

Collingwood too pointed out\(^1\) that for any science to exist one must have (a) systematic thinking, and (b) a definite subject matter — and this latter one could not have with "pure being".

However Aristotle seems to have been aware of this, and he later departs from the view that First Philosophy — πρώτη φιλοσοφία — or Wisdom — σοφία — or Theology — θεολογία — can investigate τὸ ὑπάρξειν τοῖς ὀνομ. He suggests instead that the philosopher investigates, not so much being qua being, but rather the presuppositions of the particular sciences, something about which they themselves are neither willing nor able to give an account.

Thus he says, *Metaphysics*, 1005a 20–27:

\[
\text{φανερὸν δὴ ὁτι μῆς τε καὶ τῆς τοῦ φιλοσοφοῦ καὶ τῆς περὶ πολλῶν [i.e. γίνωμαιν] ἐστὶ διὸ κεφιστι αὐτὸς}
\]
\[
\text{γαρ ὅποιάρφα χρηματοδοτείται ἀλλὰ ὅτῳ γενεί τινι κατὶ ἰδίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἀλλακὼς. καὶ Χρωματαί μεν πάντες,}
\]
\[
\text{ὅτι τὸ οὐτὸς ἐστὶν ὑπάρξιν, καὶ καθέναν δὲ τῷ γένος ἐν. ἐπὶ τὸν οὐτὸν σὲ Χρωματαί ἐξ ὄνομ. οὕτως}
\]

---

Evidently the inquiry into these (i.e. the presuppositions or axioms of a particular science) also belongs to one science, and that the science of the philosopher; for these truths hold good for everything that is, and not for some special genus apart from others. And all men use them, because they are true of being qua being, and each genus has being. But men use them just so far as to demonstrate their presuppositions; i.e. so far as the genus to which their demonstrations refer extends."

This somewhat abstruse quotation can be read as another, (and different) formulation by Aristotle of what he means by a science of "being as such". All sciences, he says, inquire into certain causes and principles of things. He cites as examples, medicine, gymnastics and mathematics - all of which figure largely in Plato's discussions of scientific method. Each of these sciences marks off systematically a definite sphere of reality (ὅν τί), and a definite genus (γένος τί), and studies the resulting limited complex of facts. None, however, discusses the being of its object; all either presuppose it on the ground of experience, as do the natural sciences and medicine; or, like mathematics, with its axioms, they start from particular definitions.
Here Aristotle seems to suggest that it is the task of the metaphysician to examine the presuppositions of the particular sciences - a task which they themselves are unable to undertake, presumably because the method of such a study would be different from the method employed in the development of the particular science in question.

Thus this is possibly a reference to the search for the presuppositions of our experience, and a first philosophy in this sense is both possible and desirable. Tillich seems to follow Aristotle in an ambivalency of attitude towards being qua being. On the one hand he says,

"Philosophy asks the ultimate question ... What is the meaning of being? ... (it) asks the question concerning being itself. Therefore all philosophers have developed a first philosophy, namely an interpretation of being."\(^1\)

and on the other hand he says that the philosophical question is the,

"question regarding the character of the general structures that make experience possible."\(^2\)

In brief, he says that philosophy is,

"that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object."\(^3\)

\(^3\) Ibid. p. 18.
With regard to the first quotation it might well be asked what sort of an answer could be given to the question, "what is the meaning of being qua being?" - in fact what sort of a question is it? We know how to use all the words in this question, but because the phrase "pure being" is empty of all content we cannot significantly ask what its content is, in so far as it is thought of as the terminus to which all abstraction tends asymptotically. Indeed Tillich's use of the phrase "the structure of being" is at once an unwarranted expression because being as such cannot be said even to have a structure. Pure being and nothing are identical.

Tillich's answer to this sort of objection may be found in the introduction to Vol. II of his 'Systematic Theology'. He contends, "(The concept of being) is not the highest abstraction, although it demands the ability of radical abstraction. It is the expression of the experience of being over against non-being, therefore, it can be described as the power of being which resists non-being. ..... This idea of being lies beyond the conflict of nominalism and realism. The same word, the emptiest of all concepts when it is taken as an abstraction, becomes the most meaningful of all concepts when it is understood as the power of being in everything that has being."1

1 'Systematic Theology', Vol. II, p. 11.
Just what he means by "the power of being which resists non-being" is difficult to ascertain. He suggests analogies between it and the notion of "being" as understood by Parmenides, Shankara, Heidegger, and Marcel, and he seems to approach here a view of a transcendental (in Kant's sense) basis for experience and for history, which is neither supranatural nor anti-natural. The very fact that anything that is said about pure being must inevitably say something about its structure, its power or its activity must arouse suspicion concerning the need for such a concept at all.

When he goes on, just as Aristotle was forced to go on, to talk not about "being as such" but about "reality" then in spite of the present day avoidance of this word as a technical term, one might cautiously agree with his provisional definition of philosophy - in a somewhat different sense perhaps than he intended.

In passing it might be noted that the disappearance of the words "real" and "reality" from modern philosophical jargon possibly stems from G.E. Moore's famous "proof" of the existence of the external world. Moore said in effect: "I hold up my right hand; I see it, you see it; hence my right hand exists."¹ This naive sorites is a subtle argument from the common usage of words. The substance of the "proof" lies in its answer to the inevitable objection of a metaphysician - viz. "this

does not prove the real existence of our hands". Moore's reply is to point out that this is the way we would ordinarily convince ourselves that our hands really exist - and if the metaphysician makes this sort of objection then he is using the phrase "real existence" in some special sense of his own.

Still we can see that in a certain sense Tillich's second view of philosophy is acceptable, because all philosophy is in a way the attempt to establish what is real. The sense-data of the positivist, the teacups and saucers of Moore, the Forms of Plato in his middle period, the Absolute of Hegel, are all attempts to approach what is "real" in a cognitive manner. Any philosophy is an enterprise carried on to establish some conclusion, and whether this conclusion is sceptical, critical or dogmatic matters not, because built into this philosophy is a view of what is "really real".

This however is an interpretation of Tillich's definition which very probably would not satisfy him. It is obvious that his view of "being" and of "reality" (which he tends to identify) is from the perspective of what might be called an Existential Idealism. The very definition of philosophy as "that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object" suggests not only idealism but absolute idealism - viz. that there is an Ultimate Reality which it is
man's business, as a philosopher, a theologian or an artist to uncover. At the same time, when he goes on to say that every philosopher, whether he is aware of it or not,

"exists in the power of an ultimate concern,"¹

i.e. his relation to reality is not so completely disinterested as he would like, then Tillich reveals the existential strand in his thinking. Although it is an over-simplification of the complexity of this thinker it would appear that he takes his idealism from his philosophy and from those philosophers who have influenced him most, while his existentialism springs from his theology; in the resultant synthesis he comes close to sinning against his own demarcation of the activity of philosophy from that of theology, and the tension in his thinking stems from a rather uneasy truce. The question at once presents itself, can idealism validly be combined with existentialism?

Certain elements in Tillich's thinking can be traced back to Schelling (e.g. the conception that the meaning of history is to be found in the process whereby the unconditional, through the instrument of human freedom, overcomes estrangement through love), but of much greater significance in understanding Tillich's position as an existential idealist are the influences of Plato and Heidegger.

(a) The Influence of Heidegger

Tillich notes in his autobiographical reflections\(^1\) that it was in Marburg in the early 1920s that he first came into contact with Heidegger, and existentialism in its Twentieth Century form crossed his path. At that particular time Heidegger was working on his famous 'Sein und Zeit', and although he has since repudiated some of the positions he advocated in that book, there can be no doubt that it has been a seminal work for many of the Continental theologians and philosophers. Whatever history, or Heidegger himself, may say of 'Sein und Zeit' its new approach to the problems of philosophy makes it a landmark in modern existentialism. The Preface sounds the note which vibrates throughout the whole work:—

"Haben wir heute eine Antwort auf die Frage nach dem, was wir mit dem Wort 'seiend' eigentlich meinen? Keineswegs. Und so gilt es denn, die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein erneut zu stellen."\(^2\)

(Do we really have an answer to the question as to what we really mean by the word "being"? By no means. Thus it is a matter of raising anew the question as to the meaning of being.)

Dr. Macquarrie has given an excellent summary of some of Heidegger's views and technical terms in his book 'An Existentialist Theology', in which he demonstrates convincingly the great influence

---

\(^1\): The Theology of Paul Tillich', p. 14.

\(^2\): Sein und Zeit' Preface. (The translations of this work are my own.)
which Heidegger's work has had upon the theology of Bultmann. (This thesis does not propose to do some desultory digging in the field which Dr. Macquarrie has ploughed so well, so his exposition may be taken as read.) In fact Tillich does not appear to have taken over so much of Heidegger's thinking as Bultmann, and his use of some basic existential concepts is very different from that of Bultmann. However Heidegger's analysis of "being", and the way in which it pointed him forward to an existential analysis of "time", have obviously affected Tillich's philosophical orientation. The latter's use of the technical terms "ontological", and "ontic" has obvious affinities with the use Heidegger makes of them in the first few chapters of 'Sein und Zeit'. Both take an ontological statement (ontologisch) to be a statement describing the structures which are common to everything that is, everything that "participates" in being. Likewise an ontic statement (ontisch) is one that tells us about some entity in its relations with other entities. However it was possibly Heidegger's analysis of the phenomena of "angst" which has had most influence on Tillich.

Heidegger notes that the phenomena of anxiety and fear, (which usually are not distinguished) had been ontically viewed by e.g. Augustine in his teaching concerning "timor castus" and "servilis"; also Luther had treated the problem of fear in his discussion of "potentia" and "contritio" in his commentary on Genesis; and finally,
of course, Kierkegaard had delved most deeply into the "psychological exposition of the problem of original sin in 'The Concept of Dread'", and he goes on,

"Anxiety directly and basically discloses the world as a world. It is not that we turn away from a consideration of the things in the world in order to think about the world in general, and then anxiety arises. Rather anxiety as a mode of feeling discloses the world as world in the first place. But this does not mean that in anxiety the worldliness of the world is understood.

Anxiety is not only anxiety about ..., but as an ontological feeling it is at the same time anxiety for the sake of .... That for the sake of which we are anxious is not a determinate kind or possibility of being. Since the threat itself is indeterminate, it is not able to threaten this or that factual potentiality. That for the sake of which one is anxious is being-in-the-world itself. In anxiety the environing things at hand, and the things of the world in general, are swallowed up."

It is surely from passages such as this that Tillich was led to his own analysis of "angst", e.g.,

\[1\] 'Sein und Zeit', Ch. 40.
"... anxiety is an ontological quality. It cannot be derived; it can only be seen and described. Occasions in which anxiety is aroused must be distinguished from anxiety itself. As an ontological quality, anxiety is as omnipresent as is finitude. Anxiety is independent of any special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of non-being - which is identical with finitude. In this sense it has been said rightly that the object of anxiety is 'nothingness' - and nothingness is not an 'object'."¹

Tillich also follows Heidegger to some extent in the analysis of 'Dasein' when he says, e.g.,

"Man occupies a pre-eminent position in ontology, not as an outstanding object among other objects, but as that being who asks the ontological question, and in whose self-awareness the ontological answer can be found ... "Dasein" is given to man within himself. Man is able to answer the ontological question himself, because he experiences directly and immediately the structure of being and its elements."²

Heidegger's analysis of 'Dasein' is extremely subtle, and one of his main points is that,

"'Realitätswesen' ist selbst eine Weise des In-der-Welt-sein."³

('consciousness of reality' is itself a way of being-in-the-world)


³'Sein und Zeit', p. 211.
Or as he puts it elsewhere,

"Belief in the 'external world', whether justified or not, proofs of its reality whether complete or not, always presuppose what they seek to demonstrate. All such demonstrations presuppose a _worldless_ subject, or a subject so uncertain that it must first assure itself of a world. Thus from the outset being-in-the-world is supposed to be based on opinion, certainty, or belief-attitudes which really are themselves already modes of being-in-the-world."¹

Man experiences himself as having a world to which he belongs, and as such he is not a "thing" or an object among other things - as Heidegger puts it, he is not "in" the world in the same way as, e.g. a book is in the bookcase, or a chair is in a room. Man says Tillich is aware of the structures which make cognition possible, and therefore,

"The truth of all ontological concepts is their power of expressing that which makes the subject-object structure possible."²

In fact,

"A self is not a thing that may or may not exist; it is an original phenomenon which logically precedes all questions of existence."³

¹ Ibid. p. 206.
³ Ibid. p. 170.
Tillich goes on to say that the "self (a term which he uses to cover the subconscious and unconscious basis of the self-conscious ego as well as consciousness itself) and the "world" determine each other. They grow up together, so to speak, and as the self without a world would be an empty form, so the world without a self would be dead. Thus the basic ontological structure between man and the world cannot be proved—it must be taken as accepted.

"The question, 'What precedes the duality of self and world of subject and object?', is a question in which reason looks into its own abyss—an abyss in which distinction and derivation disappear. Only revelation can answer this question."¹

In the evolution of this skein of existentialism Tillich had developed what he called the "method of correlation"; and it serves to explain further his attitude to philosophy. The philosopher, he says, seeks to arrive at an impartial and objective understanding of the structure of being in itself: the theologian, on the other hand, attempts to answer the basic problems of human existence. In working with, and in, this method of correlation, systematic theology begins by analysing the human situation out of which existential questions arise, and it strives to show that Christian theology can give the answers to these questions in terms of its own symbols. This analysis

¹Ibid. p. 174.
will draw upon all other modes of man's creative activity, and it will organise these in relation to the answer given in Christian revelation. Tillich continues,

"The analysis of existence, including the development of the questions implicit in existence, is a philosophical task, even if it is performed by a theologian. .... The difference between the philosopher who is not a theologian and the theologian who works as a philosopher is only that the former tries to give an analysis which will be part of a broader philosophical work, while the latter tries to correlate the material of his analysis with the theological concepts he derives from the Christian faith. This does not make the philosophical work of the theologian heteronomous. .... If he (i.e., the theologian in his capacity as a philosopher) sees something he did not expect to see in the light of his theological answer, he holds fast to what he has seen and reformulates the theological answer. He is certain that nothing he sees can change the substance of his answer, because this substance is the logos of being, manifest in Jesus as the Christ."¹

Had Tillich written as a final clause in the second last sentence quoted above, "and reformulates the philosophical question", he would

at once have been open to the charge that, by his method of correlation, he leaves the philosopher to ask all the questions, and the theologian to provide all the answers - a position intolerable for both. He avoids this pitfall by a hair's breadth, and it is clear that in so doing he gives the philosopher precedence in that it is his analysis of the existential situation (after the manner of Heidegger) which determines the way in which the theological answer must be reformulated. Thus, for Tillich, existentialism is a preliminary discipline which the theologian must undergo before he takes up his proper theological task viz., to revise the answers of revelation in the light of his existential analysis. And, when he goes on to assert that the only fundamental and literal statement that can be made about God is one derived from philosophical analysis in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, viz.: "God is being itself" then it is clear that his method of correlation breaks down. It is a method which is unlikely to commend itself to a philosopher or a theologian; the former will not willingly admit that a philosophical question does not admit of a philosophical answer; and the latter will contend both that theological questions and theological answers require revision in the light of revelation. But it is on his grand concept (one might almost say "vision") of a correlation between the questions posed by reason, and the answers formulated by revelation
that his whole theological method is determined. The interaction and the interdependence between philosophy and theology cannot be reduced to Tillich's neat demarcation in the method of correlation.

(b) The Influence of Plato

It is at this point that the influence of Plato appears most vividly in Tillich's thinking, and his language reflects this strand of idealism.

"Man participates in the universe through the rational structure of mind and reality. .... The universals make man universal; language proves that he is microcosmos. Through the universals man participates in the remotest stars and the remotest past. This is the ontological basis for the assertion that knowledge is union, and that it is rooted in the eros which reunites elements which essentially belong to each other."¹

This is very close to what Plato says in the Republic, e.g.

".... the perfectly real is perfectly knowable, and the utterly unreal is entirely unknowable. .... Their (i.e. the true philosopher's) affection or eros goes out to the objects of knowledge."²

Plato's remarks about the longing which the truly philosophic soul has to return to its true habitat, the world of Forms, are too well known to be mentioned in detail here.³

² Republic V. 476 and 480.
³ See e.g. 'Phaedrus' 250d and 252 c, and the Symposium passim.
Of greater interest perhaps is the striking similarity between Plato's conception of the Good, and Tillich's view of God. Tillich says,

"God does not exist. He is being itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore to argue that God exists is to deny him"¹

and

"The limits of the ontological argument are obvious. But nothing is more important for philosophy and theology than the truth it contains, the acknowledgement of the unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality."²

"'God' is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately."³

"The being of God is being-itself. The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. God is the ground of being - or the power of being."⁴

In comparing this view of God with Plato's discussion of the Good it must be noted that Plato was not talking about moral virtue alone - the Good is value in general, and Plato's theory, in addition to being a theory of ethics, is a theory of value. Plato begins with an intrinsic relationship between the soul and the Good. The soul by its

² Ibid. p. 208.
³ Ibid. p. 211.
⁴ Ibid. p. 235 and c.f. p. 238.
own nature loves the Good. Similarly Tillich begins with an intrinsic relationship between the "self" and God. The "self" has an ontological relationship with Being-itself, or God. Plato indeed had given perhaps the first formulation of the ontological argument, in his statements that,

"As the sun is the author of the generation of visible things, so the Good is the source of being and essence in the intelligible world."¹

"This then which gives to the objects of knowledge their truth and to him who knows them his power of knowing is the Form, or the essential nature of Goodness."²

"... The sun not only makes the things we see visible but also brings them into existence and gives them growth and nourishment, yet he is not the same thing as existence. And so with the objects of knowledge: these derive from the Good not only their power of being known, but their very being and reality."³

For Plato then the Good is the basic notion in ontology - for Tillich God is the basic notion, for God is being-itself or the absolute. For Plato the Good is the most fundamental metaphysical factor - for Tillich God is not God if he is not being itself. Everything that is said about God says Tillich is symbolic talk.⁴ There can therefore

¹'Republic' 509b.
²Ibid. 508e - to call the 'Good' a Form was surely a mistake on Plato's part.
³Ibid. 508e.
⁴'Systematic Theology', Vol. I, p. 239.
be little differentiation made between Plato's Good, as the ground and source of all that is, and Tillich's unsymbolic conception of God as "being-itself". Plato's Good (or ἄντω τὸ καλοῦν in the Symposium) is that in which the distinction between esse and essentia, Sein and So-sein, falls away. One cannot properly predicate anything of it. Therefore the apprehension of it is strictly incommunicable. (Perhaps the best way to interpret Plato is to take seriously the two Socratic premisses, 'Knowledge is virtue', and 'Virtue is incommunicable'. The conclusion of this syllogism is made explicit in Plato's later works.)

Furthermore there seem to be certain points of contact between Tillich's view of revelation and Plato's expression of the vision of the Good. Tillich says,

"It is impossible to express the experience of mystery in ordinary language, because this language has grown out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme. If mystery is expressed in ordinary language it necessarily is misunderstood, reduced to another dimension, desecrated."¹

In much the same way Plato believed that true knowledge could not be communicated; it was achieved by a personal insight after the arduous climb out of the cave, but the actual vision could not be expressed in ordinary language. Thus Socrates says,

¹Ibid. I, p. 169.
"Instead of illustrating the truth by an allegory, I should be showing you the truth itself, at least as it appears to me. I cannot be sure whether or not I see it as it really is; but we can be sure that there is some reality which it concerns us to see."¹

It was Plato's tragedy, just as it was Pascal's, to be continually trying to express the inexpressible: it might even be said that he was too intellectual for the mystics, and too mystical for the intellectuals. Tillich also sees the "felt presence of God" as a necessary element in every religious system. He says, for example, "'Mystical' is ..... a category which characterises the divine as being present in experience. In this sense the mystical is the heart of every religion as religion. A religion which cannot say, 'God himself is present' becomes a system of moral or doctrinal rules which are not religious, even if they are derived from originally revelatory sources."²

Finally Plato's use of the word "concerns" in the last Socratic quotation can be linked with Tillich's view that that which drives us to our conceptions of God is what he calls "ultimate concern". For Tillich,

¹'Republic' 533b.
"... the object of theology is that which concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us."¹

and of course this is where he finds the existential characteristics of religious experience - and ultimately he derives it from the ontological concept of anxiety. At the risk of applying modern existential terminology to Plato without warrant, it could be maintained that he, too, continually emphasises the serious (rather than ultimate) concern which the true philosopher will have to discover the truth - i.e., the meaning of life. Thus in one of the most vivid pieces of writing in the whole of his works - the description by the ordinary man, Alcibiades, of Socrates in the Symposium - we have an account of how the true philosopher (who is the embodiment of truth) affects even the ordinary man. Alcibiades says,

"Of all men he alone can make me ashamed. I wish he would vanish from the world; and yet, should this befall, I would be more distressed than anyone else. His words, like a snake, bite me to the very heart."²

This dissatisfaction of the soul in its continual search for true knowledge is a recurring theme in Plato's philosophy, and it is

²"Symposium" 215a - 222b, or see 'Theaetetus' 177b or 'Protagoras' 313c.
integral to an understanding of what he meant by true philosophy. In fact the outcome of the Socratic method in the dialogue form was not so much to solve a problem as to bring about a desired personal condition — viz. ἐπιβραδύνομαι — before knowledge could be achieved pride must be crushed. Thus the tendency, which many of his commentators have, to think that Plato's primary concern was with knowledge, is based upon a mistaken interpretation of the dialectical method — Plato was concerned, just as much as are the present day existentialist philosophers, with living. (This is, I believe, one reason for the very many apparent digressions on the life of the philosopher in his dialogues.) Like Aristotle in his lectures on Ethics, Plato was concerned not only to discuss goodness with his students but also he wanted to make them live in a certain manner — he wanted to make them good. This existential and persuasive element in his teaching has disappeared in academic ethical theory today.

Sufficient has been said to demonstrate that there is in Tillich's thinking a meeting of existentialism, which has affinities with the work of Heidegger, but also with Schelling, Kierkegaard and Boehme, and idealism, which has affinities with the work of Plato but also with Schelling and Hegel. His view of the existentialist nature of religious, and theological, thinking meets and fuses with his ontological survey of the nature of reality as ultimately based on "being-itself".
His analysis of both of these movements is extremely subtle, although at times he does appear to pass over certain philosophical problems in a somewhat high-handed and Hegelian fashion. However it is not the function of this work to criticise the philosophical coherence of his ideas, except in so far as they impinge on, and affect, his interpretation of Christian Ethics.

