

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

Published in English in 1936, these essays were written by Dr. Tillich in Germany between 1926 and 1933. The first chapter is a general introduction to Tillich's thought, a kind of biographical genesis. The remainder of the chapters deal with how we understand our historical existence, and introduce the English speaking student to many of Tillich's key concepts: the demonic, kairos and logos, the problem of being, understanding power and human existence, the relation of church to culture, and an interpretation of both history and eschatology from a Christian viewpoint.

## Part One:

### On the Boundary

Tillich discusses the boundaries that have determined his life, the boundaries between the different temperaments of his mother and father, between city and country, between social classes, between reality and imagination, between theory and practice, between heteronomy and autonomy, between theology and philosophy, between church and society, between religion and culture, between Lutheranism and socialism, between idealism and Marxism, between home and alien land, and, in retrospect, some limitations on the boundary concept.

## Part Two: Philosophical Categories of the Interpretation of History

### I: The Demonic

Tillich discusses the reality and nature of the demonic, its effect in history and the demonries of the present. The demonic is the perversion of the creative, and as such belongs to the phenomena that are contrary to essential nature, or sin. The doctrine of sin without the

comprehension of the demonic must be robbed of its content.

## **II: Kairos and Logos**

Time is all-decisive; not empty time, but pure expiration; not the mere duration either, but rather qualitatively fulfilled time, the moment that is creation and fate. We call this fulfilled moment, the moment of time approaching us as fate and decision, *Kairos*. The thinking in the Kairos is opposed to the thinking in the timeless Logos, which belongs to the methodical main line. It must become apparent that the consideration of reality in the sense of the timeless Logos is at best an immense abstraction which cannot do justice to the passing fate and decision of immediate existence— Kairos.

# **Part Three: Political Categories of the Interpretation of History**

## **I: The Problem of Power**

Power as a social phenomenon always depends on a position of power recognized by society, on an institution in which society collects its intrinsic might and only thus really constitutes itself. The might of a group can really only be born when the group creates for itself a unified, advancing, and eventually retreating will. The institution in which this happens is the sphere of power determined by the group. Only he who directly or indirectly, openly or secretly is accepted in this sphere is in possession of social power.

## **II: The Two Roots of Political Thinking**

That each individual must constantly suppress within himself subgroups of life-tendencies in favor of his unified life-process shows that we are dealing with a very deep-seated phenomenon, through which the Utopian rejection of force is refuted. In every meaningful life-process of an individual and a society, the subjection of opposing tendencies for the sake of unity takes place. Force is therefore inevitable.

# **Part Four: Theological Categories of the Interpretation of History**

## **I: Church and Culture**

In the foundation of every philosophy of religion and culture, we can define the Church as that sociological reality in which the holy is supposed to be presented, and society as the sociological reality in which the profane appears. But one sees the loss of holiness in its being placed on the same level as the profane.

## **II: The Interpretation of History and the Idea of Christ**

Christology faces the concept of history and history cannot be treated without regarding the Christological question. To develop Christology means to describe the concrete point at which something absolute appears in history and provides it with meaning and purpose; and this indeed is the central problem with the philosophy of history.

## **III. Eschatology and History**

Religious problems are approached by either of two methods—the scientific or the authoritarian. Tillich suggests a third, that through phenomenological intuition—an attempt to isolate and clarify in rational terms the content present in the religious act.

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# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part One:

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## On the Boundary

In the introduction to my *Religiöse Verwirklichung* (Religious Realization) I had written: "The border line is the truly propitious place for acquiring knowledge." When I received the invitation to give an account of how my ideas have grown from my life, it came to me that the concept of the border line might be the fitting symbol of the whole of my personal and intellectual development. It has been my fate, in almost every direction, to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither, to take no definitive stand against either. As fruitful as such a position is for thought, since thinking presupposes receptiveness to fresh possibilities, it is difficult and dangerous for life, which steadily demands decisions and thus exclusion of alternatives. From this disposition and these tensions have come both destiny and task.

### I. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO TEMPERAMENTS

It is not well to ascribe too much importance to the characters of one's parents in the shaping of one's own character. Yet there are parental and ancestral qualities that will recur in the children and remoter descendants in striking fashion, and may cause deep conflicts in them. Whether this is more a matter of heredity or of the impressions of early childhood, may be left an open question. I have never doubted, at any rate, that the union of a father from the Mark and a mother from the Rhineland implanted in me the tension between eastern and western Germany: in the East a meditative bent tinged with melancholy, a heightened consciousness of duty and personal sin, a strong sense for authority, and feudal traditions are still alive; while the West is characterized by zest of living, sensuous concreteness, mobility, rationality, and democracy. It would not be possible, of course, to allocate these two groups of characters to my father and

mother respectively. Yet it would seem that it was by way of them that these contradictory qualities were rooted in me—my life, inward and outward, to be enacted on their battleground. The significance of such congenital tendencies lies not in their determining the course of life, but in staking out the scope and supplying the substance within which the fateful decisions must be made in thought and action.

My position on the boundary in all the relations I am to speak of in the following sections would hardly be understandable without that twofold inheritance. In its development the preponderance of my father's influence, in part due to the early death of my mother, resulted in a situation in which the elements that I ascribe to the