The starting point of Tillich's theology is the establishment of the existentialist situation of man plus an affirmation that man has an 'ultimate concern'. The treatment he gives to this phenomena is penetrating, and throughout his works Tillich indicates that he has faced much more courageously than most contemporary theologians the challenging findings about man in so-called 'depth' psychology. Since the days of Freud increasing attention has been paid by psychologists and sociologists to the sub-conscious mind. The reiteration of the Freudian thesis has become almost a necessary condition for modern literature, and we have had a spate of biographical writings indicating that most of the great artists of the past have been psychotic, neurotic or both. Obviously this depth psychology requires to be taken seriously by anyone writing about ethical matters. Some psychologists maintain (and here I grossly over simplify) that the hidden depths of our egos condition our view of the world much more than we are aware of - in fact, like an iceberg of our personalities are continually submerged, and just as the iceberg moves according to the centre of gravity deep below the surface (and not according to the visible and measurable winds which
disturb its surfaces), so it is in the depths of our subconscious that we must look for the real springs of our action. They say that everything we do is a product of this hidden life - just as in the world of macroscopic nature every event is determined, or necessitated by antecedent events, so our so-called free acts are similarly necessitated. Thus every free or voluntary act is in fact constrained to happen by antecedent causes in the subconscious mind. As Tillich says,

"The ideal of personality, in the way in which it has developed in modern Protestantism and secularism, is based on an illusion, on the illusion of 'pure consciousness'. There is no such thing. Unconscious psychic forces continuously break into our conscious centre and direct it just when we believe ourselves to be completely free. The dark ground of pre-personal being, which contains elements of the universal process of life, as well as the life-process of the individual, is effective in every moment of our conscious existence. Whether it is repressed or not, it is real and powerful, and its manifestations show the limits of personal freedom."¹

¹'The Protestant Era' p. 134.
The psychologists mentioned above go farther than Tillich here and say that it follows from this that there is no distinction between freedom and compulsion. When we think we are free, and that there are alternatives among which we can choose, we are the victims of an illusion. Since a man is powerless to control the causes of his conduct, then he is also powerless to control his conduct, for his conduct is determined by its causes and these causes necessitate the effect. Tillich's method of dealing with this analysis is, in effect, on the one hand to assert the existentialist slogan that existence precedes essence, and hence man is free in a sense, and on the other hand to accept much of the findings of depth psychology. He asserts that the 'ontic' analysis of the psychologist is based on a more fundamental 'ontological' structure. Thus he says,

"Man is man because he has freedom, but he has freedom only in polar dependence with destiny."¹

By this he means merely that freedom cannot be understood apart from destiny; and by destiny he seems to mean an inevitability in the course of events over which individuals have no control; it is that to which they must adapt themselves as best they can.

"Destiny is not a strange power which determines what

¹ Ibid p. 134
"shall happen to me. It is myself as given, formed by nature, history and myself. My destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny .............

Things have no destiny because they have no freedom.

God has no destiny because he is freedom."¹

and

"A search for the basic anxiety, not in cultural but in psychological terms, is made by practical and theoretical analysts. But in most of these attempts a criterion of what is basic and what is derived seems to be lacking. Each of these explanations points to actual symptoms and fundamental structures. But because of the variety of the observed material the elevation of one part of it to central significance is usually not convincing. There is still another reason for the psychotherapeutic theory of anxiety being in a confused state in spite of all its brilliant insights. It is the lack of a clear distinction between existential and pathological anxiety. This cannot be made by depth psychological analysis alone; it is a matter of ontology. Only in the light

¹'Systematic Theology', I p. 182.
"of an ontological understanding of human nature can the body of material provided by psychology and sociology be organised into a consistent and comprehensive theory of anxiety."\(^1\)

It would seem that the existential starting point of man as a free subject having a polar relationship with 'destiny' is a legitimate one. It might be objected that Tillich presupposes freedom when he should demonstrate it, but in view of the initial consciousness of freedom which we all have, it is surely the determinist not the defender of freedom, who should be called upon to demonstrate his position. Furthermore, with his conception of a polarity between freedom and destiny, Tillich does not create the Kantian gulf between the phenomenal and noumenal selves. His datum is not the self-enclosed phenomenal self, but the self in the world, and he is justified in saying that freedom and destiny are like the positive and negative poles of a magnet, in that they involve each other when applied to any significant entity viz. a person.

However the second part of Tillich's thesis is more questionable. Granted that there is fear and anxiety in modern society (as in every society at any period in history) why should existential

\(^1\) The Courage to be\(^1\) p. 65.
anxiety be treated as an ontological structure, and pathological anxiety be merely an ontic determination which can be investigated by psychotherapeutics? The answer to this question would take one farther into Tillich's metaphysics than is necessary or desirable at this stage, but put briefly his position would seem to come to this. It is clear that when a person is morbidly, pathologically anxious then he may be treated psychologically, and given some measure of relief. But when a person is anxious about the meaning of life - when he is ultimately concerned about the ultimate questions (e.g. the existence of God, the freedom of the will and the immortality of the soul) - then, says Tillich, this is not pathological, but existential, and if it is courageously persisted in it will lead on to God - for,

"'God' is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately."¹

The existential question leads Tillich to the ultimate 'being-itself' - the ground and the power of everything that is. Thus, just as the whole of Hegel's 'Logic' is one sustained ontological argument, so in a sense Tillich's 'Systematic Theology' is also. As he says, the truth contained in the ontological argument is,

¹'Systematic Theology' p. 211.
"the acknowledgement of the unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality. The idea of a theonomous culture, and with it the possibility of a philosophy of religion, is dependent on this insight."¹ But to say as he does that autonomous reason is, "the law of nature within mind and reality, and which is divine law rooted in the ground of being itself",² then these are surely a pair of independent insights which have been questioned time and time again in the history of philosophy. The coincidence which Tillich finds between subjective and objective reason, between the structure of reality and the structure of the mind, between ontological reason and ontological being are all very questionable, and would require a much more exact epistemological theory than it seems to me he has given.

Tillich, therefore, sees man's freedom, not as a quality of one of his faculties (the will), but as a factor in his ontological structure. The self which makes decisions is not merely an abstract centre of self-consciousness; such a concept is impossible, because the self has been formed by environmental and hereditary influences (its destiny). But he also says that this notion of destiny does not contradict human freedom, as does, for example,

¹ Ibid p. 208.

² Ibid p. 34.
the notion of fate, because 'selves' can realize their own destinies - in fact each self is responsible in its relationship with its destiny. He contends that,

"Man is free, in so far as he can receive unconditional moral and logical imperatives which indicate that he can transcend the conditions which determine every finite freedom. Man is free, in so far as he has the power of deliberating and deciding, thus cutting through the mechanisms of stimulus and response. Man is free, in so far as he can play and build imaginary structures above the real structures to which he, like all beings, is bound. Man is free, in so far as he has the faculty of creating worlds above the given world, of creating the world of mechanical tools and products, the world of artistic expressions, the world of theoretical structures and practical organisations."¹

Thus it seems that here also Tillich ultimately forces the concept of human freedom back into the abyss of the ontological being of God.

"One can say that nature is finite necessity, God is infinite freedom, man is finite freedom."²

The finite freedom of the 'self' is, in fact, derived from the infinite

¹ 'Systematic Theology' 11 pp 31-32.

² Ibid p. 31.
freedom of God, and the connection between the two is seen in the light of his conception of the ontological basis of the self in the power of Being-itself.

It is true that Tillich accepts the sub-conscious and unconscious as factors in the ontic assessment of the finite freedom man has; but if his metaphysical doctrine of an ontological relationship between God and the self is rejected, then so also must his concept of 'finite freedom': and his placing of freedom as an element in the ontological structure of man savours more of a metaphysical sleight of hand than a serious attempt to grapple with the problem. His existentialism may be legitimate in its own place, and perhaps his idealism is also, but to this reader at least he never really succeeds in fusing the two positions in those parts of the 'Systematic Theology' so far published.

Section 2. The Doctrine of God

Tillich's view of the doctrine of God has already been touched on in comparing some of his ideas with Plato's view of the Good. Here we are looking, just as in the exposition of Barth, for those elements in it which give Tillich a basis for an interpretation of Christian ethics.

He states categorically,

"The being of God is being-itself. The being of God
"cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If God is a being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance .... When applied to God, superlatives becomes diminutives."¹

This implies, says Tillich, that God is the power of being in everything, the infinite power of being, and as such God is beyond essence and existence. Therefore it is a mistake to speak either of God existing or of the essence of God. So the question of the existence of God is an improper question, because neither an affirmative nor a negative answer can be given. If this question is asked it shows a misunderstanding of the being of God. This would seem to indicate that the being of God must be grasped in an a priori fashion – the study which leads to the question is empirical only in the sense that the problem is set for man by man's experience. The idea of God for Tillich is not so much an hypothesis to explain experience as a criterion by which to test all particular being and experience. By asserting the freedom of man, the existentialist, whether theologian or philosopher, has rejected the category of substance in favour of the category of causality, in an attempt to express the relation between being in itself and particular beings. But even this is not sufficient, says Tillich, because the concepts

¹'Systematic Theology' Vol 1. p. 235.
of cause and effect are also polar, and God cannot be made even into a first cause because (although he does not say this explicitly) this would reduce God to what Spinoza called 'the asylum of ignorance.' Instead Tillich wishes to say that if God is understood as the symbol of prima causa or ultima substantia this negates the categories while using them. Both of these expressions mean,

"... what can be called in a more directly symbolic term, 'the creative and abysmal ground of being'. In this term both naturalistic pantheism, based on the category of substance, and rationalistic theism, based on the category of causality, are overcome."

Obviously behind this sort of language there is a specific theory of symbolism. For Tillich a symbol must not be confused with a sign - the latter merely points to what it signifies, but a genuine symbol, "participates in the reality of that which it symbolizes." Everything which is said about God, other than that he is being itself, is symbolic, and he goes on to say that the symbol which points to the divine can be a true symbol only if it 'participates' in the power of the divine to which it points.

The word 'participates' here, of course, covers a very ancient philosophical problem - in fact it might be said to be the problem which Plato faces in his later works, and especially in the


2 'The Theology of Paul Tillich' p. 335 cf. p. 111 and 239.
'Parmenides' — what is the nature of the participation between things and Forms? And it is the point at which Aristotle makes his most trenchant criticism of Plato in e.g. his Metaphysics 991a 20ff. In the Parmenides, participation is shown to be an 'empty metaphor' by developing the consequences which arise from taking it literally. But Tillich leaves us with this cryptic, and crucial, remark that a symbol is true only if it participates in the power of the divine to which it points. To me this is both unclear and unsatisfying.

Later he maintains that,

"A religious symbol is true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation. A religious symbol can die only if the correlation of which it is an adequate expression dies ...... A symbol has truth: it is adequate to the revelation it expresses. A symbol is true: it is the expression of a true revelation."  

Here he brings in the idea of revelation, but in its turn it is based on the view that the true symbol participates in 'reality' or in being itself. In the 'Parmenides' Plato proves the need for a distinction between the different types of universals, thus undercutting some of his earlier views of substantial Forms; Tillich fails to provide us with an exposition of the difference between the different types of

1 See e.g. Parmenides 131a–e

2 Tillich here seems to be drawing on the sacramental connotation of the word "participation."

3 'Systematic Theology' p. 240.
religious symbols, and this vitiates his doctrine of symbolism and his doctrine of God. Instead he goes on to discuss the various symbolic expressions about God, e.g. God as living, God as a person, God as creator, God as spirit, God as Christ, God as logos, God as omniscient, and God as love. In the discussion he is illuminating, rich in suggestion (and in rhetoric), but still no criterion is given whereby we can distinguish the better symbols from the less good, or even the true symbol from the sign.

Barth's method of inverting the analogical doctrines of natural theology in order to see what these expressions mean when applied to God (see page 44) is not open to Tillich. Indeed he rejects it explicitly in his reply to an objection of Professor Hartshorne because of his doctrine of the symbolic character of every attribute applied to God — and for the same reason he himself is able to talk of God as loving, omnipotent etc. But here he is not any more convincing than Barth. Both theologians need the attributes of God in order to provide a basis for their ethical theory, but the way in which they reach these is neither convincing nor logical, — although, to be accurate, Barth does not 'reach' the qualities of God; rather God's qualities 'reach' to man.

Tillich indeed says that ultimately,

---

1 'The Theology of Paul Tillich' p. 334.
"it is an insult to the divine holiness to talk about God as we do of objects whose existence or non-existence can be discussed. Theology, which by its very nature is always in danger of drawing God into the cognitive relation of the subject-object structure of being, should strongly point to the holiness of God and his unapproachable character in judgment of itself."\(^1\)

When Plato was faced with the problem of expressing the ultimate - the vision of the Good - he uses the language of myth. In his attempted demythologising Tillich uses the language of symbol. But his conception of what a symbol is is scarcely more satisfying than Barth's analogical theory of meaning. Both theologians say in effect that any propositions about God are not to be understood in the customary meanings of the words; and this raises the inevitable question, here in particular for Tillich, if the language about God is symbolic, and an extrapolation from ordinary usage, why use this language at all? If ordinary categories are misleading why not use a completely new terminology which could be more clearly defined, and would not trade upon the ordinary meanings of words like person, father, creator etc.? Obviously when Tillich talks about God as love, or God as good, he has established a basis for his ethics; but to say, as he does, that

\(^1\) 'Systematic Theology' I pp. 271-272.
"if a segment of reality is used as a symbol for God, the realm of reality from which it is taken is, so to speak, elevated into the realm of the holy. It is no longer secular. It is theonomous."¹

then he is opening the door not only for a Christian ethic but for any relativistic ethic also. If Thrasymachus were to say that God is 'unjust', then can he be said to be making 'injustice' theonomous? This theory of religious symbolism is truly 'double-edged' but not in Tillich's sense. Anthropomorphic symbols, he says, are adequate for speaking of God religiously, but at the same time,

"The character of the divine life is made manifest in revelation. Theology can only explain and systematize the existential knowledge of revelation in theoretical terms, interpreting the symbolic significance of the ontological elements and categories."²

Thus he rejects the idea of a 'personal God' as a confusing symbol³, yet he also wants to say that,

"man is the image of God, because his logos is analogous to the divine logos, so that the divine logos can appear as man without destroying the humanity of man."⁴

On the one hand therefore Tillich avows the impossibility of effecting

---

¹ 'Systematic Theology' I p. 241.
³ Ibid p. 245.
⁴ Ibid p. 259.
a synthesis between kerygmatic theology and philosophy, and on the other hand he seems to want to keep the elements of his ontology as a basis for the situation of faith in Jesus Christ. It is true that his ontology is basically idealistic and his theology ultimately is kerygmatic, and he does try to combine them; e.g. he says,

"The power of being, the unconditional is the a priori of everything that has being. It precedes every separation, and makes every interaction possible, because it is the point of identity without which neither separation nor interaction can be thought. ....... The immediate awareness of the unconditional has not the character of faith, but of self-evidence. Faith contains a contingent element and demands a risk .... based on the fact that the unconditional element can become a matter of ultimate concern only if it appears in concrete embodiment."¹

It would appear that Tillich's proposition that the only proper non-symbolic statement we can make about God (viz that 'God is being itself') vitiates much of what he will say about ethics. If we may only speak of God as living, creating, personal in a symbolic sense then why not say that this proposition is also symbolic? Tillich of course bases it on his metaphysics, but there is no reason on his own

¹'The Two Types of the Philosophy of Religion' Union Seminary Review No. 4 (May 1946) pp. 11,13.
premisses why this is not also symbolic and analogical talk; —
though even on this view it is hard to see what significance can be
given to the word 'being'. Surely it would be more consistent to
say that as God in revelation confronts us as a self (although 'self'
cannot be used in Tillich's sense of the word), 'being' and 'person-
hood' in God cannot be separated. One can see that the existential
problem of God and of man's relation to him leads to the question of
the goodness of God, but it is difficult to see how the ontological
establishment of the proposition 'God is being itself' can lead to
the existential question, except by an invalid argument. If God is
our ultimate concern then he is not merely being itself (because this
is an empty and abstract concept), and if God is being itself then he
cannot be our ultimate concern, (because concern is always concern
about someone, and this can be expressed, if not in propositions then
in attitudes and in a way of living). In either case God is more
than 'being qua being' — as Aristotle admitted.

In a later essay Tillich more or less admits this criticism,
when he writes,

"We could not be in communication with God if he were only
'ultimate being' .... in our relationship to him we
encounter him with the highest of what we ourselves are,
person. And so in the symbolic form of speaking about him,
we have both that which transcends infinitely our experience
"of ourselves as persons, and that which is so adequate to our being persons that we can say 'Thou' to God, and can pray to him. And these two elements must be preserved. If we preserve only the element of the unconditional, then no relationship to God is possible. If we preserve only the element of the ego-thou relationship, as it is called today, we lose the element of the divine — namely the unconditional which transcends subject and object and all other polarities."¹

With all this it is possible to agree and at the same time rebut the implied dilemma by denying its second horn, on the grounds, (a) that it has not really been established epistemologically, and (b) that through Christ we have a view of God which is fuller and richer than any philosophical concept of the "unconditional which transcends subject and object and all other polarities." In fact, in the end Tillich (like every other interpreter of Christian ethics) must base his ethical system on the dogma that God is good. He says indeed that

"'Esse qua esse bonum est' is the basic dogma of Christianity",² and thus it could be said that it was not his metaphysics, in spite of all his efforts, which led him to this, but his faith.

¹ Theology of Culture', pp 61-62.

² Ibid p. 118.
CHAPTER VII

THE VIRTUE OF COURAGE

It is unfortunate that the projected third volume of Tillich's 'Systematic Theology' has not yet appeared, because in it he proposes to deal with 'Life and the Spirit', and presumably it will contain his most mature ideas about Christian ethics. However, sufficient conclusions can be drawn from his earlier works to enable us to see in which direction his interpretation is likely to go. He has already established, in volumes I and II, that religion is being ultimately concerned about that which should be man's ultimate concern, namely God; that God is being itself, the unconditional power of being; and that God is Christ, or as he puts it, Christ,

"is the manifestation of the New Being, the actualization of which is the work of the divine spirit." ¹

Some of Tillich's most interesting comments on ethical matters appear in scattered papers, and in his Terry lectures, published in the short book entitled 'The Courage to be'.

The latter is a remarkable and penetrating discussion of the notion of 'courage' from a theological, sociological and ethical perspective. Tillich sees courage as an ontological concept, and proceeds to draw out its ethical implications in the light of his theology.

¹ 'Systematic Theology' Vol. II p. 10 et passim.
(It is interesting to note, in passing, how very little attention the virtue of courage has received from recent writers on ethics; like friendship (which perhaps is not a virtue in the ordinary sense of the word) it has faded out of our modern ethical treatises, and it is to Tillich’s credit that he has revived an interest in this most neglected of the Greek list of cardinal virtues.)

As he so often does he winds his way into his topic in the 'Courage to Be' by means of a historical pilgrimage, viewing it in the line of thought which stems from Plato, through Aristotle, Stoicism, Thomas Aquinas to Nietzsche. Most of his historical survey is very sound, but at the very beginning he makes one important and crucial mistake in interpretation. This occurs in his discussion of Plato, and it is mentioned here because it has some bearing on the comments made in the third part of this thesis. The salient passage is concerned specifically with the dialogue 'Laches', and Tillich points out that it ends with Socrates saying -

"Thus we have failed to discover what courage really is."¹

This failure, Tillich says, is quite serious within the frame of Socratic thinking and he goes on -

"According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge, and ignorance about what courage is makes any action in accordance with the true nature of...

¹'Laches' 1996.
courage impossible. But this Socratic failure is more important than most of the seemingly successful definitions of courage (even those of Plato himself and of Aristotle.) For the failure to find a definition of courage as a virtue among other virtues reveals a basic problem of human existence. It shows that an understanding of courage presupposes an understanding of man and of his world, his structures and values. Only he who knows this knows what to affirm and what to negate. The ethical question of the nature of courage leads inescapably to the ontological question of the nature of being. 1

But this is surely a misreading of Plato. After all most of the Socratic dialogues end with a profession of ignorance. Tillich could just as easily have chosen 'Charmides' which ends with a similar remark about temperance (σωφροσύνη), or 'Buthyphro, which indicates ignorance of true piety (σειτίρησι), or 'Meno' or 'Protagoras' which reach the same conclusion about virtue itself. Just because the 'Laches' ends in this way does not show that 'courage' is not simply a virtue among other virtues. Socrates's point was rather that by cross-examination he was able to reduce a man to shame (αδυνάτω). For him debate was only partly an attempt to solve a problem — it was primarily a way to bring about a desired personal condition. Thus the inability to define 'true courage' was only one among many 'failures'. Tillich could have chosen Justice, Temperance, Piety or

1. 'The Courage to Be' p. 7 (My italics)
even Virtue itself, and he would have been led to see that Socrates was pointing beyond his negative conclusions to his own view that true virtue is incommunicable - just as i true knowledge. However as Tillich has picked out 'courage' for his own ends, we must follow his line of reasoning remembering that the Socratic view must be placed in a wider context than he has chosen to see it.

The historical introduction leads him to what he calls an 'ontology of anxiety': it does this because he has shown that courage as a moral virtue points beyond itself to its ontological character. Courage as a human action he views as an ethical concept, but,

"... courage as the universal and essential self-affirmation of one's being is an ontological concept."¹

Thus he wishes to include in an ontology of courage an ontology of anxiety.

Tillich sees in anxiety, as has already been pointed out, the natural and inescapable heritage of man as a finite creature. Because we are mortals, and because we are aware of the possibility of extinction (or as he puts it, because we are aware of the possibility of not-being) we have, in the depths of our being an inescapable, built in (ontological) anxiety. Anxiety as such has no definite object - but fear has. We may overcome fear by struggling with it and "taking it into our self-affirmation". But what of anxiety which has no definite object - i.e. other than non-being?

¹Ibid. p. 3.
We have fear of dying, but anxiety is beyond this, for it is fear of non-being which is beyond death.

"The dreams in Hamlet's soliloquy, 'to be or not to be' which we may have after death and which makes cowards of us all, are frightful not because of their manifest content but because of their power to symbolise the threat of nothingness, in religious terms of 'eternal death'". ¹

"Anxiety, if not modified by the fear of an object, anxiety in its nakedness, is always the anxiety of ultimate non-being."²

"Anxiety strives to become fear because fear can be met with courage."³

But this, says Tillich, is bound to fail because the threat of non-being belongs to existence itself.

However this is not to be taken as a neurotic state; Tillich calls it existential anxiety, and he sees it appearing in three forms, which are not however mutually exclusive: (i) the anxiety of death, (ii) the anxiety of meaninglessness, and (iii) the anxiety of condemnation and guilt. Each of these acts of awareness of anxiety impels a man to the question - is there a courage which can overcome these anxieties? Here Tillich's

¹ The Courage to Be' p. 38.
² Ibid. p. 38.
³ Ibid. p. 39.
analysis shows acute psychological insight, e.g. he says that the element of doubt is a condition of all spiritual life, and that the imminence of death has always awakened the anxiety of guilt in man. In fact all three stands of anxiety lead to what he calls the situation of despair.

"Despair is an ultimate, or 'boundary line' situation. One cannot go beyond it. Its nature is indicated in the etymology of the word despair: without hope. No way out into the future appears."¹

Even suicide cannot free one from the third type of anxiety. However this situation is perhaps never reached by most people, and for the remainder it is only reached very infrequently. Tillich maintains that the rare occasions in which it is present,

"determine the interpretation of existence as a whole".²

Obviously the dividing line between psycho-pathological anxiety and existential anxiety is here very thin, but Tillich still wishes to draw it, and he devotes a chapter to elucidating the distinction between the two. This is, of course, a recurring theme in his work, and here he is perhaps at his best. Elsewhere he criticises Freud for not distinguishing man's essential and existential nature. Freud errs, he maintains, because he saw man only from the point of view of existence and not from the point of view of essence - and his essence is goodness. Beyond the psychoosomatic

¹Ibid. p. 54.
²Ibid. p. 57.
irregularities and the neuroses and psychoses to which we are subject (and here Tillich goes all the way with Freud's analysis of the irrational depths in man) there are fundamental presuppositions. These are the facts of finitude, doubt and guilt in every human being - these are what make us what we are. It is the universality of these that make them the presuppositions of man, and for these, Tillich maintains, depth psychology has no explanation. In fact what the psychologist lacks is an ontology of man as man.

Once again Tillich displays a wide knowledge of psychological medicine, and his comments are both penetrating and illuminating. Thus, for example, he points out that certain brands of religion can protect and feed a potentially neurotic state (Cowper is a good example of this - but could the same be said of Joan D'Arc?) and he contends that the mutual action of the minister and the psychoanalyst would be of benefit to both. He concludes that pathological anxiety is an object of medical healing, while existential anxiety is an object for the minister of religion.

Thus he is led to his definition of courage as,

"... the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of non-being. It is the act of the individual self in taking the anxiety of non-being upon itself by affirming itself either as part of an embracing whole or in its individual selfhood. Courage always includes a risk, it is always threatened by non-being, whether the risk of losing
oneself and becoming a thing within a whole of things, or of losing one's world in an empty self-relatedness. Courage needs the power of being, a power transcending the non-being which is experienced in the anxiety of fate and death, which is present in the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness, which is effective in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. The courage which takes this threefold anxiety into itself must be rooted in a power of being that is greater than the power of oneself and the power of one's world.¹

This sort of writing is, I believe, Tillich at his worst. What is he trying to say here? What is the 'cash value' of these ponderous phrases - such as "the self-affirmation of being"? It is obvious that he is far away from the ordinary view of an act of courage as being a certain daring and boldness of action which makes a man ready to undergo dangers, and also a certain ability to endure danger once it is risked; or even the Platonic view in the 'Republic' that courage is that ability to hold fast to one's principles in spite of every danger, whether physical or moral.

If (and it is a big if) I interpret Tillich correctly what he is saying here is something like this: Man as man with all his rationality and irrationality is in the world and he must act. Yet every action is a

¹'The Courage to Be' p. 155.
source of guilt. In order to overcome these anxieties to which he, as a man, is necessarily subject, there is also built into man a structure of courage - a power that enables man to overcome the threats of anxiety. Tillich seems to say that the fact of this ontological structure of courage makes a man go on in spite of all anxiety and this points beyond itself to a power of being itself. It is this which enables a man to affirm his true essence in spite of, and also because of, the attacks of the alien existential elements in his own composition and in the world in which he finds himself. Thus he maintains that,

"... every courage to be has an open or hidden religious root. For religion is the state of being grasped by the power of being itself. In some cases the religious root is carefully covered, in others it is passionately denied; in some it is deeply hidden and in others superficially. But it is never completely absent. For everything that is participates in being itself, and everybody has some awareness of this participation, especially in the moments in which he experiences the threat of non being."¹

This is a far cry from the purely ethical concept of courage. Indeed in these lectures Tillich concerns himself scarcely at all with the ethical side of 'courage'. He wishes only to use this moral term to point beyond

¹'The Courage to Be' p. 156.
it to the affirmation of being-itself - or as he says later,

"The ultimate source of the courage to be is the 'God above God'". To use his own terminology, courage as a moral virtue is an ontic concept and points beyond itself to the ontological concept of the 'courage to be'.

However this summary of his Terry lectures might lead one to suppose that this is the way in which Tillich would approach any moral virtue whatever. As was pointed out earlier he begins with a misinterpretation of Plato in the 'Laches' - and it might reasonably be deduced that if he had read, say, the 'Charmides' with the same preconceptions he would have given us a similar analysis of temperance. His exposition might have gone on these lines: just as the moral virtue of courage is exemplified in the presence of pain, or possible pain, so the moral virtue of temperance is exemplified in the presence of pleasure or possible pleasure. But these are merely ontic concepts and point beyond themselves to the ontological concept of the 'temperance to be', and the ultimate source of the 'temperance to be' is being-itself or the 'God above God'. However temperance to be in order to affirm itself must take within itself the ontological concept of, say, ecstasy - the polar co-ordinate of the ontological concept of anxiety. And here we would require an analysis of pathological happiness and an ontology of ecstasy.

\[\text{Ibid. p. 162.}\]
In fact the game could be played throughout all the Greek moral virtues, and would allow one to produce just as many psychological insights into the psychology of pleasure as did the analysis of anxiety into the psychology of anxiety. The language Tillich uses has prevented him from seeing that ultimately he has given no explanation for our moral evaluations of courage, justice, and temperance, and his balancing act with the ontic and ontological concepts involved, while it contains much that is illuminating and much that is true, gives one no warrant for asserting that our moral valuations are either valid or absolute. He has moved too swiftly from the ontic plane to the ontological, and it is patent that his whole interest is to establish the reality of the latter - almost one might say because of the unreality and lack of 'depth' in the former.

However although his discussion of one factor (Courage) in the list of cardinal virtues does not seem to stand up to scrutiny, it may well be that he is more persuasive and less rhetorical when he turns to the so-called theological virtues.
As a parallel to his discussion of the cardinal virtue of courage in the Terry lectures one might look to Tillich's investigation and analysis of the theological virtue of love as given in his Firth and Sprunt lectures and amplified in his book 'Love, Power and Justice', published in 1954.

It is significant that the second title to this book is 'Ontological Analysis and Ethical Application', so that its form might be expected to be similar to that of 'The Courage To Be', and in fact this is true. Tillich gives us first a brief statement of the problems involved in these three powerful concepts, and at one launches into an ontology of love, an ontology of love and power, and an ontology of love, power and justice. Having examined the roots and established the basis for these concepts he then feels free to go on to an analysis of their place in firstly personal relationships; secondly in group relationships; and finally in the relationship of man to God.

At the beginning of this work Tillich states frankly the problem implied in the emotional and ethical interpretations of love. If viewed as an emotion the Christian doctrine of love is a paradox because an emotion cannot be either commanded or demanded, therefore Tillich concludes,

"either love is something other than emotion, or the Great Commandment is meaningless." ¹

¹ 'Love, Power and Justice', p. 4.
Naturally he rejects the second horn of this dilemma, and he must therefore prove that love is something more than an emotion among other emotions. He seeks to prove in fact that the ethical nature of love is dependent on its ontological nature, and that the ontological character of love is revealed through its ethical characteristics.

A similar point about the ethical nature of love was made by Kant, although he rejected the first horn of the same dilemma, and interpreted the second in accordance with his own ethic of obligation. Thus he said, for example,

"Love to God, however, considered as an inclination (pathological love) is impossible, for He is not an object of the senses. The same affection towards men is possible no doubt, but cannot be commanded, for it is not in the power of any man to love anyone at command; therefore it is only practical love that is meant in that pith of all laws (the Great Commandment). To love God means, in this sense, to like to do his commandments; to love one’s neighbour means to like to practise all duties towards Him. But the command that makes this a rule cannot command us to have this disposition in actions conformed to duty, but only to endeavour after it. For a command to like to do a thing is in itself contradictory, because if we already know of ourselves what we are bound to do, and if further we are conscious of liking to do it, a command would be quite needless; and if we do it
not willingly but only out of respect for the law, a command that makes this respect the motive of our maxim would directly counteract the disposition commanded."¹

For Kant the prime error of the moral sense school in ethics is to suppose that the law is binding because we have a specific emotional attitude towards it. No emotion can be, as he said and as Tillich implies, the basis of a binding moral law; but a moral law may be the basis of a specific moral emotion. (In Kant's later writing he speaks of 'Achtung' as owed to all human persons because of their capacity for morality, and from this various important duties follow.)

Tillich would seem therefore to be on the right lines when he sees that love as a mere emotion is an insufficient ground for an ethical system, but whether his ontology of love can make out a stronger case for theonous ethics than Kant's analysis of 'ought' does for an autonomous ethic remains to be seen.

In his search for the root (and therefore ontological) meaning of love Tillich is forced to break the concept into various strata - one of these he envisages as emotional and ethical and the other the ontological. He states categorically,

"Life is being in actuality and love is the moving power of life."

In these two sentences the ontological nature of love is expressed.

They say that being is not actual without the love which drives everything that is towards everything that is. In man's experience of love the nature of life becomes manifest. Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated. Reunion presupposes separation of that which belongs essentially together."¹

This quotation reminds one both of Empedocles's principles of Love and Strife - the former uniting, the latter separating the elements - and of Hegel's view that,

"Love is, in general, the consciousness of the unity of myself with another,"²

But whereas Hegel is content to treat love as an emotion (indeed he disparages the romantic notion that the essential thing about marriage should be 'being in love' in the ordinary sense of that phrase), Tillich wishes to make it the ontological power which actualizes being itself. Here again there is an undoubted extrapolation from the ordinary meaning of the word to a metaphysical use - and it is employed here in order to account for the assertions that "God is love" and that "Love is one". Like Hegel, Schelling and many others Tillich is anxious to assert the ontological status of the One - he is a monist.

"The ontology of love leads to the basic assertion that love is one."³

²The Philosophy of Right', Section 158, cf. The Philosophy of Mind, Section 578ff.
³Love, Power and Justice' p. 27.
Tillich is led to this view because he sees the different meanings of the word love not as types but as qualifications of the one 'real' meaning of love.

English, like German, has only one word to express ἐρωτέω, φιλέω, ἀγαπάω, and Tillich proceeds to analyse these 'qualities' of love. He maintains that all these forms of love contain the drive towards the reunion of the separated.

Epithymia, the lowest quality of love, is generally viewed as the desire for sensual pleasure, but Tillich uses the ancient argument against psychological hedonism to point out that desire is primarily for food, for sexual union etc., and that it is the fulfilment of such animal desires which is accompanied by pleasure. His point here is the sound one (and it was probably better expressed by Bishop Butler) that psychological hedonism grants more rationality to human beings than they in fact possess; for in postulating that the sole motive for our actions is epithymia, in the sense defined above, it postulates that we always have in fact a motive for what we do. But fortunately we frequently act on impulse, and the investigation of any motive is notoriously difficult. In brief psychological hedonism is guilty of putting the cart before the horse. Simply because the satisfaction of any impulse brings pleasure it does not follow that one's object in satisfying an impulse is the pleasure which follows its satisfaction. Hedonism, both psychological and ethical, is
based on the fallacious inference that pleasure, because it is essential to
the complete desirability of an experience, must constitute the essence of
its desirability, and Tillich is sound both in his rejection of it and in
the further corollary which he is prepared to draw viz., that epithymia is
a factor in any and every relationship of love.

Eros is a word which is not used by the New Testament writers —
possibly because of its Homeric connection with sexual passion. Tillich
interprets it as transcending epithymia. He says,

"It strives for a union with that which is a bearer of values because
of the values it embodies. This refers to the beauty we find in
nature, to the beautiful and the true in culture, and to the mystical
union with that which is the source of the beautiful and the true."¹

and he connects it in a polar relationship with philia. Eros represents
what he calls the 'transpersonal' pole and philia the 'personal'. By this
he seems to mean that Eros is the quality of emotion with which say a
philosopher approaches truth, or an artist beauty, or a saint holiness,
and philia is that quality of emotion with which any man approaches truth-
fulness, beauty or goodness in another individual. They are polar co-
ordinates because, for example,

"He who cannot love the friend (philia) cannot love the artistic
expression of ultimate reality (Eros)."²

¹Love, Power and Justice" p. 30.
²Ibid. p. 31.
Tillich seems to assume the Platonic realm of the Symposium, but his cryptic remarks here could also be connected with G.E. Moore's view, expressed in the final chapter of "Principia Ethica", that the pleasures of social intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects in art and nature are the most valuable things we know. Moore however did not attempt to connect these as polar co-ordinates in the systematic way which Tillich does. The latter's emphasis here too is very different from that of Aristotle in books VIII and IX of the 'Ethics'. Whereas Aristotle brings in philia, apparently to introduce the fact of altruism (which otherwise is lacking in his lectures), Tillich tries to paint his portrait of love on a much wider canvas, and the place of philia is determined, he suggests, by the presence of Eros. Philosophers of course are fond of wide generalisations, and Idealist philosophers are very prone to make the sort of remark quoted above. It sounds well and it reads well, but what empirical evidence can be found to substantiate it? What factual evidence can one find for a statement to the effect that a man for whom aesthetic appreciation is impossible will be unable to make friends, and vice versa? Patently Tillich believes that all men are capable of both, and this might be granted, but to say that they are in a polar relationship is much more dubious. Francis Bacon was a man with a finely sensitive and discriminating mind for both the beauty of Nature ('Of Gardens'), and for the beauty of Art ('Of Studies'), but his personal relationships with his family, his friends and his political associates were cold in the extreme
('Of Friendship'). A man with a wide and deep appreciation of beautiful objects does not necessarily make deep and lasting friendships. In fact on empirical evidence alone it would almost seem that the Eros quality which is directed towards objet d'art dissipates the philia quality which is directed towards other individuals, and any correlation there is, is not positive as Tillich implies, but negative.

However with certain qualifications his point that there is a relationship between philia and Eros may be granted, and also that each may be termed a quality of love rather than a separate type. Tillich's analysis has been investigated above in order to demonstrate that some of his sweeping generalisations (of which there are many) need much closer investigation than he has given to them.

At this point he proceeds to an analysis of the agape quality, which, of course, is predominant in the literature of the New Testament. He asserts,

"... agape enters from another dimension into the whole life and into all qualities of love. One could call agape the depth of love, or love in relation to the ground of life. One could say that in agape ultimate reality manifests itself and transforms life and love.

Agape is love cutting into love ..."¹

¹ 'Love, Power and Justice' p. 33.
Once again in spite of his initial resolution to give a semantically close analysis of the different qualities of love this is bafflingly abstruse language. It is difficult to decide whether Tillich is speaking here of an empirical finding of the quality of agape or whether it is an a priori assertion. There is no attempt made either to deduce or to prove these woolly sentences. On the contrary in his final chapter Tillich goes on to assume them as already established in his ontological analysis, and he asserts that,

(a) "Agape elevates libido into the divine unity of love, power and justice."

(b) "Agape cuts into the detached safety of a merely aesthetic Eros. It does not deny the longing towards the good and the true and its divine source, but it prevents it from becoming an aesthetic enjoyment without ultimate seriousness. Agape makes the cultural Eros responsible and the mystical Eros personal."

(c) "Agape ... needs no sympathy in order to love; it loves what it has to reject in terms of philia. Agape loves in everybody and through everybody loves itself."¹

It is clear that Tillich is torn between the desire to make a leap from the epithymia, Eros and philia qualities of love to another quality which transcends them, and the desire to establish agape as the essential

¹Ibid. pp. 117, 118 and 119.
(or ontological) basis of all other qualities of love. Obviously too he wants to point to the fact that agape is that love which God has for man, but because he sees all four elements as qualities in the meaning of love he asserts that love is one and that all love contains a trend towards the reunion of the separated. Thus he is forced to say, on his own premisses, that,

"The three types of love (viz. epithymia, philia and Eros) contribute to the symbolisation of the divine love, but the basic and only adequate symbol is agape."\(^1\)

His doctrine of symbolism has already been commented on (p. 164ff) and reference has been made to its inadequacy in enabling us to distinguish the true symbol from the spurious. However even granting Tillich's premisses, and his obvious desire to establish agape as the basic ontological element in the concept of love, he seems to have landed himself in a certain logical inconsistency here.

On the one hand he asserts that,

"Love is absent where there is no individualisation, and love can be fully realised only where there is full individualisation in man."\(^2\)

Presumably because he has already said that the only non symbolic statement which can be made about God is that God is being-itself, he here adds the

---

final two words to the above sentence. If by "full individualisation" he means those contingent characteristics which he speaks of (2) as a necessary prerequisite for the three qualities of epithymia, Eros and philia — viz. "repulsion and attraction, passion and sympathy", then he is consistent so far. But he has already told us that,

"'Personal God' does not mean that God is a person. It means that God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality. He is not a person, but he is not less than personal."¹

In short he believes that God is being beyond personality and individuality. Yet he still says, symbolically speaking, that God is love in the sense of agape (the "only adequate symbol"). Thus he is saying in effect that agape, as a quality of love, is of a different type to all the other qualities. Presumably by the statement that 'God carries within himself the ontological power of personality' he implies that this includes Eros, philia and epithymia — but these have been rejected by God in favour of agape. This in itself should have led him to the view that agape is in a different category to the other three qualities. (This is, of course, the conclusion reached by Anders Nygren in his book 'Eros and Agape'. See e.g. Vol. 1 p. 14f, where he says "Eros and agape are two phenomena which originally have nothing whatever to do with one another."²)

¹ Ibid. p. 271
² Ibid. p. 311
Tillich is aware of course that the agape of God to man (which accepts
the other in spite of resistance, which suffers and forgives, which affirms
the other unconditionally) is very different from the agape of man to God.

"Affirming God's ultimate meaning and longing for his ultimate
fulfilment is not love in the same way as agape. Here one does not
love God 'in spite of', or in forgiveness, as in agape towards man."¹

However because he has committed himself to the procrustean view that the
four qualities of love have an ontological basis Tillich asserts that
agape can be applied to the

"love wherein man loves himself, i.e. himself as the eternal image in
the divine life. Man can have the other forms of love towards
himself, such as simple affirmation, libido, friendship and Eros.
None of these forms is evil as such. But they become evil where they
are not under the criterion of self-love in the sense of agape.

The divine self-love includes all creatures; and proper human self-
love includes everything with which man is existentially united."²

This means in effect that the agape of man to God is the agape of God to
Himself - man's love for God is the love with which God loves Himself, and
no matter how Tillich twists this about in the labyrinth of his symbolism
it would appear to distinguish agape in a radical fashion from all the

¹Ibid. p. 312.

²Systematic Theology' Vol. 1, p. 313.
other qualities of love. Thus even on his own premises I cannot agree that Tillich has satisfactorily established the ontological status of agape, nor that his analysis has cleared up what he himself calls "the ambiguities of love". The interpretation of love in his book "Love, Power and Justice" is no more convincing than was his interpretation of courage in "The Courage To Be", and ultimately it must be said for almost the same reasons.

Tillich is usually clear and frequently illuminating when he gives an account of what he calls the 'ontic' characteristics of a specific concept. It is when he turns to the 'ontological' sphere that his language becomes vacuous and his intelligibility suspect. In one of his many attempts to elucidate what he means by 'ontology' he writes,

"Ontology is the elaboration of the 'logos' of the 'on'; in English, of the 'radical word' which grasps 'being as such' .... Ontology asks the simple and infinitely difficult question: What does it mean to be? What are the structures, common to everything that is, to everything that participates in being? One cannot avoid this question by denying that there are such common structures. One cannot deny that being is one and that the qualities and elements of being constitute a texture of connected and conflicting forces."¹

¹ Love, Power and Justice pp. 18 and 19.
The ambiguity and vacuity of the term 'being' has already been touched on in comparing Tillich's position with that of Aristotle (see pp. 127 - 132), but there seems to be an additional assumption here which should be brought to light. Behind what is said in the final sentence quoted above, and indeed behind the whole doctrine of what an idealist ontology is, there lies, in philosophical terminology, the theory of internal relations. This doctrine is pregnant in every idealist epistemology, and according to Russell,

"... the axiom of internal relations is equivalent to the monistic theory of truth".  

and it is undoubtedly one of Tillich's most significant presuppositions - and it is significant in spite of being unacknowledged.

Thus he says, e.g.,

"Knowing is a form of union. In every act of knowledge the knower and that which is known are united; the gap between subject and object is overcome. The subject 'grasps' the object, adapts it to itself, and, at the same time, adapts itself to the object. .......... (knowledge) transforms and heals; this would be impossible if the knowing subject were only a mirror of the object, remaining in unconquerable distance from it."  

---


In using the words 'grasps', 'adapts' and 'transforms' Tillich reveals his adherence to the doctrine of internal relations, as held by, for example, Bradley and Hegel. He does indeed make a distinction between an 'ontological' and a 'technical' concept of reason; the former he defines as,

"the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and to shape reality", ¹

and the latter he sees as the reason which is used as an instrument in any ordinary method of empirical verification, logical analysis, or semantic clarification: and he contends that it is this concept of reason which,

"has become predominant since the breakdown of German classical idealism, and in the wake of English empiricism." ²

His sympathies are obviously with the former, ontological reason, and in retaining it as the proper function of reason in philosophy he gives it logical priority, and therefore commits himself to the 'axiom' of internal relations. Miss Dorothy Emmet was surely correct when she said,

"I believe that .... much of what he (Tillich) says about the use of the 'ontological reason' in philosophy is dependent on idealistic epistemological assumptions which are insufficiently examined or justified." ³

¹Ibid. p. 82.
²Ibid. p. 80
³"The Theology of Paul Tillich" p. 207.
It is explicitly contended here that the most important of these assumptions is this 'axiom'.

The theory of internal relations can, perhaps, be best stated in a negative form. According to the theory all things are interconnected, and their relations to each other are not external, i.e. that relations cannot change without a change in the nature of the things related, being really an expression of their nature. This is taken either to buttress idealism and monism, or as an inference from monistic idealism, viz. that thinking is not simply a finding of a datum (the external world) but a construction both of the thinker and the object thought. Thinking (and perceiving) make a difference to the two terms in the relation.¹

Tillich may have been led to his peculiar view of the cognitive relation by considering the question, 'What is a relation?' as if it was of the same form as, 'What is a chronometer?' and on this view one is inclined to treat 'relation' as a term. But when Bradley, for example, said ² that relation presupposes quality and quality relation, and that neither are real, he was, in his own way, drawing attention to the fact that the logical behaviour of the word 'relation' and of the phrase 'internal relations' were different to that of, say, the word 'combustion' or the phrase 'internal combustion'. The answers to the question, 'What is a relation?' will be philosophical and possibly logical answers, and one cannot give a pseudo-scientific reply about the so-called 'nature of relations'.

²Appearance and Reality' p. 25.
Dr Ewing ("Idealism" Chapter IV) after listing and discussing ten possible meanings of the phrase 'internal relations' finds that in some obvious senses the internal relations theory is valid, e.g. viewed etymologically as relations within a given whole - where the whole in question is everything that is - but that in this sense it is a meaningless and fruitless tautology. And so it proves for all other distinguishable views of the internal relations theory - if valid they are tautologous, and if not tautologous they are not valid. In the end one must say that it is an axiom discovered intuitively by absolute idealists in general, and here assumed without question by Tillich. Yet it is at the very heart of what he means by 'ontological reason'.

Therefore however much one may agree with some of Tillich's conclusions about separate Christian and moral virtues - and in the concluding Part it will be evident that some of his findings are endorsed by this writer - in the end it must be said that it has been chiefly his views of 'ontological analysis', and his concept of 'pure being' which are ultimately unsatisfying, and give no logical basis either for morality in general, or for Christian ethics in particular. There is in his thinking far too much rhetoric and verbiage about the 'abyss' and the 'depth of being', too much floundering in an ocean of philosophical terms, and too many basic concepts left unexamined to allow one to say that here is a coherent and logical exposition of what theology means by Christian ethics.
In America, the current philosophical mood, where it is not dominated by the formal mechanics of symbolic logic (following Professors Quine and Carnap) has been strongly influenced on the one hand by Continental existentialism, and on the other by English linguistic analysis. The distinction between these two groups becomes obvious in the selection each makes of what it takes to be appropriate philosophical material. Those who are existentially minded display a fondness for the individual, the unique and the outstanding - disregarding the common and the mediocre (cf. Kierkegaard's view that to be truly subjective is to be transformed and distinguished); to the linguistically minded, however, the precise opposite is the case; they tend to deride the esoteric and the unique, and spend much time in hunting down the ordinary man and the common denominators in his speech. The former can lead to the cult of the individual (as it did in Nietzsche, Hitler and as it does in all power politics); the latter can lead, and indeed has led, to a disengaging movement by the young at our own and American universities from all participation in politics or public affairs; to be uncommitted is the philosophical ideal and, unfortunately, this permeates, through the semi academic journalist, schoolteacher, etc., to that ordinary man whose conversation is so fascinating. Both are
excesses and all excesses have baneful consequences. In the following
discussion about the functions of the philosopher and the theologian, I
have disregarded the existentialist position and concentrated upon the
analyst, for the simple reason that it is the latter who occupies the fore¬
ground in the English philosophical scene.

During the past few years a number of philosophical works have been
published in this country dealing with what seemed, in the previous two
decades, to be a no man's land between theology and philosophy. Two
collections of essays in particular have had considerable impact, viz.
'Faith and Logic', edited Mitchell, and 'New Essays in Philosophical
Theology', edited Flew and Macintyre. The papers in these works are, for
the most part, based on various linguistic techniques evolved in the recent
mood of neo-scholasticism in English philosophy.  
The word 'mood' is used
here because one cannot say definitely that there is a specific school of
linguistic analysis. The contention of those who are influenced by this
atmosphere is that by utilising linguistic methods (which have been largely
developed in the numerically strong school of philosophy in Oxford), we
can achieve a better understanding of terms which are used both in the
market place and in the study. The two works mentioned above are
concerned, in the main, with the nuances of the language used by
theologians, and as such they may well strike the pure theologian (i.e. the
theologian who is not interested in the philosophical or metaphysical
repercussions of his language - the theologian who is concerned only to
examine the repercussions of God's activity in its relationship to man) as being arid, sterile and trivial. With this opinion one can sympathize. Flew's parable of the divine gardener,¹ Hare's lunatic 'blick',² and Mitchell's Stranger,³ make for a stimulating discussion, but for the Christian theologian this is not enough. When Professor Flew poses his central question,

"What would have to occur or to have occurred, to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God."⁴ it is open to the Christian to point out, as an argumentum ad hominem, that it is a characteristic of a philosophic statement that it cannot be resolved by practical procedures in, for example, a laboratory, why then can Flew expect a theological statement to be substantiated in this way? Another possible answer would be to put another question - "What change would have to occur in you to demonstrate the love of, or the existence of, God?" For the pure theologian there is no question of proving the existence of, or the love of, God. He is, as was pointed out earlier, a committed man, and his main problem is how to remain faithful to the impact of God in his theological statements without losing the vitality of that impact. A discussion about God is not merely a discussion; it is, at the same time, an admission of a

¹New Essays in Philosophical Theology, pp. 96ff.
²Ibid. pp. 100ff.
³Ibid. pp. 103ff.
⁴Ibid. p. 99.
commitment, and it is this which makes the theologian's position particularly difficult. How can he 'discuss' with a philosopher 'about' God? - they are talking on different levels. The modern philosopher may discuss the subject in an academic manner - the theologian in discussing is doing something in addition, for he is revealing the mainspring of his life. To use the current terminology, almost all the theologian's talk is performatory. He is not simply putting forward descriptive propositions; the propositions he expresses are continually loaded with his deepest convictions and evince his attitude of mind and his way of living. As Barth says,

"The idea of an abstract knowledge of this object (the activity of the living God towards us, with Jesus Christ Himself) - we might almost say the idea of a theologian abstracted from the fact that he is a Christian - is one which has no substance." A philosopher can, in theory, take up the subject of the existence of God as he takes up the subject of perception; but the theologian takes up the subject of God as he takes up a moral problem of his own.

That there is this difference in attitude to their respective studies is evident to anyone who has attended university classes in the two disciplines or who has read any of the modern theologians and

1.c.f. 'Religious Language', I.T. Ramsay, p. 36, where he states that this sort of commitment is only given up at the cost of a personal revolution.

philosophers writing in England. When a philosopher is intensely and personally involved in philosophy (as for example is Heidegger) this is viewed with a certain amount of suspicion. The reception given to Mrs. Dorothea Krook's recent book 'Three Traditions of Moral Thought' furnishes a good example of this. The main objection to Mrs. Krook's treatment is that, in her book, she is preaching rather than teaching, and she is contrasted in her involvement with her subject matter with the calm detachment with which, say, Professor Basil Willey dealt with a similar period.

This, of course, raises the general problem of how far the teacher in the humane disciplines in our universities should be concerned with the teaching of the subject matter of the discipline and how far he should be concerned with the formation of character. In the course of a review of Mrs. Krook's book, the Provost of King's College, Cambridge, Mr. Noel Annan, after criticising its contents quite severely, said,

"As a testament of faith her book must command more than respect and sympathy. Through it there shines a horror of human wickedness and a passionate belief in human goodness. It is the book of a dedicated teacher of righteousness, which has the effect of making at least one of its critics feel minuscule."¹

On this the leader writer in the Times Literary Supplement of Jan. 29th, 1960, commented, "But is there a proper place in English universities for

dedicated teachers of righteousness?" and his conclusion was in line with the current philosophical trend when he answered his own question in the negative. The good teacher, he said - and the reference was mainly to the teacher of English Literature - should not be involved to the extent of making personal value judgements and attempting to foist these upon his students or readers.

This view, which has much to commend it, has a pertinent connection with the attempted objectivity in academic philosophy today. The leader writer in the T.L.S. sees correctly that the doyen of English criticism, Dr. Leavis, is not only "a very great technical critic of verse and prose", but that he is also "an authoritative moralist". In short Dr. Leavis can not only criticise in detachment but he can also be a moralist in so far as he leaves his audience in no doubt about certain moral commitments of his own. But can the same thing be said mutatis mutandis about our academic philosophers? Obviously if the linguistic philosopher believes that philosophical problems are due to a misuse of language, that they are verbal puzzles, then his involvement in such problems is more like the mathematician's attempt to solve an equation than it is like the mathematician's attempt to resolve, say, a matrimonial difficulty of his own. Thus modern analytic and linguistic philosophy is said, to presuppose,
"a palate for exact thinking, and hence analytic philosophy will naturally appeal to scientifically minded people more than to religious enthusiasts, poets and painters."\(^1\)

Epitomising this view of philosophy was an article by Professor J. Wisdom entitled, significantly, 'Philosophical Perplexity' in which he says,

"Philosophical theories are illuminating .... when they suggest or draw attention to a terminology which reveals likenesses and differences which are concealed by ordinary language."\(^2\)

and he concludes that it is better not to say that philosophical statements are either verbal or factual but that they are philosophical.

In concentrating thus on the kind of problem which puzzles the philosopher much thought has gone into the problem about what sort of a problem is a philosophical problem. When the philosopher is puzzled about the existence of external objects or about the validity of memory, these are not the kinds of problem he would take to the psycho-analyst (although a comparison has been made between the work of the so-called therapeutic positivists and that of the psycho-analyst\(^3\)). It is suggested that philosophical problems such as these can be solved by understanding how language is ordinarily used, and

---


\(^2\) P.A.S. Vol. XVI, 1936.

\(^3\) Vide B.A. Farrell: 'An Appraisal of Therapeutic Positivism' Mind 1946.
how certain misuses of key terms have generated these very problems. One of the symptoms of philosophic bewilderment is to go on looking for more ultimate explanations than can be given. Thus Professor Ryle contends that philosophic problems arise out of dilemmas where no real, factual or logical, conflicts exist, but only 'fancied' conflicts and 'cross-purposes', and the aim of (linguistic) philosophy is the removal of the puzzlement engendered by the dilemma.¹

There can be no doubt that much of the work of this brand of linguistic analysis has done much good; it has forced everyone confronted with it to examine more carefully just how certain terms are being used in extrapolation from ordinary language, and it has proved a useful corrective to the wilder excesses of, for example, Hegelian Idealism. However one may still want to say that, even when all the linguistic problems have been settled, do not the great problems of the existence of man and the human situation remain? The primary purpose of language, after all, is to talk about matters that are not linguistic, and the result of a cleansing operation of one's language may still leave one with no satisfactory answer to the problems of one's own existence in this world of space and time.

It is this which accounts for the reaction to linguistic analysis among, particularly, the non academic philosopher today. Linguistic analysis is useful as an exercise in verbal dexterity but, by its own

¹G. Ryle 'Dilemmas', p. 11.
terms of reference, it must shun the extremes of human thought and human conflict, keeping always to the narrow path that signifies the mean, the median or the mode of ordinary language. (Doubtless if the word 'thought' was substituted for 'language' in the phrase 'ordinary language' the movement would have fewer adherents.) For the modern linguistic philosopher it may be true that philosophy is, as Wittgenstein once said, a perpetual fight against the fascination which certain forms of expression have for us: but for the previous philosophers it was much more than this - it was a perpetual fight against the fascination which certain ways of living have for us. Socrates seems to say, "I don't give you a theory of what is sense and what is nonsense. I formulate no dogmas. But bring me a man prepared to think for himself and I shall infect him with this wonderful disease of philosophy." Plato and Aristotle not only discussed 'goodness' with their auditors - they tried to recommend and propagate their own views of eudaimonia; and Kant's moral theory was his religion. In so far as a man is involved in his discussion as in a moral problem of his own then so much the more is he fascinating to read. There is this resemblance between the older philosophers and great works of literature or music that after we become really acquainted with them our lives may be changed - we may view the world and its values from a different perspective.
This may be simply because some philosophers like Plato, Hobbes and F.H. Bradley did much of their ratiocination in and through images; they used rhythm and imagery in their prose not merely for ornament, nor even merely to reinforce their meaning, but actually to convey their state of mind and to persuade. However the same could not be said about Aristotle or Kant. As Russell once put it,

"All great art and all great philosophy spring from the passionate desire to embody what was at first an unsubstantial phantom, a beckoning beauty luring men away from safety and ease to a glorious torment."

The significant words here are "passionate desire", and it may be that the present objections to modern philosophy are based on the belief that modern philosophers are not passionate about anything - except perhaps their rejection of traditional philosophy.

The question of the involvement of the philosopher in his subject matter becomes particularly acute in the realm of moral philosophy, possibly because our concept of what it means to be 'involved' comes generally in the realm of morality. The philosophers of the past, as has been pointed out, believed that the function of moral philosophy was to produce good citizens and that its goal was practical knowledge. The linguistic philosophers of today make no such claims. They state clearly that their function is not to provide recipes for the good life
or to produce blueprints for 'eudaimonia', but rather to examine the logical behaviour of concepts concerned with moral activity. Mr. R.M. Hare says,

"Ethics, as I conceive it, is the logical study of the language of morals."¹

and Mr. P.H. Nowell-Smith ends his penetrating book on 'Ethics' with the comment,

"My purpose has been the less ambitious one of showing how the concepts that we use in practical discourse, in deciding, choosing, advising, appraising, praising, and blaming, and selecting and rejecting moral rules, are related to each other. The questions, "What shall I do?", and "What moral principles should I adopt?" must be answered by each man for himself; that at least is part of the connotation of the word 'moral'."²

This obviously implies that Nowell-Smith is doing something different from the traditional moral philosophers; he is a moral analyst in so far as he is content to demonstrate how ethical concepts are related to, and how they differ from, concepts of other kinds, and he is not prepared to go on to encourage the observance of a moral code, or to propagate any views about what makes a man good or happy. In this laudable project he is in the main stream of present-day English

¹ The Language of Morals', R.M. Hare, p. v.
² Ethics', P.H. Nowell-Smith, p. 320.
philosophy. The philosopher does not now attempt to be a prophet or a priest; he is content if he can dissolve some of the confusions and distortions of language which generate spurious questions: for example, in tackling the question "What is the meaning of life?", the present day philosopher would dissect the term 'meaning' at some length and eventually show that the question is really a multiple question which has many different and conflicting answers.

In line with this type of reasoning the Christian philosopher, Professor D.M. Mackinnon writes,

"..... today those who are concerned with philosophical studies in British universities, and who also profess and call themselves Christians, are reproached by the bien-pensants if they do not present to their students an unhealthy hybrid called a 'philosophy of life', something which is neither philosophy nor theology, but a violation of the integrity of both disciplines, and indeed a standing menace to the spiritual health both of the man who purveys it and of those condemned to listen to him. If the present writer may be permitted a personal comment at this point, he might observe that for him to suppose that what he could offer the students in his ordinary class at nine in his lecture room could be in any sense whatever an adequate substitute
for the mysteries of the Eucharist at which he may have assisted
at seven thirty the same day, would be a treason alike to his
faith and to his philosophical conscience.\(^1\)

All this seems to indicate that possibly the chief difference
between the philosopher and the theologian is that where the former is
concerned to commend critical enquiry and a precise, and impartial,
examination of the presuppositions of our terminology, the theologian
is committed to a certain terminology and to certain presuppositions.
Where the strict analyst, in the tradition of Wittgenstein, almost
seems to put himself out of business in so far as he dissolves the
embryonic philosophical puzzles of his students, the strict theologian
must continually be aware of his commitment to certain dogmas which
colour and condition all his teaching. This implies that philosophy
has no practical function except perhaps that of developing a facility
in the solution of linguistic paradoxes - akin to a dexterity in solving
the 'Times' crosswords. The theologian always has to keep before him
the goal of a developing knowledge of the activity of God, with all that
this implies in his own life and in the life of his students.

But this is too simple. Granted there are certain philosophic
puzzles and paradoxes which may be investigated in an abstract and
disinterested way - means of, for example, "language games", still one

\(^1\) "Essays in Christology", ed. Parker, p. 273.
must say that this type of discipline, because of the nature of its semantic relationships, will affect one's way of living and teaching. I would go so far as to say that the fact that Professor Mackinnon assisted at the Eucharist at 7.30 a.m. would undoubtedly have an effect on what he said, if not at his 9 a.m. lecture that day, in many subsequent lectures. Earlier it was said that a belief is subconscious for the greater part of its life history, and it must also be admitted that subconscious belief can exert a remote influence on one's conscious actions - and action here includes language. There is no idea without its attendant emotion, and this applies as much to what are usually termed 'philosophic' ideas as to any others; any teacher must be only too well aware of the way in which he has to strive for a degree of objectivity and impartiality. I say 'degree' because it is the contention here that complete impartiality in philosophical topics is impossible. Every argument in a philosopher's repertoire is as 'loaded' as is any discussion in a theological lecture room. One has only to read the excellent biography of 'Keynes' by Sir R.F. Harrod to realize what the teaching of G.E. Moore's 'Principia Ethica' meant to the circle at Bloomsbury, among others - and it was as much what Moore did not say, as what he did say, which was significant.\(^1\) The statements contained in the two philosophic cum theological works mentioned on page 198, are

\(^1\) c.f. Heidegger's view that it is the unsaid ('Ungesagte') which constitutes the real doctrine of any thinker.
also revealing and contain much material for practical inferences.

Particularly interesting in this connection is a recent, and very thoughtful, book by Dr. R.W. Hepburn, 'Christianity and Paradox', which has the tone and the accents, as Professor H.D. Lewis points out, of a regretful and nostalgic erstwhile member, or near member, of the Christian community. Dr. Hepburn shows that he is aware of what life can 'mean' for the professing Christian, and in an attempt to hold to certain of the values of such a life he sketches the manner in which a religious orientation of life can be retained in an agnostic setting; and he concludes,

"The chief value of adding fable, myth, and symbol to moral judgement is that of enlivening the imagination with memorable insights into the character of the way of life to which one has committed oneself. Further, once it is seen clearly how inescapable is some imaginative perspective or slant on the non-human world, commonsense alone would urge the adopting of that slant that backs up, does not make nonsense of, the value-j judgements one has made. ...... the proper task of a religious orientation is the enriching of life in a great many different ways."²

¹Our Experience of God', H.D. Lewis, p. 100f.

²Opus Cit. p. 209.
The flaw in this attractive programme is that by the "religiously orientated sceptic" Dr. Hepburn would seem to mean no more than a moral analyst, who is at the same time blessed, or cursed, with imaginative powers. It would appear that this is precisely what Dr. Hepburn is himself. He has a logical acumen similar to that of a Nowell-Smith, but at the same time he feels strongly that this type of moral theorising is lacking in that imaginative force (some would say "rhetorical power") which was a prominent feature of the work of the great ethical writers. Thus he suggests readings in, for example, Orwell, Koestler, Dostoievsky, Bunyan and Euripides, presumably in order to put living flesh on the dry bones of what is in effect a naturalistic ethic.

This is a significant pointer to the apparent sterility of much present day philosophy. It also serves to substantiate the remark made in Chapter I that if a student is looking for a "philosophy of life" today he goes to the school of Humanity, or English Literature, or History, but not to the Philosophy school, and it is no secret that several of England's leading philosophers have deserted Philosophy for Literature (English and Russian) and (interestingly) for the study of psycho-analysis. Dr. Hepburn's "religion for the sceptic" is a hybrid makeshift, which nevertheless is an inevitable outcome of the prevailing philosophical climate. The stern winds of logical positivism in the thirties and of linguistic analysis in the fifties have blown away most
of the intuitionist and deontological props for ethical theory and seem to have demolished any possibility of a theological ethic, or indeed any type of ethic, whatever.

It may seem that in criticising Barth and Tillich in Parts I and II, I have been adding a breath to this wind of change, but this is not altogether true. "Every philosophy is a product of its age and subject to its limitations", said Hegel, and, although he believed that his own philosophy was exempt from this criticism, it may be read not as a criticism at all but as an inference from what it means to be a human being in a world which was not made by human agency. No matter how hard a teacher, or writer, strives for objectivity in the presentation of his subject matter, in few, if any, subjects can complete objectivity be achieved; and this is particularly true of philosophy. Although the linguistic philosopher maintains that there is no end product in his discipline, that the practical results of his talking in a metalanguage are non-existent, the practice belies his principle. Inevitably the individual treatment of a philosophic problem - even a piece of philosophical historiography - betrays, perhaps unconsciously, the individual's fundamental beliefs. The selection of what seems important in a discussion, the omission of certain points, the presentation of an argument, the key terms used, even the incidental adjectives, betray a bias, and this bias is perhaps more significant for the student than the argument presented.
This is not intended as a criticism of the prevailing climate of agnosticism and atheism in the world of the academic philosopher - it is rather a cautionary notice pointing out that the non-practicality principle of linguistic analysis is a myth. Previous periods were probably just as sceptical in mood as is present-day Oxford. A recent writer notes,

"When I was an undergraduate, back in predepression days, those of us who breathed deep of the intellectual air of our time breathed a very sceptical air indeed. Bernard Shaw was a staple, and while he did go in for a tongue-in-cheek piety, especially when talking to rationalists, he could not be called a bulwark of classical Christianity. Aldous Huxley was a long way from his present esoteric piety, the younger C.E.M. Joad was still crying "hands off the Church of England; it's the only thing that saves us from Christianity"."^1

The point is that the present day linguistic and positivist philosopher is more 'committed' than perhaps he likes to suppose; and this is substantiated if one examines the excessive number of critical and destructive arguments which appear in the philosophic journals today - all contain an implicit positive commitment, otherwise they would never have been written. Professor J.O. Urmson writes,

---

^1The Renewal of Man', Alexander Miller, pp. 17-18.
"It is notorious that many philosophers claim that they are adherents of no philosophical doctrines whatsoever, and even regard adherence to a philosophical doctrine as a sign of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy. There seems to be nobody left under the age of eighty who is prepared to confess himself a rationalist, or empiricist, a neutral monist, a materialist, a logical atomist, a pragmatist, a realist, an idealist ...."  

But in fact these philosophical critics are not simply neutral observers, because their terms of reference are positive, even if they refuse to admit this even to themselves. There are few who are more biased than those who proclaim their lack of any bias.

In an introductory passage in Plato's 'Protagoras', Socrates asks the youthful Hippocrates what art he expects to be taught by the sophist Protagoras. When the answer is 'Rhetoric' Socrates discovers that this entails the nourishment of the soul by knowledge - especially the knowledge of good and evil, and he cautions Hippocrates in these words,

“If you know which of his wares are good and which are evil, you may safely buy knowledge of Protagoras or of anyone; but, if not.

---

2 c.f. 'Other Minds', J.J. Austin, P.A.S. 1946, where it is argued that 'I know' functions like 'I promise' in that it makes a commitment. This is a specific example of the general view of philosophical argumentation envisaged here.
then, my friend, watch out; don’t take risks, don’t gamble, with
the most precious thing you have. For there is far greater
risk in buying knowledge than in buying food and drink."¹

However he does not stop Hippocrates going to see Protagoras; he is
simply issuing a caveat, because of his own conviction that true
knowledge could not be taught. It was not to be expressed in any glib
formula or in any piece of potted wisdom. It was something which could
only be discovered - not developed or perhaps even discussed, except
negatively. It may be that he believed that philosophic wisdom was an
achievement in a way of living - which of course included dialectic.
It is precisely this sort of wisdom which is so conspicuously lacking
in the experimental language games of linguistic philosophy. If
philosophy is no more than a mental gymnastic, on a par with other
mental disciplines, then of course its repercussions are negligible.
But if the Socratic view, that in venturing upon a philosophic problem
we are hazarding the most important part of ourselves, is taken as valid,
then indeed the responsibilities of the academic philosophers are greater
than they themselves realize.

It is perhaps salutary here to recall Kierkegaard’s remarks about
the mode of life of Socrates. He wrote,

".... let us now also look to see, less systematically and more
simply, how he (Socrates) conducted himself while he lived, when

¹'Protagoras' 313c.
he went about in public places and mocked the Sophists; when he was a human being, and, even in the most ridiculous situation that has been preserved for posterity (c.f. Antonius philosophus - ad se ipsum XI, 28), when, because Xanthippe had taken his clothes and left the house, he threw a pelt around him and appeared thus clad in the market-place to the great amusement of his friends, still in this situation remained a human being, and not nearly so ridiculous in his pelt as he later became in the System, where he appears fantastically draped in the rich systematic trappings of a paragraph. Did Socrates go about talking of what the age demands, did he apprehend the ethical as something to be discovered, or which had been discovered by a prophet with a world historical outlook, or as something to be determined by an appeal to the ballot box? No, Socrates was concerned only with himself, and could not even count to five when it was a question of counting votes (Xenophon); he was unfitted for participation in any task where several were required, to say nothing of where it was necessary to have a world-historical mob.¹

Kierkegaard should have known better than to trust Xenophon - but in any case it was in the Gorgias that Socrates said, jestingly, that he did

¹Unscientific Postscript', p. 132.
not understand about letting people vote. The extremism of the above quotation is easily accounted for when one remembers Kierkegaard’s attitude to the System. Socrates was not impractical, but he had such a strong awareness of the activity of God that his actions appeared foolish and his sense of values distorted. For him (as for the Orphics generally) religion was no mere formal observance or empty ritual but the very life of man.

In the light of this therefore, it must be said that the philosopher and the theologian are closer than appears at first sight - and this is especially true of the moral philosopher.

By way of illustrating the Socratic view of philosophy it might be instructive to take one theory of the linguistic canon which bears on this topic, and to contrast it with what might be taken to be the Socratic view. The important article by Professor J. Wisdom mentioned on page 203 was one of the factors leading to a revision of the positivistic dictum, "The meaning of a statement is the method of its verification", because obviously the status of this statement was itself doubtful. It is neither an empirical statement nor a tautology, therefore, as Mr. J. O. Urmson points out¹ it was replaced by the maxim, "Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use" - and this prescription is closely followed by Nowell-Smith.² The contention here is that to give

---

¹Philosophical Analysis', J.O. Urmson, p. 179.
²Opus Cit. p. 69.
the meaning of a sentence is to give general directions for its use in making true or false assertions, but the meaningfulness of a sentence has nothing to do with its truth or falsity, although of course a true sentence, or a false one, must be meaningful. To know the meaning is to know, in general, how to use, and to talk about the meaning is to talk about the rules, habits and conventions of correct usage.

This is true up to a point. But there are many 'meanings' (uses) of the noun meaning which this theory omits. We speak, for example, of the 'meaning' of a work of art. We talk of what Bach's 'Matthew Passion' means for us. In the British Academy Shakespeare Lecture of 1925 the late Harley Granville-Barker wrote,

"We don't expect to enjoy it (Beethoven's great Mass) as we do 'The Mikado', or even as we may enjoy a Mozart sonata. There is as much enjoyment of the common sort in 'King Lear' as there is in a shattering spiritual experience of our own; though we may come to look back on both with gratitude for the wisdom they have brought us. Incidentally the due interpretation of such art will purge the interpreters with mental and emotional and physical exhaustion too. It demands from them an extraordinary self-devotion. Its greatest effects may be within their reach but will always be a little beyond their grasp. Actors and
singers are brought to the point where they forget themselves and we forget them. And beyond that boundary - it may happen to some of us a dozen times in a lifetime to cross it - we are, for a crowning moment or so, in a realm of absolute music and of a drama that Shakespeare's genius will seem to have released from all bounds."¹

In short the 'meaning' of 'Lear' for Granville-Barker was that part of it which involved a change in himself and that part which he could not express in sentences however involved and analytical. I submit that it is this kind of 'meaning' which was significant for Socrates. Of course part of the Socratic dialectic was a method of clarifying meanings in the sense of showing how they are used; but this semantic analysis was only undergone in order to bring another individual mind to the realisation of the other 'meaning' which lay beneath or beyond the surface of expression. Socrates was concerned about the former meaning, but he was involved in the latter.

The distinction here made between 'being concerned' and 'being involved' seems to be a further example of philosophic legislation, which bears no relation to the use of these terms in ordinary speech. Yet there does seem to be a difference in that I may be concerned about a situation and do nothing about it; but if I am involved in the same

¹ From Henry V to Hamlet', H. Granville-Barker, p. 27.
situation I am committed to doing something about it or in it. I may be concerned about the health of my parents, but I am not involved in it unless and until, for example, I enter into a financial transaction to pay the bills of the Doctor who attends them. I may be concerned about the problem of 'Apartheid', but I am not involved in it until, perhaps, my daughter announces her engagement to a coloured man, and in my reactions to this I display my commitment to one side of the problem or another. We are concerned about, but we are involved in. Being involved means being personally committed; being concerned means being interested as an onlooker or a spectator. It is in this sense that I wish to say that Socrates was involved in philosophy - it was a personal commitment to a way of living for him, and this included as a part, being concerned about semantic clarification and logical analysis. He was not merely the continuous sceptic (the embodiment of the true scientific spirit, as pictured, for example, by Professor Popper), for as Professor J. Wild once said,

"Cautious doubters with no positive philosophic convictions do not live the Socratic life or die the Socratic death."

The linguistic philosopher will say that this is simply 'emotive' meaning, which can be explained in much the same way as one explains causal meaning - for example as "Dark clouds mean rain", or "This means trouble". The emotive meaning of a word or sentence, they will say,
may vary with the content in which the word or the sentence is used. But in one sense what we are concerned with here is the 'meaning' of the whole context. It may be granted that this meaning, labelled 'emotive', is that in so far as it changes our outlook, but it must be remembered that it was revealed by ratiocination, just as the fuller understanding of a work of art changes its 'meaning' for us. To call this view of 'meaning' emotive then is not necessarily derogatory.

The concept might be elucidated, merely by way of illustration, by drawing a comparison with Heisenberg's principle of Uncertainty in the field of Quantum Physics. Heisenberg said that not only had physicists in the past never thought out a way of detecting the exact path of an electron, but that it was fundamentally impossible to do so. The general problem of exact prediction demands an exact knowledge of both position and velocity at a particular instant, and he said that so far as electrons, for example, were concerned this could not thinkably be found. He argued that if we are to find out where an electron is, we must illuminate it with some kind of light, and look at it with some kind of microscope. But whatever kind of radiation we use we are at an impasse. For if the illuminating radiation has a low frequency we give the electron a very small push from the quantum of radiation, but get a very indefinite idea as to where it is; if we use a high frequency
radiation we get a good location, but give the electron a heavy push which sends it somewhere quite different from where it would have been if we had let it alone. We cannot therefore, by any conceivable experiment, find out at the same time where the electron is and how fast it is moving - if we know where it is precisely we are very indefinite about its speed, and if we know precisely what is its speed, we are very indefinite about where it is. And it is this inevitable uncertainty which is embodied in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. The principle does not, of course, make any difference to our ordinary methods about finding the speed and position of macroscopic, and indeed most microscopic, objects. It is the construction of these objects which is questioned by the principle.

In much the same way Plato and Socrates believed that the 'truth' - the 'true meaning' - which the philosopher tries to discover is, of necessity, distorted when he attempts to pin it down either by means of a symbolic notation or in a system. In the illumination distortion occurs. This is a general impression received from a study of a wide range of the Platonic canon, but two quotations might be cited; in the 'Phaedrus' Socrates says,

"Writing, you know Phaedrus, has this strange characteristic in which it is rather like portraiture. For the creatures of portraiture stand like living beings, but if you ask them a
question they remain solemnly mute. The same is true of written words: you might suppose them to speak as if they had intelligence, but just ask them anything with a view to learning what they mean and they go on forever repeating what they said."¹

In short the written word is one further step from the 'truth', and any expression in the written word results in a distortion greater even than that of the spoken word. And in the 'Phaedo' Socrates says to Simias,

"... if it is impossible to attain to pure knowledge (or truth) while we are associated with the body, one of two things must follow: either we can nowhere at all acquire it, or only after death."²

It is clear that this Socratic-Platonic view of an uncertainty principle embodied in any attempted expression of the true meaning does not affect the analysis of ordinary meaning as given by the linguistic philosopher. Thus it might be said that much of Plato's philosophy is the attempt to express scientifically (i.e. in the categories of science) the essentially incommunicable; and the discussions about truth and values are still with us today, because the true meaning cannot be taught - it cannot be conveyed from one person to another - but, like the vision of the Good in the Republic, it is an intensely, and essentially

¹Phaedrus' 275d. c.f. Ep. 7.

²Phaedo' 66e.
a, personal experience. And this is the reason why Plato and Socrates (and perhaps also Christ) distrusted the written word. The 'meaning' in this sense cannot be expressed. No teacher can convey 'truth' to a pupil - the most he can do is to test whether the ideas of his students are genuine children or mere phantoms.¹

In an early and beautiful little dialogue, Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates the following question,

"Were we right in saying so before I was condemned to die, and has it now become apparent that we were talking at random and arguing for the sake of argument, and that it was really nothing but playful nonsense?"²

and his answer was found both in the way he lived and in the manner of his death. Philosophy for Socrates was indeed a serious undertaking, and the wisdom he achieved was something rare and valuable. The 'meaning' of philosophy for him could never have been pinned down in mere sentences, and to talk about such a meaning was never a matter of talking about "the rules, habits and conventions of correct usage".

If the activity of the philosopher is reduced to the examination of syntactic similarities and differences then the whole basis of the Socratic activity in linguistic analysis is removed. Knowledge is always sustained by intellectual passion. Propositions - even

¹c.f. Theaetetus 151c, and S. Kierkegaard "Philosophical Fragments"

²Crito' 46d.
propositions about linguistic method - can form no part of a philosophic system unless somebody asserts them and commits himself to believing them. This passion has a part to play in determining what is, and what is not, 'philosophical'. For instance we require a philosophical argument to be interesting and important. And if it is objected that, even if complete objectivity has not yet been achieved by the linguistic philosophers, still it can be regarded as an ideal to be pursued, the reply must contain a reference to the kind of 'facts' which make one philosophical theory preferable to another. Philosophical theories, by their very nature, cannot be verified empirically (if they could they would not be philosophical but scientific); they have built into them a 'meaning' element which demands personal assent or denial, and this personal factor is inevitably relative to the individual auditor and to his intellectual environment. 'Philosophical facts' are part of the heritage of human beings and are perhaps more properly termed 'philosophical questions'. To this extent also it must be contended again that the concern of the philosopher (of whatever school) has practical repercussions. Most of the leading moral philosophers of today in England are naturalists and this will undoubtedly have its effect on the subsequent generation of students and readers.
This is, of course, not an indictment of, for example, the Oxford moralists as amoral individuals. There can be no doubt that they are men of integrity, and are very properly concerned about the upbringing of their children, about honesty, justice and temperance.\(^1\) It may however be recalled that Socrates was condemned for impiety, because for him the exposure of superstition and intellectual pride was a necessary preliminary to the discovery of 'truth'. But for many of his pupils the preliminary stage was sufficient, and Alcibiades and his friends were delighted with his ridicule of Homer and the other sacred books of Greek morality. In the same way the destructive arguments of our naturalistic philosophers are sufficient for too many of the younger generation, and nothing positive is developed. Thus the main theme in this final section is the search for a non-naturalistic basis for morality, following certain lines of thought suggested by the two theologians examined in the previous two parts.

Neither of the two have any interest in the brand of philosophy discussed above. Indeed their attitudes to philosophy are very different and in this respect they may be taken as leaders in two divergent movements in modern theology. Barth has encouraged the independence of Christian faith and philosophy: Tillich has consistently advocated the assimilation of the faith in philosophy - by which he means something like philosophia perennis; and it has been

\(^1\) Vide e.g. R.M. Hare, Opus Cit. p. 74.
argued that the former tends towards a new authoritarianism, and the latter to a kind of biblicist obscurantism.

It was no accident that in the discussion Barth called forth illustrations from the philosophy of Kant and post-Kantian philosophy, while Tillich's work was strongly reminiscent of much Greek philosophy. These seem to be the two main strands in theology today, and these theologians are perhaps the best exemplars of the two themes. This is not to say that either man consciously developed his theology upon Kantian or Platonic presuppositions, but rather that they find in these eras of thought a background against which their own speculations can be sketched. The question must now be faced — What elements in these two systems might be utilised by the philosophers of today — especially by those philosophers who also profess to be Christians?

For the modern philosopher of course Barth is the more recalcitrant of the two. Professor D.M. Mackinnon and Dr. R.W. Hepburn are two philosophers who have given much thought to the Barthian interpretation of Christology. Both show that they are well aware of the intellectual tension which is set up in an individual when he is confronted with the claims of a persuasive realistic type of philosophy (such as linguistic analysis), and the claim of faith in Jesus Christ. The former writes,
"No one .... who has come even to the frontiers of the conflict between faith and philosophy can lightly esteem its Angst."¹ and his present solution seems to be one of public service in realist philosophy and private expression in prayer and in Church ritual in Christological religion. Dr. Hepburn, in becoming convinced of the logical breakdowns in contemporary theology, holds that theological dogmas are untenable and professes scepticism about the reality of Grace. Barth's answer in a way is to embrace the paradoxes of religious, and particularly Christological affirmation, and to say that it is true that all our talk about God is nonsense in one sense of nonsense ("to the Greeks foolishness") - because our language is the language of sinful men and is not fitted for its task; but at the same time it is the most meaningful talk there is, because God Himself takes our words and allows them to carry His meaning and message to men. Thus for him the Angst referred to by Professor Mackinnon is stilled by his wholesale involvement in Christology. The encounter of man with the Word of God is as searing as Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus, and is sufficient to drive philosophy out completely. He is not interested in its problems or its solutions.

Tillich disposes of philosophic-cum-theological Angst by denying its existence; he maintains that any conflict there is is between rival

¹*Essays in Christology*, p. 288.
theologies and rival philosophies, and not between a theological and a philosophical problem. He believes that a 'Christian philosophy' is a contradiction in terms, but, as was pointed out in Part II, this solution depends so much on his own stipulative definitions of the terms 'philosophy' and 'Christian' that he can say, for example,

"All modern philosophy is Christian, even if it is humanistic, atheistic and intentionally anti-Christian."\(^1\)

and such a linguistic manipulation of terminology can be no more satisfying than is the verbal dexterity of much linguistic analysis.

It is clear that the scrutiny of the language used in a theological system might be the chief object of a philosophic view of what a theologian does. (But at the same time it must be remembered that this same scrutiny is never, by the nature of things, completely impersonal.) This indeed is the main theme of the two compendiums mentioned above. Both Barth's and Tillich's views of 'meaning' have been rejected as inadequate but it would be possible for both of these theologians to accept something similar to what I have taken to be the Socratic view of 'meaning', as distinct from 'contextual meaning', and to say that it is this with which they are concerned.

This may be further illustrated by a brief glance at some of the recent discussions of the problem of 'truth' as given by the philosophers

\(^1\)Tillich 'Systematic Theology', Vol. I, p. 31.
and what is said by Barth and Tillich. As might be expected the
philosophic approach now is to examine the ways in which the noun 'truth'
and the adjective 'true' are used in ordinary discourse. Thus Mr. P.F.
Strawson, following a clue left by F.P. Ramsey in his essay, 'Facts and
Propositions'\(^1\) developed what might be termed a performatory theory of
truth in two important articles.\(^2\) In rejecting the traditional coherence
and correspondence theories of truth Strawson says that 'true' and 'false'
are not the names of special relations, because they are not the names
of anything. The word 'true' is a convenient linguistic device which
we use to signify agreement with, or to confirm, endorse and underline
other statements, and is never used to ascribe a property to these
statements. The adjective 'true' functions in speech in much the same
way as a nod of the head. In a more recent article\(^3\) Mr. A.R. White
agrees with Strawson but goes on to emphasise the evaluative functions
of the word. As I have pointed out elsewhere,\(^4\) these theories are
undoubtedly of value in drawing attention to certain gaps in the older
relational theories of truth, but they do not touch the problems which
generated those theories. No mere examination of ordinary usage will
elucidate, say, the Socratic concept of 'truth' - the essential meaning
as opposed to the contextual meaning. If it is objected that this is

---

\(^1\) The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays', p. 142.
\(^3\) A.R. White 'Truth as Appraisal'. Mind Vol. LXVI, p. 318ff.
an example of the old metaphysical error of supposing that there is something which is 'THE' meaning, all one can do is to indicate that this is not a trespass upon the domain of linguistic analysis but an attempt to account for what has been called 'religious truth' as against 'empirical truth'. It may also be pointed out that the theological usage of the sentence "Christ is the Truth", is a usage which does not fit into the performatory or appraisal analyses, but it may well be a basis for the theory of 'meaning' held by Plato and Socrates. If the term 'true' is reserved for analytic and empirically verifiable sentences then this is simply another stipulative definition, and it involves a break with the whole of a previous philosophic tradition, and incidentally neglects a whole universe of discourse. Ramsey may have had something like this in mind when he said,

"The chief danger to our philosophy, apart from laziness and woolliness, is scholasticism, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category."\(^1\)

Tillich keeps to the older tradition when he says,

"If the question is asked, 'What makes a judgement true?', something must be said about reality itself. There must be an explanation of the fact that reality can give itself to the cognitive act in such a way that many processes of observation

\(^1\)F.P. Ramsey, Opus Cit. p. 269.
and thought are necessary to reach true judgements. The reason is that things hide their true being; it must be discovered under the surface of sense impressions, changing appearance and unfounded opinions. This discovery is made through a process of preliminary affirmations, consequent negations, and final affirmations. It is made through "yes and no" or dialectically. The surface must be penetrated, the appearance undercut, the 'depth' must be reached, namely, the cusia, the 'essence' of things, that which gives them the power of being. This is their truth, the 'really real' in difference from the seemingly real. It would not be called 'true', however, if it were not true for someone, namely, for the mind which in the power of the rational word, the 'logos', grasps the level of reality in which the really real 'dwells'.

This once again is in an out moded idealist jargon, and we might recall Eddington's remark, "Reality! Loud cheers." It is based on Tillich's ontology, and is open to the objections mentioned in Part II. But when in Vol. 2 Tillich says,

"The Fourth Gospel says of him (Christ) that he is truth, but this does not mean that he has omniscience or absolute certainty.

1 Systematic Theology', Vol. I, p. 112.
He is the truth in so far as his being - the New Being in him - conquers the untruth of existential estrangement. But being the truth is not the same as knowing the truth about finite objects and situations.¹

then he is operating with a concept on a different level, although both are expressed by the same word. To believe that Christ is the truth means something more than simply to endorse an endorsement, or to evaluate an evaluation. It is to commit oneself to a way of living - a way of living which, the Christian says, adds another dimension to our finite existence. It is to live in the awareness of the activity of God. And it may be said that this way of living is the commitment, not the saying of the proposition.

Barth, of course, would have no time for the first quotation from Tillich, but he substantiates and elaborates the second when he says,

".... the relation between Him and the all things which He will give us (referring to Rom. 8 v 32) cannot be reversed if we are not to come into conflict with the question of truth, or rather with the answering of the question of truth as we have it in God's act fulfilled in Him for us. He is the truth. He is the disclosure and knowledge of that which is. For He is. To be of the truth means first to believe in Him. And to proclaim

the truth means first to proclaim Him, to proclaim this principal clause, and only then the subsidiary clauses which derive from it."¹

Because he accepts that Christ is the truth he can speak of "the truth speaking for itself in Him" - of accepting, hearing and obeying 'the truth' - of the truth 'addressing' and 'calling' us.

Here then we have a use of the noun 'truth' which is far removed from ordinary usage. We speak of a man being truthful, or even of a man of truth, but by this we mean no more than that he habitually utters propositions which are true. What sort of a content can be given to a sentence like "The truth speaks to us"? When Christians say that Jesus Christ is the truth what sort of a use of 'truth' is this? Is it simply a shorthand way of saying that everything he said was true? This will not do, because if Christ's words "I am the truth" are thus translated then according to modern logical theory (developed to allow for the logical paradoxes) this sentence is not significant, because it is self-referential, and no language, on pain of contradiction, can express the whole of its own semantics.² Or as Whitehead and Russell put it, "Whatever involves all of a collection must not be one of the collection."³

¹ Kirchliche Dogmatik, Vol. IV/1, p. 252.
² c.f. e.g. I Copi 'Symbolic Logic', p. 188 and 332ff.
³ Principia Mathematica. Introduction to 1st Ed. Chap. I.
But of course Christ was using the abstract noun in a different manner altogether. Here we are concerned with the concept of religious truth, and it was this concept that Augustine had in mind when he said, "Here then is Truth; embrace it if you can, and enjoy it and rejoice in God and He will give you the desires of your heart; ... and shall we deny that we are happy when we are watered by and feed on truth?"¹

It is with such a concept too that Barth's remarks about revelation must be connected. For example he says,

"The material, impersonal truth-in-itself ascribed to dogma, its objectivity for contemplation (which is the whole point for Catholic theology when it stresses in the concept of dogma the meaning of a doctrinal proposition), is what for us is the mark of a truth conditioned and confined not only by man's creatureliness but also by his sin, in contrast with which the truth of God in His revelation is quite a different truth. ..... We do not think and never can think that that truth should be the truth of the Word of God, which is put in the hands of the Church as is the case with Church dogma. We claim to know the truth of the Word of God from the witness of Holy Scripture as a truth

¹De Libero Arbitrio, II viii 26.
that is sovereign in quite another way."\(^1\) and later, "The content of revelation is irreproducible in human language, and therefore insusceptible of adequate expression in human language."\(^2\)

It would doubtless be easy on positivistic premisses to dismiss this use of the word 'truth' as a piece of metaphysical or theological nonsense, and to say that it is analogous to the expression of an emotion, for example as in the sentence, "A great work of art conveys truth". In a discussion about the various theories of truth, Dr. Pap remarks about this example,

"What information is conveyed (by this sentence) it is by no means easy to tell; in this respect the sentence is typical of much that goes by the name of 'aesthetics' or 'philosophy of art'."\(^3\)

It might be noted that the presupposition here is that the only significant sentence is an informative sentence. But when a sentence is used in a performatory way - i.e. not to convey information, but to do something, e.g. in the utterance of 'I do' in the marriage ceremony, or 'I baptize thee' in a baptismal service - then it includes a commitment of the speaker in a way in which an informative sentence does not. When a man and a woman says 'I do' then they are committing themselves...
to a future course of action. In the same manner, by analogy, when Christ equated truth with His own person He was not conveying information (because on this view it is precisely this which cannot be conveyed); He was committing Himself to an activity - the activity of God. And if a Christian says that Jesus Christ is the Truth, then he is, derivatively, committing himself to a pattern of activity which, Barth would say, by faith, is in accordance with the command of God. The continual search for this pattern of activity is the life of the Christian.

The encounter with Christ as the truth is unique, but it has similarities with the impact of a great work of art - and hence, perhaps, this is why we are tempted to use the 'vacuous' phrases of aesthetics derided by Dr. Pap. Thus Dr. Arnold Kettle, in comparing 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' with 'Wuthering Heights', says,

"'Uncle Tom's Cabin's' contribution to human freedom (which, heaven knows, one doesn't wish to undervalue) is in a sense fortuitous. Someone else might have written something else which had roughly the same effect. It was an act of courage rather than an act of art (and if an American negro tells me that it is worth more to him than 'Wuthering Heights' I cannot argue). But no one else could have - or at any rate has - written anything very like 'Wuthering Heights', and no reader
who has responded fully to 'Wuthering Heights' is ever, whether he realizes it or not, quite the same again."

When a Christian utters the sentence "Jesus Christ is the truth", in full awareness of its performatory significance then the contention is that he is "never quite the same again". And in this sense the non-informative 'emotive' utterance is more significant than any true descriptive sentence in the empirically informative realm of discourse - and it is more significant precisely because it conditions a man's future conduct.

In the above incomplete treatment of one specific philosophical problem which has been disposed of at different times recently by semanticists, positivists and analysts alike, all I have attempted to do is to show that the theologians with whom this work is concerned are operating, not with precise and demarcated logical concepts, nor with the humdrum language of the man in the market-place, but rather with 'metaphysical' concepts which are themselves pregnant not only with the interactions of a language system, but also with the events and actions which that system attempts (however imperfectly) to express and describe, and in addition are potent in so far as the man who uses them is never using them as an onlooker but as a participant in the drama on which they form a commentary. Language is a special sort of human performance

---

and as such it is as varied as the non-linguistic performances out of which it develops - and equally it has its limitations like all other human performances. To attach the linguistic symbol 'truth' to Christ as Christians do (i.e. to say that truth is a person) is partially at least to accept the fact that behaviour, activity, conduct, is prior to, and superior to, linguistic activity. And just as learning the rules of chess is very different from playing the game itself, so learning how to use certain words (or how certain words are used) is very different from becoming aware of their significance in a way of living and acting. This is what is meant by saying that both the theologian and the philosopher are committed men in the choice of certain terms; and also that a believing Christian knows very much better than an onlooking atheist what he means when he uses certain focal terms. No examination of the contexts in which the word 'God' is used will teach any man the meaning of 'God' - because God (and truth) can only be encountered not described.

Lest this sketch of the usage of the word 'truth' as found in the writings of Barth and Tillich seem too outrageous to the philosopher it might be pointed out that it is not far from the sort of view Plato held - at least during that most interesting period of his life when he wrote the Theaetetus, the Parmenides and the Sophistes. With the view that Plato had moved away from the teaching of Socrates during his
middle period (i.e. when he wrote e.g. the Phaedo, the Symposium and the Republic) I would agree. There is little similarity here between the Plato who claimed that he knew what was best for everyone, advocating totalitarian methods of expulsion and extermination for the radical and the revolutionary, and the Socrates whose main claim to knowledge was that he knew nothing. (c.f. the violent denunciation of Plato in K.R. Popper's book, 'The Open Society and its Enemies' - this is too extreme, but it contains much that is true.) Professor Ryle has argued most persuasively that the 'Parmenides' is an early exercise in the logical theory of types, and that it contains a repudiation of the theory of substantial Forms (upon which Plato's reputation is usually based). With this interpretation I agree entirely. The mysterious Stranger, as Ryle points out, who appears in the 'Sophist' stands for the true philosopher and he also represents that element in the Parmenidean tradition which persuaded Plato that his own theory of substantial Forms was untenable. But what Ryle does not go on to say is that because of this, Plato, towards the end of his life, returned to his earlier view (which he got from Socrates) that truth is ultimately incommunicable. The effort to develop the theory of Forms was a failure because it attempted to express the inexpressible. In the Theaetetus it is true that he spends some time pointing out how formal concepts (e.g. 'exists' 'is the same as') differ from generic (e.g. 'man') and

1 'Mind', Vol. XLVIII 1939, G. Ryle.
from specific concepts (e.g. 'Theaetetus'), and he demonstrates that they differ rather as the arrangement of letters in a syllable differs from the letters which are so arranged. But all the analyses he gives are apparently for the negative purpose of destroying all other views of what truth, or knowledge, is. He seeks to prove, for example, that perception is not knowledge - nor is it true belief - nor is it true belief combined with an explanation. All this seems entirely destructive.

But it must also be remembered that the dialogue belonged to a special literary genre. It combined dramatic composition along with an implicit invitation to the reader or auditor to participate in the intellectual drama unfolding before him. The dialogue in Plato's hands was not merely a spectacle - it demanded audience participation. We are expected to collaborate and to capture its 'meaning' for ourselves. Thus it may be said that in these extremely difficult dialogues Plato invites his readers to move on to his own conclusion, namely that truth (or true knowledge) cannot be set down in any capsule of wisdom, to be swallowed by the student sitting at the feet of the master. Truth is encountered, he implies, through insight - a personal vision - and in turn this insight is conceptualised and expressed through logos - either as the spoken or the written word. We may, and do, strive to set down truth and to explain true knowledge, but the project is doomed
to fail, because truth - knowledge - wisdom - cannot be so pinned down. Plato had glimpses of 'truth' (or 'goodness' or 'beauty') and it was upon these that he based the objectivity of epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. Our knowledge is a pale reflection of true knowledge - and the knowing even of the eye witness is far from being true knowledge.¹

Professor Ryle, in concentrating his energies upon the subtle logical and linguistic analyses in the 'Parmenides', avoids the point - probably deliberately. These analyses for Plato were only the propaedeutic to his real concern - the concern to uncover the nerve of truth which itself initiated and sustained the analytic activity. The "concern for truth" is a significant phrase when the word 'truth' is a symbol for the sort of search in which we are all involved. The Christian answer is that Christ is the truth, and it may be that when a man is touched by God (as Socrates was aided by his divine guide) then this is 'revealed' to him.

Dr. Hepburn writes,

"If the theologian is to communicate at all, he must establish some sort of contact-points between his special senses of the words he uses and the ordinary senses of these words. If he has modified their meanings in using them to speak of God, he must show clearly the direction in which the modification has

¹c.f. Theaetetus 201a and b.
taken place. He must convince us, too, that the change of meaning is not so drastic as to erode away the entire sense the words originally possessed. The search for these contact-points and the general inquiry into meaningfulness certainly deserves to be counted as vital parts of the apologetic task today, a task the magnitude of which is as yet realized by very few theologians.¹

and the view that Barth in particular attenuates the 'ordinary' meaning of words in constructing a special language for the elect is a common one. Yet if the above summary account of 'Socratic meaning' and 'Platonic truth' is admissible even in part, it would appear that it is the linguistic philosophers who have to clarify their position with regard to the amount of existential 'commitment' involved in their terminology; although it must also be admitted that neither Barth nor Tillich are as lucid as one might wish in the establishment of 'contact-points' in the way desired by Hepburn. If the linguistic philosophers are willing to grant that their arguments are not completely 'neutral' with regard to the concepts used by the theologians, and the theologians are willing to grant that linguistic analysis may be a useful introduction to a more constructive (Socratic) type of philosophy, then some

¹Opus Cited pp. 6 and 7. Dr. Hepburn here puts his finger on the main theological problem; this is the problem of analogy, and not, as he goes on the suggest, the problem of paradox.
common ground for dialectic might be attained. Barth's insistence that his work is not apologetic in any way is a great obstacle to this ideal, as is Tillich's adherence to the vacuous terms of Aristotelian metaphysics, but the latter at least is willing to talk philosophy; equally the linguistically trained philosopher must be prepared first to see that he cannot talk in a meta-language all the time and that his commitments to certain (philosophical) propositions have practical repercussions as have the performatory utterances of the theologian; and secondly he must accept the fact that the theologian is working with concepts which are at the limits of human thinking and therefore they must not be expected to conform even to the informal logic of ordinary language; he may even come to the view that the linguistic paradoxes to be found in theology are of no importance when they are resolved in a certain way of living, because living with a Person entails continual surprise (and delight) in a way which living according to a system does not.
CHAPTER X

PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

One result of the linguistic techniques developed in recent philosophical ethical writing has been the eclipse of non-naturalism, and especially what might be called intuitionism, that is, the position which holds that one, or more, of the moral predicates is a unique characteristic, and irreducible to a natural or a social process and hence known only through immediate insight or intuition. Post-war English philosophy has, in general, attended to the ethical writing of, for example, G.E. Moore, N. Hartmann, H.A. Prichard, A.C. Ewing, G.D. Broad, W.D. Ross and W.G. De Burgh only for the purpose of pointing out their logical inconsistencies and linguistic confusions. The concepts of a transcendental world of 'values' and of simple, unanalyzable, non-natural qualities are not easily accepted by someone trained in symbolic logic, for one of the major achievements of modern logic has been to show that substantives need not refer, or correspond to, things, and to suppose that there is some queer sort of quality corresponding e.g. to the noun 'good' is looked on as an outmoded logical fallacy. But another, and perhaps surprising, result has been the eclipse of explicit naturalistic theories of ethics, such as those of A.J. Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, Bertrand Russell and (possibly) also G.B. Stevenson.¹ This has come about chiefly because of the strength

¹In a strict sense, of course, Ayer, Carnap and Stevenson are not naturalists in that they hold that ethical predicates do not refer to anything; but in a wider sense they may be called naturalists, because they hold that everything can be reduced to natural phenomena.
247.

of an argument of Hume's, developed by G.E. Moore, and labelled "the naturalistic fallacy". In brief the statement of this fallacy seems to indicate the impossibility of deriving an 'ought' from an 'is'. The present writers on ethical topics tend to withdraw from the contest and assume neutrality. Thus there has been an excessive amount of talk about the sort of language used by the previous generation of moral philosophers, with an implicit suggestion that the talker is neither in one camp nor the other. Ethics today in the academic field has become a sort of meta-talk about the language used in situations which involved the use of specific moral terms such as 'right', 'good' and 'duty'.

At the same time, following on what was said in the previous chapter, it must be said that the contemporary Oxford moralists, when they are pressed to disclose their position vis-a-vis the naturalist non-naturalist see-saw, almost without exception come down on the side of the former. The two most influential writers on ethical problems in the Oxford school are undoubtedly R.M. Hare and P.H. Nowell-Smith, and such respect have I for their work that to praise it might well seem an impertinence. Both of these moral philosophers reveal that they have as strong views about morality as they have about the logic of moral discourse, but when the former says, for example,

\[\text{c.f. e.g. 'Reason in Ethics', S. Toulmin.}\]

\[\text{c.f. 'Words and Things', Ernest Gellner, p. 150, note i, where he epitomises the linguistic moral philosopher's position sic: 'Is there objective moral value? Yes or no. There are only rules of language. But expressions expressing obligations have a use', }\]

So ..... And so on ...."
"... a complete justification of a decision would consist of a complete account of its effects, together with a complete account of the principles which it observed, and the effects of observing those principles — for of course it is the effects (what obeying them in fact consists in) which give content to the principles too. Thus if pressed to justify a decision completely, we have to give a complete specification of the way of life of which it is a part. If the inquirer still goes on asking, 'But why should I live like that?', then there is no further answer to give him, because we have already, ex hypothesi, said everything that could be included in this further answer. We can only ask him to make up his own mind which way he ought to live; for in the end everything rests upon such a decision of principle."¹

he reveals his subjectivism; as does Nowell-Smith in the penultimate paragraph of his book on 'Ethics', where he states,

"Moral philosophy is a practical science; its aim is to answer questions in the form, 'What shall I do?'. But no general answer to this type of question can be given. The most a moral philosopher can do is to paint a picture of various types

¹'The Language of Morals', R.M. Hare, p. 69.
of life in the manner of Plato and ask which type of life you really want to lead. But this is a dangerous task to undertake. For the type of life you most want to lead will depend on the sort of man you are."^1

To all of this the non-naturalist will reply - "yes, but I believe that there is a way of living which is the way - a way which even if no man ever attains it is the one which all should strive to live". This in effect was what Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and many other philosophers wished passionately to establish. In fact this was probably the chief end of their labours. And this is, of course, what Barth in particular, and theological ethics in general also seek to establish. Granted that man is placed in societies in which there are diverse norms and diverse standards of taste and opinion, still these thinkers, all in their different ways, say that moral predicates ultimately cannot be reduced to the predicates of some natural science, and moral compulsion points us to the recognition that certain moral values have objective validity whatever we may think in our own limited environments. Obviously, as Nowell-Smith says, no general answer to the question "What shall I do?" can be given - any general answer is bound to be an abstract formula which needs to be supplemented with the requirements of the context in which it is asked. No one asks out of the blue,

1'Ethics', P.H. Nowell-Smith, p. 319.
"What shall I do?"; the question is asked by a man in a certain situation and environment of conflicting pressures.

However the reaction of the outsider (say a theologian) to much of the moral philosophy of today is likely to be something like this. "I grant that all this examination of the language used in 'moral' situations is clever and persuasive. You obviously are committed to something when you analyse moral language in this way - but frankly your chief commitment seems to be to make sure that you have brought to light most of the nuances of those words which are most frequently used about the conduct of man. What I want to know is, Are you committed to any particular way of living - or has this analysis nothing at all to do with life lived? I am aware of the distinction which you so frequently make between the use of a term and the mention of a term, and that one of your contentions is that you are not using ethical terms as they are used in life but are mentioning them. But I suggest that these fundamental terms of value must be used at some point in the discussion and not merely mentioned if they are to be intelligible at all; and it is exactly at this point that your pragmatic meta-language approach breaks down. There is the truth, as Hare puts it, that you can get out of, say, driving a car, but you cannot get out of being a man - and part at least of what is meant by this is
that you use moral predicates and have such predicates applied to you - and this includes your activity as a moral philosopher. And this, incidentally, is the reason why I am constantly aware of the strong moral views of both of these Oxford dons, although both disclaim any attempt to promulgate their own views about morality."

In short the suggestion is that the analysis of the language used in moral situations breaks down when the analysis is viewed as an activity which itself requires assessment by the very predicates which it claims to have analysed completely. Following on what was said in Chapter IX, if the use of statements is divided up according to the intention governing the use, for example as Hare does in distinguishing between commands and statements, then it may be seen that although the analysis seems to be exhaustive it in fact is not because it cannot include itself. Is the analysis couched in purely informative statements, or is it undergone in order to recommend the conclusions it promulgates? In so far as it obviously is the latter then it is both 'affirming' the sentences it uses and inviting 'assent' to them. In this respect once again the philosopher is never merely describing how language is used, but he is using language in the description, and this factor is vital in any discussion of the moral terms used in moral situations. Is it in fact possible for a

\[\text{Opus Cit., Chapter 2.}\]
teacher to know exactly when he is conveying information impartially, and
when he is at the same time propagating his own opinions? Thus when
I said (as I have done), with reference to the final stanza in John
Donne's "Hymn to God, my God in my Sickness" - "the first two lines
of this stanza are the most complex in the poem", and I proceed to
develop the complexity involved, am I barely passing on information,
am I admitting a belief of my own, or am I instructing my students to
believe something which I do not necessarily believe myself? I do not
think that the uses to which sentences are put can be divided up in this
linguistically neat manner, because to some extent I may be doing at
least two out of the three. And if the moral philosophers writing in
this mode are pressed to explain why they wrote these particular books
they might say, "I wrote them because I thought it important that people
should become aware of the logic of moral discourse?". But this entails
that this logic is important for a better way of assessing various
factors in moral situations. Ultimately it is the moral situation which
is important, and therefore these linguistic analyses, interesting as
they are, evade in a particularly subtle fashion the fundamental problems
of ethics, e.g. Is there an ultimate justification for moral beliefs and
habits?; is morality objective or subjective?; nor do they help us,
except incidentally, to answer such questions. These moral philosophers

---

1 cf. R.B. Braithwaite 'The Language of Morals', Discussion in 'Mind'
seem to write under the impression that they are outside the practical moral discussion throughout their discussions of it - but ultimately their activity is itself assessed within, and as a part of, a practical moral situation. To put this in another way; in order to describe the various uses to which moral terms are put in everyday discourse a decision must be made about the conditions of their use - and this decision is a moral and not a linguistic decision; and when the question is asked concerning the purpose of the books mentioned above then we are implicitly drawing attention to this fact.

In the light of this brief assessment of the statement of moral philosophy in England today is there anything which can be deduced from the works of Barth or Tillich which might prove fruitful for the moral philosopher? In the remainder of this chapter I shall suggest two points which seem to be of importance for the non-Christian moral philosopher, and the final chapter goes on to develop an interpretation of Christian ethics which owes much to the stimulation I have received from their thinking.

Section 2

The Cosmic Dimensions of Theological Ethics

Behind the work of the present day moral philosophers there seems to stand a general prescription about what philosophers should do. This is, that in order to grasp the meaning of, for example, a word or
a sentence, it should be put into a context which must be linguistic; the linguistic context should then be put into a social context, and the philosopher's job then is to describe what he finds - at the same time showing his awareness that the same word or sentence may occur in many different contexts. This prescription is behind the whole device of language games which provided Wittgenstein with the major content of his posthumously published 'Philosophical Investigations'.

By means of these simplified, and yet sometimes complicated, language games Wittgenstein was able to point up a conflict between the use of words in ordinary language and their use in a philosophical theory, and the implication was that when this conflict is exposed the necessity for the 'theory' disappears. The trouble is that the dispelling of a puzzle about a problem does not necessarily dispel the problem - if this were so the philosophical Elysium would be located in the state of childish innocence, where there are no such problems. One of the techniques evolved in this view of philosophy was the argument from paradigm cases.

It naturally spread to moral philosophy and the approach recently has been to take simplified cases of moral problems, examine the sort of language which is used in those situations, and then to contrast this with the sort of language which was used about moral problems by previous


naturalists and non-naturalists. This is intended to clarify the problems of the latter and to expose some of their linguistic confusions. Thus Professor Flew, in disposing of the problem involved in accepting man's free will and the omnipotence of God, argues that,

"The first phase consists in bringing out what is meant by 'acting freely', 'being free to choose', and so on; particularly that none of these concepts necessarily involve unpredictable or uncaused action. A paradigm case of acting freely, of being free to choose, would be the marriage of two normal young people, when there was no question of the parties 'having to get married', and no social or parental pressure on either of them; a case which happily is scarcely rare."¹

and he has little difficulty in showing that the young man's action was free in the usual sense of the word 'free', and also that the action was in principle predictable in the usual sense of 'predictable'. By investigating a case in which an expression like 'acting freely' is used, Flew is prepared to accept both that the will is free and that many free actions are predictable - and therefore the problem mentioned above is a spurious one.

But in one way at least this sort of argument from paradigm cases is assuming what it wishes to prove; that is that if a concept is not

¹"New Essays in Philosophical Theology", p. 149.
analogically related to its use in ordinary language then it is used in a misleading and puzzle-producing manner. The great philosophers of the past were indeed operating with concepts, the terms of which were possibly on everyone's lips, but their precise significance for these philosophers lay in that sphere which was untouched by the ordinary man; and it is doubtless true that they were less interested in the market place than in the Royal Academy, less concerned with the nursery than with the university. They said, in effect, "Let us push these terms to their limits", and at times they may have been tempted to say, as the scientist Niels Bohr once said to J.R. Oppenheim, "When I am up to something important I am touched with the thought of suicide.". The isolation of the scientist who presses on to the discovery of a new peak when there are only a handful of his associates who can reach the foothills is very like the isolation of, say, Kant when he worked out his transcendental deduction of the categories. It is therefore the suggestion here that an implicit adherence to the argument from paradigm cases has militated against any progress in ethical thinking among our present Oxford moralists. They are afraid (mixing my metaphors) to venture out of the Procrustean beds of ordinary language into the rarer atmosphere of the older tradition. It is true that a philosopher should pay attention to the normal use of expressions, but if he has anything to say he will be obliged to depart from that stock use at some point. Thus, e.g., Nowell-Smith imagines the peculiar situation of,
"... a man who makes a promise to another man who is dying on a desert island to dispose of his goods in a certain way if he ever reaches home. Is he under any obligation to keep his promise if it is clear to him that some other distribution of goods is going to be more generally beneficial, and if there is no chance of his breach of trust being detected?"¹

and he more or less rejects the problem as a serious ethical problem on the grounds that the logic of our language about moral problems is not equipped to deal with it. As he says,

"Moral language is used against a background in which it is almost always true that a breach of trust will, either directly, or in the more roundabout ways which utilitarians suggest, do more harm than good; and if this background is expressly removed my ordinary moral language breaks down. For it is the background which gives the air of self-evidence to the assertion that the rule ought to be obeyed. This self-evidence is due to the Janus-character of moral words, and the fact that they have this character is, in its turn, due to the normal background of their use."²

With all this one must to some extent agree, but what has escaped Nowell-Smith is the significance of the fact that it was the nature of a peculiar and possibly unique situation which revealed this "background

¹ Opus Cited, p. 240.
² Ibid. p. 241.
of their use". (In fact it will be suggested later that the 'Janus-character' of moral words is due not to the normal background of their use, but that the abnormal use supplies the background for their normal use.) Could it not be said here that the very example he uses, discloses, not that,

"(a) the language of duty cannot be translated into the language of purpose, and (b) that moral habits die hard."¹ but rather that the limits of the background thus revealed must itself be investigated and this brings us back to the ancient question of the relativity, subjectivity or objectivity of morality.

If the implicit prescription in Nowell-Smith's procedure is adopted then the linguistic moral philosopher is limiting (arbitrarily) the types of moral problem which he is prepared to examine, and is left with the sort of argument which the late Professor J.L. Austin used (to demonstrate that yielding to a temptation does not involve the loss of self-control),

"I am very partial to ice-cream, and a bombe is served divided into segments corresponding one to one with the persons at High Table: I am tempted to help myself to two segments and do so, thus succumbing to temptation .... But do I lose control of myself? Not a bit of it. We often succumb to temptation with calm and even with finesse."²

¹Ibid. p. 244.

In contrast to this the two theologians with whom this work has been chiefly concerned have not been afraid to venture into "strange seas of thought". In Parts I and II several arguments of the linguistic type have been put forward in an attempt to curb some of their linguistic excesses, but it must be admitted that they in no way feel tied down to ordinary linguistic usage. They know perfectly well that they are operating with concepts which are far removed from the normal; in a sense Barth glories in the paradoxes involved in the Christian's attempt to talk about God, and Tillich strives to cover it with his umbrella theory of symbolism.

Theology as a science operates on the boundary line between knowledge and faith, and theological ethics is concerned, as Barth contends, with the activity of God and the implications of that activity for man. If, as Christians maintain, God was revealed in Jesus Christ, then the events in Palestine during the years 1-33 A.D. have significance for all men. The Christian is committed to the belief that the Incarnation meant a genuine involvement of God in the human situation, and in so far as Christ faced (with dread) the death which confronts all men, then He experienced the boundary situation, which forms so prominent a feature in Tillich's theology, and which was a feature in the early works of Barth. For Barth, as has been pointed out, ethics is an ethics of

---

1 Vide e.g. 'Romerbrief' and 'The Problem of Ethics in our Time'.
grace, and this means that for him the problems of ethics may be found only,

"... through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ."¹

Whether this is accepted or not, the theologians inevitably work with concepts which at least claim universal significance; and it is perhaps a necessary correction to the, at times, finical examination of the language used in everyday life to be reminded that the problems generated by value judgments in general are faced, not in the everyday use to which such value words are put, but in the abnormal situations which especially call our everyday values to the test. This incidentally serves to explain in part the peculiar attraction there exists for most people in viewing a Tragedy in the theatre or the cinema. Aristotle suggested that we go to such spectacles of human guilt, suffering and death (which in life would be intolerable) in order to purge (his doctrine of 'Katharsis') the soul of excess passions — "Through pity and fear tragedy effects the purgation of these emotions". But in our ordinary, work-a-day lives we seldom, if ever, generate such passion — we are never in the extreme and unique position of an Antigone, a Lear or a Macbeth. Thus Aristotle was wrong to say that we go in order to rid ourselves of emotion; rather we go in order to experience, vicariously, a wider range of emotion than normally is our lot; and we go to see these boundary situations (rejected as spurious

¹Kirchliche Dogmatik, II/2, p. 595.
by the linguistic philosophers) because of our realisation that our own petty humdrum lives are bounded by the great ultimates which they portray. And the equilibrium which results from viewing the tragic experience is a reflection of that equilibrium which results from an awareness of the presence of an immanent good in the tragic world, even when the specific theme is evil or suffering.

Even if almost all of Barth's and Tillich's attitudes to philosophical ethics are rejected, there is at least one empirical fact which they emphasize in a manner which is alien to the moralist, but to which, perhaps, insufficient attention is paid. They say, in effect, that the true ultimates for man are not good and evil, but life and death; and although they speak of a new life which overcomes death still they do keep these polarities near the front of their ethical thinking. Barth indeed says,

"One can blind oneself even to the terrors of death - and of all who have died only one man has not done this. ..... Our disquietudes, objectively considered, are never so great and crushing as to make us ultimately disturbed, and therefore ready to find peace in God. For it is palpable that they are always followed by pacifications which easily enable us to recover our poise - which has nothing to do with the peace of God. As for death, its significance is nowhere so obvious in the world of
creation that the thought of it necessarily induces reflection on the divine judgment. For as far as we can see, in spite of all the terrors which it may impress on us, death does not usually meet us except in association with new life. And it is as well that we ourselves are made independent of the question concerning the depth and emphasis of our seriousness, the profundity of our capacity to suffer, our susceptibility to genuine disturbance and assault."¹ and he is correct in emphasising that the thought of death does not necessarily drive us to God. But throughout the K.D. the many references to death and the death of the body, linked as they are in his system to the actual death of Christ on the cross, indicate that the thought of death is ever before his mind. Tillich is more explicit when he remarks,

"If man is left to his 'having to die', the essential anxiety about non-being is transformed into the horror of death. Anxiety about non-being is transformed into the horror of death. Anxiety about non-being is present in everything finite. It is consciously or unconsciously effective in the whole process of living. Like the beating of the heart, it is always present, although one is not always aware of it. It belongs to the potential state of dreaming innocence, as well as to the contested

¹Kirchliche Dogmatik, III/1, pp. 374-375.
and decided unity with God as expressed in the picture of Jesus as the Christ. The dramatic description of the anxiety of Jesus in having to die confirms the universal character of the relation of finitude and anxiety.¹

Both theologians discount the anxiety about death as giving us anything like an awareness of God although for Tillich, when a human being faces the thought of his own death with deep concern then he is at a boundary moment in his life, and he suggests that even if the individual returns to the ordinary affairs of his normal life, or is returned to them by means of a trivial incident — as, for example, Mr. Polly was when he faced suicide in Wells' novel — with no faith in God or in anything else, then he is a changed person, and has penetrated further into the 'depths'; he has been in contact with the ontological 'being' which is the basis of his ontic 'being'.

It cannot be said that the specific treatment of the phenomenon of death as given by Barth or Tillich will be acceptable to a moral philosopher, but it could be contended that the thought of the boundary of life with which they are so much concerned — moving as they do within the poles of life and death — should perhaps receive more attention than it does from moralists. This is not quite the same suggestion as Mackinnon made when he said,

"Suppose we were, as a kind of exercise, simply to look at things people have said or written about death in relation to their lives as human beings. One could call it a study of the logic of poetic and religious expression on the subject. It might be that such an exercise would open our minds a little to what drives people to speak so hazardously about survival and immortality. Such an enterprise would call for sympathetic imagination - for a readiness perhaps to widen our horizons. But I can see no other way to get at the inwardness of this problem than a readiness to take the strain of such a widening."

For reasons given earlier it will be seen that such an exercise, in order to be exhaustive, would have to include the commitments (and the natural anxiety) of the individual who undertakes it: and in so far as it does include these it will involve the use as well as the mention of the concept 'death'. In this sense it cannot be merely an academic 'exercise' in the manner envisaged by Mackinnon. To call it a study of "the logic of poetic and religious expression on the subject" indicates his belief that this concept can be pinned down on the linguistic dissecting table and its internal workings will be revealed. But such a dissection inevitably kills. One is reminded of the attempt

---

1. New Essays in Philosophical Theology', p. 264.
to communicate the vital elements in any artistic masterpiece. The exigencies of our examination systems demands, for example, that the 'set' Shakespearean play has to be analysed; its language has to be examined; its 'horizontal' and 'spatial' dimensions revealed (as by Professor Wilson Knight); its characters uncovered by critical scalpels sharpened in workshops of A.C. Bradley or Professor Dover Wilson; and so on; but this all too often kills the play for the student, and he may never again be able to see a Shakespearean play for the organic unity it is. In much the same way it could be said that the significance of "death" cannot be a mere exercise in logical acumen; and it is probable that a "widening of the horizons" which this entails would be impossible in the same way as our own physical perspective cannot really be widened if we merely stand and observe; because we are involved ourselves and we carry the range of our horizons about with us. We can only see so far, and if we move on to the limit of our view we can still see the same distance, although not necessarily the same scene; and physical death is the limit of all our earthly horizons.

In a recent book 'The Picaresque Saint', Professor R.W.B. Lewis has to some extent carried out Mackinnon's suggestion in the field of the modern novel. He contends that some of the most important novelists of the twentieth century have been preoccupied with death and the
possible human answers to it, and he draws some illuminating parallels between this age and the sixteenth century, e.g., Donne's 'Spenser's' augurs Camus's 'The Myth of Sisyphus'. For the first generation of moderns — Joyce, Mann, Proust and Woolf — the answer he maintains was art. For their successors — Moravia, Silone, Faulkner, Graham Greene and Malraux — art was only an instrument, an antenna, which they utilised in order to give variously propounded concepts of charity. Their answer to the universal pressure of the thought of death is to be found in the fraternity which exists among the victims of death. As Eliot said, we are all dying 'with a little patience'.

Much of what Professor Lewis says is illuminating and could be used in the type of thesis sketched by Mackinnon. But the true philosophic activity, as distinct from linguistic analysis, differs from that of the literary critic precisely in that it includes the commitments of the philosopher involved in it as well as the logic of the terminology used about it. Herein lies the seriousness of all great philosophy. In addition it must also be said that if one has ever been in the presence of death, either the possibility of one's own or another's, it is at such a moment perhaps that the whole realm of one's living values is put to the test. This is the point to which most men come at least once in their lives, and it is here that one is aware of a possible criterion for testing our everyday values. To see a man, perhaps an unpopular personality, stand at the threshold, about to undergo, say, a crucial operation, and watch the reaction of his
associates (including oneself) is a richer experience than to read about it in a novel. What seemed important before loses significance; values are discovered at such a time of which previously one was unaware.

It is this sort of situation to which Barth and Tillich point, and it might prove of interest and note for the moral philosopher who is only prepared to consider the everyday and the trivial. The present day philosophers are mistaken in refusing to cast their thoughts to the extremes of life. The work of the theologians has a cosmic significance and a cosmic dimension which serve to remind us of the greater issues which lie beyond our trivial decisions about whether to go to the cinema or to watch television. The justification of morality is not to be found in the market place or the 'bus queue but in those situations which reveal the values upon which we depend in our everyday commerce and in joining queues.

Section 3

Personality and Encounter

To recommend the moral philosophers to read Barth and Tillich for their views on 'personality' might have as much effect as a recommendation to a higher critic to read an elementary manual on grammar. In both cases the technicalities into which their studies have led, seem far removed from the naivety of an elementary primer. The suggestion would undoubtedly raise such questions as, "What do these theologians know about the problem of counter-factual conditionals which arise within any
dispositionalist or phenomenalist account of body or mind?" or "What awareness do they show of the logic of 'personality' words?"

The philosophical investigation of 'personality' and of 'person', in the older tradition say of Stout and Bradley (a sort of philosophical-cum-psychological approach) has indeed been more or less abandoned. There was a significant passage in Wittgenstein's 'Blue Book' which had much to do with this. He suggested that the term 'personality' had not got one legitimate (stock) use, and this was largely developed and amplified in Professor Ryle's influential book, 'The Concept of Mind'. When the latter appeared many reviewers thought that Ryle was talking about mind, but of course he was really talking about "mind". His interest was in the 'logical geography' of mental conduct concepts, and such an interest did not entail his having a parallel interest in the justification of such concepts. Thus he states,

"Many people can talk sense with concepts, but cannot talk sense about them; they know by practice how to operate with concepts, anyhow inside familiar fields, but they cannot state the logical regulations governing their use."\(^1\)

'The Concept of Mind' can therefore be viewed as a second order commentary on first order talk about minds. As such it, in principle, makes no assertion as to the existence or non-existence of minds. Ryle asserts

\(^1\) Opus cited p. 7.
only that talk about minds proceeds in certain ways; he asserts that expressions involving mental conduct concepts have logical characteristics worthy of examination. a fortiori he should neither assert nor deny that there are ghosts in us machines. Both such an assertion and its denial are first order observations. But again, because of the philosophical nature of the subject matter he cannot sustain an argument about mental conduct concepts without using them at some point, and when he does this he indicates an adherence to a type of psychological behaviourism; and of course behaviourism, in any form, is a first order attitude, about minds, feelings and dispositions. If one is prepared to agree with his negative thesis - that the language in which we ordinarily discuss minds is not Cartesian - then one is likely to accept his positive thesis that ordinary language is non-Cartesian; and it is this positive account of ordinary language which makes possible his attack on previous philosophic attempts to distort that language. The failure of the enterprise rests, not in his extremely subtle analysis of ordinary language, but in the failure to see the implications of the philosophic use of language in order to mention ordinary language.

Professor J. Wisdom castigates the traditional treatment of the ancient problem of how a person remains the same person in spite of all the changes which occur to, and in, him, and he compares the metaphysician who might be concerned with this problem to,
"... a man, who meeting an old friend in disguise, asks, 'Who is this?', and then if we merely sponge the old friend's face and straighten his tie, says, 'Still I don't know who it is': while if we pull off the false beard and the wig he says, 'But this is not now the same man. The man I asked you about had a beard and a wig'. Nothing satisfies him. Or rather nothing in the way of analysis satisfies him."¹

The trouble with this is that it leads to an extreme view of the importance of linguistic analysis, and the inexperienced student of philosophy is tempted to produce an analysis which shows that a philosophic question such as, "Do I remain the same person in spite of all the changes I have undergone?" is based on a misleading use of the adjective 'same'. Such an analysis might go something like this:

'Same' - A Linguistic Exercise

1. There is prevalent the loose use of 'same' in which it is equivalent to 'similar' or 'resembling' or 'practically indistinguishable from'; as, e.g. "This is the same speech as he made last week", or "This is the same weight as that". Here 'same' functions transitively. It is, as Mr. S. Hampshire pointed out,² functioning neither as a descriptive symbol nor as a relation; it is in fact an incomplete

---

²'Scepticism and Meaning', S. Hampshire. 'Philosophy' 1950.
expression, and requires completion with a namely-rider, e.g. 'namely about atomic warfare' or 'namely 5 lbs.'

2. However we do in this type of transitive use of 'same' seem to be naming a relation between two different entities. The sentences are of the form ARB plus a namely-rider, where A and B are either descriptions or demonstratives. When we say, on the other hand, "He is the same person as he was 10 years ago", this sentence appears to be of the form ARA plus a namely-rider. But to assert a relation between something and itself, even with a rider, seems to be futile. However this usage is also hallowed in ordinary language, and it forms a second type of transitive use of 'same'. It is employed here as a linguistic device, either for reasons of economy, to save us mentioning all the attributes which he as a person had 10 years ago, or else for emphasis, to show that some previous remark about the man in question was mistaken (or correct). In neither case do we add anything to - nor abstract (and isolate) any attribute from - the conception of his personality by prefixing the expression 'the same'.

3. There is, however, also an intransitive use of 'same' as in, for example, "Two sentences can express the same proposition", or "No two people can see the same sense-datum". Here we cannot, without stretching ordinary language unduly say that 'same' means 'identical'. It is nonsensical to say that two things are identical, and to say of
one thing that it is identical with itself is to say nothing. We use 'same' in this intransitive sense not to describe (and therefore not to identify anyone or anything), but to indicate singularity (not identity). Thus "Two sentences can express the same proposition" is equivalent to, in the intransitive sense, "Two sentences can express one proposition". The contradictory of 'same' here is not 'different' but 'duality' or 'plurality'.

Some of the puzzles about self-identity have been due to the fact that this intransitive use has been confused with its two (at least) transitive uses.

This also explains indirectly why it is that 'same' is almost always prefixed by the definite article - once again giving the impression that it is a description. However modern logicians have clearly shown that nouns do not necessarily correspond to things, nor adjectives to characteristics, and that definite descriptions do not necessarily refer to anything. We use the definite article rather than the indefinite with the word 'same' to signalise either that we are (indirectly) referring to some characteristics which have been, will, or could be, listed, or that we are directly indicating a unique person or event. We seldom, if ever, talk about 'a same so-and-so' simply because there are both these transitive undertones and the implications of uniqueness lurking behind the different usages of the word. Obviously, however, this leads us back to the problem of singularity or uniqueness - and this has linguistic problems of its own ....
This somewhat extended linguistic exercise was undertaken in order to show the kind of game which can be played using the linguistic approach. There is indeed a certain similarity between it and the way in which Tillich juggles with the terms in the 'ontic' and 'ontological' spheres, (see pages 178-179). And of course it does not touch the vital point which has to do with the identity of the same self, not as an object, but as a subject i.e. as something which can feel and think and suffer and know. Hume and Kant have shown up the difficulties involved in thinking of the self as substance. As Professor H.J. Paton puts it,

"The identity which .... we attribute to the self is not the identity which belongs to the object qua object. The identity which we attribute to the self is not such identity as is necessary for it to be known. It is rather such self-identity as is necessary if there is to be knowing of any object whatsoever (object being here taken to mean something known which changes in, or lasts through, time, and has its own quite different kind of identity). ..... We are here interested not in the self-identity of the object self, but in the self-identity of the subject-self."¹

This problem is untouched by the sort of linguistic approach envisaged above. If one wanted to apply Wisdom's castigation to the (imaginary) linguistic analyst it would run,

¹ In Defence of Reason¹, H.J. Paton, p. 103.
"The linguistic philosopher is like a man hearing about an exciting new play, asks, "What are people saying about it?", and then if we produce the views of the (normal) Sunday critics and some of the (popular) newspaper headlines, says, 'Oh yes now I understand what all the fuss is about.' While if we attempt to bring him to an actual performance of the drama, says, 'But I'm not interested in the play. It is what is said about it which is important.' Everything satisfies him. Or rather everything in the way of talk about the drama satisfies."

The outstanding feature in Barth's and Tillich's treatments of the conception of personality is, of course, their view of the meeting between the individual and God: the eternal subject, God, meets man in the Word, and each individual who is chosen 'encounters' Him and 'acknowledges' Him (to use Barth's word).

"But in this word ('acknowledgement') expression is also given to the fact that in experience of the Word of God we are concerned with a relationship between man as a person and another Person, naturally the Person of God. Of course we also speak of acknowledging facts and with such a fact we are concerned here, but a fact which is acknowledged is at least not a fact of nature - we do not acknowledge a landslip or a rainbow or the like - but a fact created and presented by a person or persons. Of such a
creation is the determination of a man's existence by the Word of God; it is determined by God's Person.1

This is incidentally a sound piece of linguistic analysis, but of course Barth contends that the 'encounter' with human individuals is different in kind to a man's encounter with the Word of God. As he says,

"The encounter with man's word as such is never a genuine, ineffaceable encounter, and cannot be one. The encounter with the Word of God is a genuine ineffaceable encounter, i.e. not one to be dissolved into fellowship. The Word of God always tells us something new, which otherwise we could never have heard from anyone."2

Barth's special concept of the encounter and acknowledgement of God by man need not necessarily be accepted by a moral philosopher in order to see the importance for ethical theory of the concepts of 'encountering' and 'acknowledging'. We may, as he points out, 'acknowledge facts' and we may 'encounter obstacles', but primarily these words have to do with a meeting between persons. In encountering another human being, I encounter an entity which has something more than merely the 'open texture' which Waismann discovered to be a property of all empirical statements.3 According to Waismann an empirical statement is never

1Kirchliche Dogmatik, I/1, p. 234.

2Ibid. I/1, p. 160.

completely verifiable since no battery of tests can establish its truth, and it is a virtue of empirical language that it leaves room for the unexpected. This is also a significant feature of our encounter with other humans - they are always liable to do the unexpected, the action which seems out of character. The 'open texture' of personal relationships may well be the basis from which the open texture of our language is derived, because language is fundamentally communication, and communication, as Tillich points out\(^1\) occurs only between persons. Tillich also brings in the idea of encounter here, when he says,

"If he did not meet the resistance of other selves, every self would try to make himself absolute. But the resistance of the other selves is unconditional. One individual can conquer the entire world of objects, but he cannot conquer another person without destroying him as a person. The individual discovers himself through this resistance. If he does not want to destroy the other person he must enter into communion with him. In the resistance of the other person the person is born. Therefore there is no person without an encounter with other persons. Persons can grow only in the communion of personal encounter."\(^2\)

This emphasis, by the theologian, on the encounter between individuals is something which has been neglected for too long by moral philosophers.

---

\(^1\) Vide e.g. 'Systematic Theology', Vol. I, p. 195.

Ever since Bertrand Russell made his celebrated distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description'\(^1\) - i.e. knowledge of particulars or universals and knowledge that something is, or is not, the case, the former kind of knowing has had a pejorative flavour. Without going into the ramifications of Russell’s theory and disregarding his suggestion that knowing \(x\) (where \(x\) is a person) must be recast into knowing by description, it could be said that in one sense of 'know' I know my wife better than anyone else. Much of what I know of her can undoubtedly be recast into the form, "I know that \(\phi\)" where \(\phi\) is a proposition. But it must also be said that the significant part of what this encounter means to me cannot be so expressed. The vital factors in our relationship are incapable of being put into propositional form - in somewhat the same way as the significant factors in the performance of 'King Lear' could not be expressed by Granville Barker.\(^2\) The differences between the meaning of the play and the meaning of the person are perhaps difficult to formulate - the difference between two inexpressibles might well defy expression, but one has incomparably greater value than the other.

Dr. Hepburn voices several objections to the theologian's use of this concept of 'encounter' as applied to God, particularly to the idea of a distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' encounters, but the examples he

---

\(^1\)Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description', P.A.S. 1910-11.

\(^2\)See pages 219-220.
chooses are not conclusive. Even his final example of the 'rapport' which can exist with a life long friend fails to do justice to the encounters between, say a child and its mother, or between a man and his wife. He says, for example,

"I think I am saying more than that all human I-Thou encounters remain full of 'impurities' through their dependence on 'knowledge about'. The peculiar difficulty is to know how, even theoretically, the situation could be improved. If we seriously try to conceive circumstances in which we might claim to have done away with all behavioural checks in comming with someone, we will find either that we have in a peculiar way failed to maintain the separate identities of the two people concerned, or that we have no means of knowing whether we are in rapport with someone or not, which does not ultimately rely upon the behavioural checks themselves."¹

and Hepburn concludes that there is so great a difference between knowledge of persons and knowledge of God that the analogy is of no value.

Disregarding this latter application for the present it does seem that on the psychological level alone this rings false. A child 'knows' its mother first, and later achieves 'knowledge that' which is subject to behavioural revision. When I know a person intimately it is true that the I-Thou encounter is full of impurities, but it is only at the 'knowledge by description' level. If I have to make behavioural checks

¹ 'Christianity and Paradox', p. 36.
upon what I know of my wife then at the moment of checking I cannot be said to accept her as a person. The 'I-Thou' relationship is encounter primarily - it is knowledge by description at all other levels.

The truth about the relationship between a man and his wife (if they are truly together) is non-propositional, and as with the Socratic theory of meaning, the attempt to express it results in distortion. Because of this primary relationship between two personalities all the discrepancies in behaviour are accepted, and it may well be that 'knowledge by description' is revised; but a man does not generally reject his wife because she acts 'out of character'; it is precisely the 'open texture' of 'knowledge that' which deepens and increases the significance of our primary statement "I know my wife" - and this primary statement is the expression of the encounter between my wife and myself.

This immediate awareness of another person - the encounter and communion, say, with one's wife - should be recognised by the moral philosopher, because it is from this awareness, this communion, that many of our obligations and responsibilities spring. I do not love and cherish my wife and family because of the principle that a man ought to love and cherish his wife and family, but because I encounter my wife in this primary sense I love and care for her and for our family. The obligation springs from this primary relationship - not vice versa.

It is for this reason that I am not happy about accepting too easily the non-naturalist account of the naturalistic fallacy. When I accept
that I ought to pay school fees for my child I do this not on any general principle such as "Fathers ought to give their children as good an education as possible" - but simply because I encounter him as my child. A man is not commended for loving his wife or his family, but because he does love them certain obligations arise. Here we seem to derive an 'ought' from an 'is', and seem to be on the side of the naturalists.

However the point which is really being made is that there is a certainty which comes from personal encounter which seems more valid than any piece of empirical testing could be. When we accept statements on authority this depends upon the primary encounter we had with the individual asserting the statement; and the evidence which personal encounter affords is different in kind from that afforded by empirical evidence or logical proofs. And when we accept, or become aware of, certain responsibilities, these too arise out of our encounter with other personalities; and the evidence for the existence of such responsibilities is to be found, not in the general principles of human conduct, about which moral philosophy has so much to say, but in our empirical acknowledgement that we have encountered, are encountering, or shall encounter, another person. It is to this conclusion that the treatments of 'encounter' and 'personality' in the works of Barth and Tillich point, and it could be of some significance for the moral philosopher.
CHAPTER XI
AN INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The foregoing discussion of the concept of 'encounter', in so far as it was viewed with respect to the thinking of the moral philosopher, had to be limited to the notion of an encounter between individuals; but, as was pointed out, its chief significance for Barth and Tillich lies in the idea of the encounter between God and in this sense its significance might be further investigated by the moralist who professes Christian principles. One of the differences between the two theologians could be said to be that for Barth the initiative for this encounter can only come from God - while Tillich seems to concentrate on the potentiality for the encounter, which he maintains is with all men in so far as they are men, and indeed the desire for it is the source of our existential 'angst'.

Barth says explicitly,

"The possibility of knowing the Word of God lies in the Word of God and nowhere else."¹

and for the man who has been claimed by the Word,

"Not for one moment or in any respect, merely because he is thus in it, will he put his confidence in the fact, take his bearings by it, derive from it the measure for understanding the reality

¹Kirchliche Dogmatik, I/1, p. 255.
in which he stands; he will not reflect upon it at all, but will simply be in it."¹

And Tillich writes,

"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 despair of Greek scepticism, or to the threat of nihilism as expressed in 20th Century literature, art and psychology. Nevertheless the question does not 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."²

Both theologians agree in holding that, of himself, man is not capable of meeting with, 'encountering', God, but that in Christ we see the activity of God. If as Christians we believe that Christ was the revelation of God what effect will this have on our construction of an ethical system? In the attempted answer to this question, I depart radically from the views of both Barth and Tillich, but the sketch for a theonomous ethic which is developed here owes much to what I have learned from their work. In this respect Barth has proved by far the more potent influence, and although I have rejected his interpretation of Theological ethics it will be clear that my chief debt is to his thought.

¹Ibid. p. 252.
A beginning can be made by rejecting as too extreme one contention of his, and then tying this up positively with the view of personality expressed in the previous section, plus the conception of religious truth developed in Chapter IX. Although the encounter with Christ is unique and individual (and therefore incommunicable) it may only be talked about in analogy with our encounter with other persons whom we know and with the personalities of other persons with whom we have no direct knowledge (via e.g. their books or their works). In order to suggest the experience of the unique we must use the evidence of the familiar. However in discussing ethics as the command of God, Barth writes,

"What is the true Christian way of speaking about right conduct? In this respect we cannot go roaming around. We cannot cling to a man, perhaps someone whom we regard as an exemplary Christian, or to a human type, perhaps a representation of Christian living that we find particularly instructive in a historical or contemporary group or school. If obedience to God's command is right conduct, what incontrovertible reason have we to pass off any individual or general human model as obedience? What authority have we to make it a norm? And what are we to think if, in the portrayal of this obedience, the spokesman is something in the nature of a Christian self-consciousness even if this is ever so sure of its case and objectively ever so purified? Again, it is difficult to see in
what sense and with what right we can undertake to sketch an ideal picture of the Christian life which can then be proclaimed as the realisation of the good, as the norm of Christian obedience. Where are we to derive this ideal picture? And what authority have we for maintaining that this is the form of living that corresponds to divine election?"1

Granting that all this is partly true, it leaves out of account the empirical conditions in which revelation is received. Barth says indeed, "God may speak to us through Russian communism or a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub or a dead dog",2 but this for him is not really what is meant by revelation. "God reveals Himself through Himself"3 - and by this he means revelation in Jesus Christ. The significant omission in this formula is the 'us' to whom God in revelation speaks. Barth may deny that he does neglect the human recipient of revelation, but the long quotation above was chosen because it would appear that there is in the Barthian system an omission of any consideration of the human situation within which revelation occurs. Granted that we cannot cling to an exemplary Christian as the objective basis for a moral system, still it is usually through such a personality, and always through the medium of some personality, that an individual is orientated towards the Word of God; and in fact it is always through the encounter with other persons that we are made aware of what it means

1Kirchliche Dogmatik', II/2, p. 538.
2Kirchliche Dogmatik', I/1, p. 60.
to be touched by God, or of what it means to be moral. This fact must have its place in any Christian ethic.

One of the features of ethical thought since Kant has been the change over from the Greek ideal of the Good to the idea of duty - and this has entailed a deterioration in the standing of the word 'virtue'. We seldom, if ever, discuss the virtues of a person now (except in obituary notices), and one of the phrases in which the word occurs in ordinary language is in the phrase 'of doubtful virtue', which has at the very least a Victorian ring about it. The chief objection which may be made, say to the Kantian and the Aristotelian formulations of ethics is that both involve so much calculation that the spontaneity which seems to be a feature of all actions that are truly called 'good' is lost. If a man always has to consult a principle of morality before he acts, then he is not considered a genuinely moral person. Thus Aristotle e.g. maintains that,

".... the young man is not a fit student of moral philosophy for he has no experience in the conduct of life, while all that is said presupposes and is concerned with these: and in addition, since he is apt to follow the promptings of passion he will hear as though he heard not, and with no profit, the end in view being practice and not mere knowledge."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Ethics 1095a.
and of course this may apply to any age group whatever - the teenage mentality is not confined to teenagers. (Russell misinterprets Aristotle here, as in many other places, when he says that his is a repulsive doctrine appealing only to the respectable middle-aged.)

Calculation appears in the Aristotelian ethic in the search for the mean which is virtue and also in the assessment necessary for propounding the practical syllogism. But in choosing the Greek word θείκον in his work Aristotle showed that he was aware of this factor of spontaneity. His book is really a treatise on moral education and the end product is a man of practical wisdom; i.e. a man who does the good act does so from habit (θεός), and therefore spontaneously. He says in effect that an act is not really good unless it is done by a good man, and in order to be a good man one has to work to achieve goodness according to the methods outlined in his treatise.

Since the time of Kant, however, moral philosophers have been concerned with 'ought' and 'duty' rather than 'good' or 'virtue' because it has appeared that these are the terms which more fitly express moral experience. Kant agrees with Aristotle that a good man is one who habitually acts rightly; but he goes on to say that the only right action is one which is done from a sense of duty. Thus he writes, e.g.
"... an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined."

and that maxim is the maxim of duty. Professor Paton puts this succinctly,

"The good man's maxim, in virtue of which his action has moral worth, is not, 'This is the kind of thing I will do, if I happen to have an inclination for it.' His maxim is 'I will do my duty, whatever my duty may be.' This is what we mean when we say that a man acts for the sake of duty. This is what we mean when we say that he is a conscientious and good man. The formal maxim of duty, and not the material maxim of inclination, is what determines his conduct and gives it its value."

Kant's general principle is of course a formal principle and no rule of conduct can be derived from it; but the suggestion is that all rules of conduct may be tested by means of it. At this point the lack of spontaneity in the Kantian system is most evident. The attempt to discover the maxim for any action is notoriously difficult, and if a man has to ask himself, before any proposed course of action, "is this really being done from the maxim of duty?", then the habitual action of the good man must proceed by a series of jerks - a hiatus in action.

occurring each time he deliberates about the maxim of his action. Furthermore there is an implied infinite regress here. When I consult the maxim of my action, this action (of consultation) must itself be considered a duty - and so on ad infinitum.

In addition it might well be asked why should anyone act in accordance with this maxim of duty - in accordance with the moral law? In his answer to this question Kant is illuminating and psychologically perspicacious, and he gives a pointer to the kind of ethical theory envisaged in the succeeding paragraphs. In effect his solution (or rather one of them, for he is in two minds about this) is to bring in the unique feeling of 'Achtung' - which is translated in most English transcripts by 'respect', but is perhaps better rendered as 'reverence'; in his writing it has also the flavour of awe. We act for the sake of duty when we act out of 'Achtung' for the law; and this emotion arises because we are conscious that our wills are subordinated to a law with no intervention from the world of sense. Kant devotes a long section in the 'Analytic of Pure Practical Reason' to this unique emotion, and in the course of this he says,

"... before an humble plain man, in whom I perceive uprightness of character in a higher degree than I am conscious of myself, my mind bows whether I choose it or not, and though I bear my
head never so high that he may not forget my superior rank. Why is this? Because his example exhibits to me a law that humbles my self-conceit when I compare it with my conduct: a law, the practicability of obedience to which I see proved by fact before my eyes. Now, I may even be conscious of a like degree of uprightness, and yet the respect remains. For since in man all good is defective, the law made visible by an example still humbles my pride, my standard being furnished by a man whose imperfections, whatever they may be, are not known to me as my own are, and who therefore appears to me in a more favourable light. Respect is a tribute which we cannot refuse to merit, whether we will or not; we may indeed outwardly withhold it, but we cannot help feeling it inwardly. Respect for the moral law is therefore the only and the undoubted moral motive, and this feeling is directed to no object except on the ground of this law."  

Man, according to Kant, is a member of two worlds, and this emotion is the subjective feeling which is called forth by the "weak glances" the phenomenal man has of the noumenal world, and it is at once humbling and exalting. I shall suggest that the Kantian description is correct, but that the emotion of 'Achtung' is directed not to the moral law, but to the activity of Christ as it appears in human conduct. Kant erred in

---


2Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason. Ibid. p. 246.
making his moral law into an empty categorical imperative; Barth is nearer the truth when he sees ethics as the commands of God. But Barth also erred in seeing obedience only in the God-man Jesus Christ; and Kant was nearer to the truth when he asserted that 'Achtung' is directed towards persons as possible shrines of the Holy Will.

If the theories of truth and of personality outlined above are combined in the idea of 'encounter' with Jesus Christ, we have a pointer to what revelation is and what morality means for man. And if there is added the view, which Kant expresses so well in his own way, of the respect we feel for the Christ-like man, there appears the conclusion that all true moral action is Christ's action, and the 'Achtung' is directed not to the man but to the person of Christ acting in and through him; it is the 'encounter' with the activity of Christ which generates the subjective emotion of 'Achtung'; not a moral law, but an active personality. The Christian ethic denies that our actions are good; yet the Christian is prepared to commend good actions and good men when he sees them. This paradox is resolved by taking literally Paul's words in Gal. 2 v. 19 "not I, but Christ who liveth in me": and this is what the Christian says when commended for an action. He ascribes all good to God; yet at the same time he accepts all responsibility for doing wrong himself.
This entails that the proposition, "God acts morally" (or its equivalent "Christ's action is moral action") is a redundancy. The proposition should read, "God acts". Thus there is no such entity as 'morality' which is there to be investigated by the moral philosopher, any more than there is a 'goodbye' to be looked for when we wave 'goodbye'. In the proposition "God acts morally", 'morally' is an internal accusative - to use a phrase of Brentano's. It is surely significant that in any investigation of what we call a moral action we look at the person or persons who are involved. Christian ethics, on this interpretation, says that an action is moral if it is Christ's action; immoral if it is not. In this respect the distinction into moral and immoral is a man-made distinction, and it arose in the first place, and continually, because man is ever aware of the activity of God as being different from his own activity and it is because of this that our various moral systems have been constructed. In fact this theory states that the only power a man has of himself is the power to do wrong. Hobbes was correct in seeing the activity of man, left to himself, as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". As Barth contends repeatedly, God's action is perfectly revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ - and in Him we see this picture exemplified.

Continually He "charged them that they should tell no man" - i.e. He

---

1 Hobbes: 'Leviathan', Pt. 1, Ch. 13.
ascribed all glory to God; He said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." - only God's activity is good. Because of his extreme interpretation of Christomonism Barth failed to take many of Christ's sayings literally (e.g. "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.") - as Paul most certainly did; and he is therefore wrong to neglect the activity of Christ as a continuing activity, as he says, but the activity is not one of commanding simply - the concept of activity cannot be limited merely to the issuing of commands - nor can it be limited to a few years He lived in Palestine. The moral action is still Christ's action - or rather it is still Christ, because He is known only in his action. God through Christ acts in and through men, and in that activity more of His personality is revealed. In this respect one must agree with Pere Teilard de Chardin, when he wrote,

"The bigger the world becomes and the more organic become its internal connections, the more will the perspectives of the incarnation triumph."¹

Moral philosophers attempt to construct systems of morality or to prove perhaps that moral sentences are expressions of emotion; they deduce deontological systems, systems of utilitarianism, of moral sense, of social approbation, even of theological approbation; but all our systems are bound to fail, because they attempt to catch and pin down

the activity of God. Perhaps all the moralist can do is to describe that activity as it occurred in the past; he can never catch it as it passes before him and perhaps in and through himself. Kant's maxim of duty, and his various attempts to express the true categorical Imperative are remarkable attempts to systematize the way in which God acts. But the man whom we call 'good' is the man who is open to the activity of Christ. He who knows that the very best that he can do is not enough, and all that remains is to say, "Take me and let me be transparent to thee". This is where Tillich, perhaps, comes closest to this interpretation - his concept of 'the courage to be' could be said to arise at this point. To feel the fear of the activity of God and to go ahead in spite of it, and because of it, can be called 'courage'. The American poet R. Frost expresses it well in his poem, 'A Masque of Mercy', thus,

"Our sacrifice, the best we have to offer,
And not our worst nor second best, our best,
Our very best, our lives laid down like Jonah's,
Our lives laid down in war and peace, may not
Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight."

This is what Christ was and is. In so far as He was man, He partook of man's nature with its limited horizons. He was tempted and He was capable of sin. It is when our activity clashes with His
activity — when we attempt to assert ourselves and our pride — that God's voice comes as a command over against all our inclinations (this is what Kant discerned and tried to make static in his formal principle). We conceive as a duty what He would do through us, if we could forget ourselves.

The chief difference between this theory and Barth's is that it does not attempt to provide a correspondence theory of 'good' i.e. that man's action is good in so far as it corresponds with the activity of God; rather it accepts synergism, and indeed energism. This also accounts for the importance we attach to the 'encounter' with other individuals, and it is a pointer to the unique encounter with Jesus Christ. We may be impressed by someone we know and love and realize the powerful way in which our relationship effects our conduct. Perhaps the most significant relationship occurs in marriage; in the performance of the most intimate action known to a man and a woman there is the surrender of self in its most extreme human form. We seem to have lost today all trace of the medieval speculation about the striking psychological similarities between erotic and religious experience.¹ The contact with the thinking of the

¹John Donne expresses this well in the third stanza of his fine poem 'The Canonization'

"The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
   By us, we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit,
   We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love."

For him the word 'mysterious' had a specific reference to religious 'mysteries.
great philosophers or the great artists may condition our attitudes in many situations. But the encounter with Jesus Christ has this difference to all human encounters that it does not set up a relationship between two persons at all. In that encounter our own personalities are demolished. Christ takes over and we are emptied of everything — even our personalities.

Inevitably our human language cannot cope with this situation, and paradox results — the paradox of grace. If we could explain the mystery of how and when Christ acts we would partake of His action, and on this theory this is impossible. The paradox has its embodiment in Christ — and the Christian, in becoming fleetingly aware of it in his everyday relationships with others believes that the grace which was His from all eternity is the same grace which resides in man when true moral activity occurs. To look for Christ is to look for His activity; and to search for Truth is to search for His living acting Person. This entails also that 'obedience' is not the word to describe the action of man, and talk about 'the command of God', or 'the Divine Imperative' may be misleading. There is only God's action, and man's action, and when a man wishes to act for himself he experiences the clash between his activity and God's as a command or an imperative or a moral law. The pressure upon us of unconditional values, which the ordinary man admits is that dim awareness of the activity of God which all men have — and
hence also the pressure upon us to construct a natural theology.

God is other; His activity is over against man's activity. But this does not destroy man's freedom; it does destroy man's freedom to choose God's activity. The task for man is to prepare himself as an instrument fit for use by God.

This interpretation may seem far removed from ordinary language, but in fact it may be seen that many of our moral notions accord with it. It accounts for the authoritative character of our ethical ideas - in clutching at an ethical ideal we are catching at some facet of that one Person who has supreme authority (inevitably we use present participles in the attempt to express this effect of 'seeing through a glass darkly'). Hence we tend to think of moral judgments as being true or false, and independent of individual hopes and desires. It also accounts for the normative character of our human ethical judgments; our judgments are parts of our activity and if we judge certain principles to be ethical, e.g. "Never tell a lie", the normative character of God's activity is reflected in the imperfect formulation of it in the ethical principle.

In addition this theory accords with our ordinary way of speaking about moral compulsion. Miss M. Macdonald points out, in an interesting paper,¹

"... moral judgments are more usually, and effectively, spoken than written. Is it not significant that it is always the voice,

¹'Ethics and the Ceremonial use of Language', M. Macdonald.
and not the letters and treatises, of conscience which admonishes? The ideal of a scientific statement is the mathematical equation. I suggest as one reason for this that mathematical formulas are more naturally written or printed than uttered. They thus quite rightly, exclude personal bias, but also personal concern. But many typographical devices of italics, exclamation marks etc. must be employed if moral judgments in print are not to lose half their life."

Could not this be because it is only in acting that we become aware of the activity of God? In the concept of responsibility there is involved the idea of being answerable, of being ready to take the blame: when a man says that he is responsible for a certain action it usually means that he is the one to be held worthy of blame, not praise. Goodness too is an attribute we ascribe to others; if we heard someone saying "I am a good man" we would suspect (rightly) the truth of the statement. To ascribe goodness to oneself is to detract from any goodness ascribed to oneself by others. Finally the theory allows for that spontaneity of action which is a characteristic of the truly good man. If a man is transparent to God he does not need to consult a concept of duty or to construct a practical syllogism - the action occurs; just as we are all aware of the phenomenon of thinking when it would be more correct to say 'it thinks in me' or 'thinking goes on without my volition' rather than
'I think', so in the really good man 'action occurs' - and this is 'God's activity', not ours. Of course this includes the assessment of the total situation; God's activity is not limited to manual or visible action.

If it is true that the activity of God can be seen - distorted and imperfect though it be - in the action of men, then the task for the Christian moralist must be twofold. An ethic of an acting personality can never expect to be either a purely descriptive ethic, or a meta-language ethic about the language used in, or about, moral situations. It must recognise the commitment of the moralist as one of the most important factors in its expression. This does not mean that he should sell his Christian birthright for a pot of message - but it does mean that continually the message should be able to break through. In this sense he must continually seek (though perhaps never succeed) to lose himself in the activity of God, and he must look for evidence of its effects in others - including those men in the past who made significant advances in our so-called moral evolution - men like Wilberforce and Barnardo and Schweitzer - all those good people we have known, without whose activity all the moral theories man has developed would be so much water spilt on sand. These men do not as a rule construct theories of conduct - like the great artists the rules by which they live are constructed in living (or creating) as they go along. Genius has been defined as "that in whose power a man is"¹ - we could say the same of

¹By R.T.S. Lowell in 'Rousseau and the Sentimentalists'.
'goodness'. Secondly he will be aware that the human apprehension of what we call moral truth, or God, is bound to be imperfect. God is not to be grasped in an abstract vision or formula or moral code, but in living He can grasp us. To live in such a way as to make this possible is our ethical ideal - but even this is still our endeavour - our activity. He must view conscience as necessarily subjective and therefore the possible means of an inversion in values, because it may create a moral self-consciousness, within which virtuous behaviour nourishes an impulse of self-approbation. The very acknowledgement of good as belonging in any respect to man provides the incitement to a subtle species of pride. "Sin grows with doing good"¹, and the Christian moralist must point to that new innocence ("except ye become as little children") which signifies the acceptance of God's action as what we know of truth and morality.

The ecstasy to which mystical experience points may be a rending of the veil between the two activities, but again the attempt to express that experience is an inevitable distortion of it. As Tillich says,

"It is impossible to express the experience of mystery in ordinary language, because this language has grown out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme. If mystery is expressed in ordinary language it necessarily is misunderstood, reduced to another dimension, desecrated."²

¹ 'Murder in the Cathedral', T.S. Eliot, Faber and Faber, p. 44.
There may be mystical experiences which can only be known by those who experience them, but they cannot be used to establish anything. However there is room for such experience in this theory. In addition the experience of 'Angst' may be seen to be brought about by the continual clash of the two activities. Angst occurs because man's action must be negated in order to give God's activity its due supremacy. Only in one Person was that activity revealed pure and untouched, and because of the Christian's faith in that Person does the same activity become possible, in an imperfect form, for him. The cross symbolises the two activities; the life of Christ was wholly the activity of God; His death was the activity of man.

This is why we must see the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount as an impossible ethic for man - "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect" - drives us from our activity (including this activity in constructing a theory for the basis of ethics) to the activity of God. All our man-made theories necessarily fail to catch the personality of Christ (to this the Form critics point, but with a different emphasis); His meaning cannot be caught (and here we must speak in analogies) any more than the simultaneous position and speed of the electron can be caught; but we through grace are enabled to be the medium through which He acts. True faith then is not a matter of human belief, but of divine action, and in so far as it includes human doubt
(activity) it is imperfectly realised in us. The person whom we call 'moral' is that individual whose activity either is, or approximates to, the activity of Christ. He may be one of the outstanding personalities beloved of the existentialists or he may be a 'humble plain man' whose language is eulogised by the linguistic analysts. We are not able to say when and where His activity takes over from the activity of such a personality - all we can say is that our norms of conduct, our moral standards, and our knowledge of good and evil are ultimately derived from this activity. In searching for, and copying, that action we exemplify our _eros_ for the activity of God, and when it does occur, our _eros_ is transformed into the divine _agape_, which is truly divine and different in kind from all human love (which is a part of human activity.) Faith, Hope and Agape are not Christian virtues, but Christ's activities - and thus they are the negation of the Greek scheme of the cardinal virtues; the latter are the activities of men - the achievements of man, and therefore not the activity of God.

Plato saw in dialectic the instrument by which 'the truth' could be discovered in the depths of our being. To put this metaphorically he saw dialectic as the scalpel which reveals the seam of something finer than gold; something which resides in all men; and of course the less keen the blade the less likely are we to find the seam in its pristine state: clumsy thinking knocks pieces off, and they evaporate when
exposed to relational thinking (our ordinary ways of thinking). Therefore dialectic has to prove to be a precise and efficient logical instrument, feeling its way along the labyrinths of true thought. Hence it should move only a short distance at a time - by short questions and answers. Socrates says, e.g.

"If you want to hear me and Protagoras discoursing, you must ask him to shorten his answers and keep to the point . . . . if not how can there be any discussion? For discussion is one thing, and making an oration quite another, in my humble opinion." ¹

and in the important Epistle VII Plato wrote,

"Only after continued application to the subject itself and intercourse with it is the truth brought to birth in the soul, suddenly like the light which is kindled by a leaping spark and thereafter sustains itself."

The chief objection to the views of both Plato and Aristotle is that they regard the capacity for knowing the truth as the highest attribute of man, and in this respect they are intellectualists. But the Platonic view of dialectic might well be widened in order to see that in action - in activity - God is discovered. God's activity is what we slowly and dimly apprehend in the realisation that our own activity is never His. And as God's action is a Person acting we may expect that more of His Personality will be revealed as time goes on.

¹ 'Protagoras' 336b.
"The wind bloweth where it listeth" indeed is true, and our ethical systems are, as it were, the isobars man draws in a vain attempt to find out when and where and why God acts. Our efforts to chart His action are placed in static systems which require continual revision, just as do the maps of the meteorologist. And in this image we realise also the need for such systems - subject as they are to change and revision. Just as the forecaster cannot look out of his individual office and decide what things are like in the Outer Hebrides, just as he is dependent on reports from weather stations and weather ships and radiosonde balloons - so is the moralist with regard to the activity of God. We cannot say what God's actions are from our own individual standpoint; we have to draw on the standards and the example of others to be aware of the activity of Christ - to realise wherein true morality resides. Thus this is no theory which allows for individual complacency - a wait and see what the Lord will do type of ethic. It is the precise opposite in so far as the Christian moralist must search all history, as well as his own conscience in the attempt to find God's person at work. It means chiefly taking another look at the supreme example of that activity in the life and the personality of Jesus Christ. We may not indeed be able to see that historical Person as He appeared in Palestine 1,900 years ago, but we can see the activity of that Person both in the great ones of the past and in the good men and women we meet in our ordinary
lives. Action is the dialectic which reveals the Truth as the Person of Christ - and in this respect the 'humble plain man' (in Kant's example) is better placed than most academic moral philosophers or academic theologians.

It will be clear that by working from different premises, suggested by Barth and Tillich, we have arrived at an interpretation of Christian ethics which is akin to the Christological theory developed by the late Professor D.M. Baillie in his brilliant book, 'God was in Christ'. He saw in the paradox of grace the pointer to the meaning of the Incarnation. He wrote,

"What I wish to suggest is that this paradox of grace points the way more clearly and makes a better approach than anything else in our experience to the mystery of the Incarnation itself; that this paradox in its fragmentary form in our own Christian lives is a reflection of that perfect union of God and man in the Incarnation on which our whole Christian life depends, and may therefore be our best clue to the understanding of it. In the New Testament we see the man in whom God was incarnate surpassing all other men in refusing to claim anything for Himself independently and ascribing all the goodness to God. We see Him also desiring to take up other men into His own close union with God, that they might be as He was. And if these men, entering in some small measure through Him into that
union, experience the paradox of grace for themselves in fragmentary ways, and are constrained to say 'It was not I but God', may not this be a clue to the understanding of that perfect life in which the paradox is complete and absolute, that life of Jesus which, being the perfection of humanity, is also, and in an even deeper and prior sense, the very life of God Himself? If the paradox is a reality in our poor imperfect lives at all, so far as there is any good in them, does not the same or a similar paradox, taken at the perfect and absolute pitch, appear as the mystery of the Incarnation?\(^1\)

Objections to these theories (and I do not claim that Professor Baillie's theory agrees altogether with the one outlined above) will come from both theologians and philosophers. Indeed in a recent article, Professor J.H. Hick voices what is probably the chief theological objection, namely that it violates the Nicene and the Chalcedonian claim that God was in Christ in a unique sense, and he continues,

"The danger .... towards which Baillie's suggestion tends is that of assimilating too unreservedly the divine presence in Jesus to the divine presence in all good men, or in all men in so far as they are good. .... Baillie is left occupying the unsatisfactory

\(^{1}\)Opus Cited pp. 117-118.
position that Christ's uniqueness is one of degree - degree of
divinely enabled moral achievement."¹

Not being a theologian I feel unqualified to argue against this except to point out that the final sentence is probably a misunderstanding. Christ was not 'divinely enabled' to achieve 'morality'. He was the activity of God, and therefore any such attributes as 'moral' or 'having moral achievement' are misapplied when attributed to Him, i.e. if they are taken as synthetic accusatives. It is true that we do tend to pin such labels on to that life, but the labels are meaningless here, because the life itself is what gives meaning to the labels. Furthermore in a reply to Professor Hick, Professor J. Baillie wrote,

"I have heard my brother say that it is misleading in such a connection to rely too much on the familiar distinction between degree and kind (or sense), because the absolute and perfect differs from the imperfect and relative not merely in degree but in kind, just as infinity and eternity are no mere prolongation of the finite and temporal, but belong to another order of being. That is to say when a difference of degree is 'taken at the absolute pitch' it is already a difference of kind."²

and he quotes Professor H.R. Macintosh.

² S.J. of Th. September, 1958, pp. 265-266.
"Fidelity to moral fact then obliges us to emphasise, as a fundamental principle that Divine immanence is essentially a matter of degree ..... Our true mode of describing Christ accordingly, is to speak of His person as representing the 'absolute immanence' of God. For the Divine indwelling must vary in quality and intensity with the receptiveness of man; hence as it deepens it must from time to time involve new departures, turning points, crises of an epoch-making character. Of these the life of Christ is the last and the highest. He opens a new order; we may certainly put it so if we add that in this new order He is unique." ¹

This helps to dispose of a philosophic objection that this interpretation departs radically from the way in which we normally use ethical predicates and become aware of moral obligations. It was pointed out earlier that our normal lives are very limited - the range of our emotions is a narrow one, the opportunities we have even for using pure moral predicates are few and far between - and we do use these terms most frequently in non-moral contexts. We say, 'That strawberry flan was good', or 'This experiment ought to substantiate such and such an hypothesis'. Is there then any valid criterion we can use to distinguish a moral 'ought' or 'good' or 'right' from non-moral uses? To this sort of question - a favourite one in moral philosophy today - this theory can indeed give no definitive answer.

¹'The Person of Jesus Christ', p. 432f.
However this kind of objection does not touch the core of the theory which attempts to establish, in an admittedly metaphysical manner, the view that all truly moral action is God's action. This is the basis for our ordinary view that morality is objective - it is objective precisely in that it is not our action. It is a metaphysical theory in so far as it is meant to open up a new programme for ethical inquiry. It suggests that there is a mistake built into the whole project of trying to find out what morality is by examining the ways in which we normally use moral predicates: if we could instead attempt to find out more about Christ in His activity then perhaps we will see that the end of ethical inquiry is once again a way of living - a way which is not our way, because "My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.". This is literally true and the realisation of its truth, in acting even as morally as we know how, brings the sense of ἀσέβεια, which, as Socrates saw, is the first step on the way to truth. The first step is perhaps as far as moral philosophy can take us, but it is the only action that is open to us as moral philosophers.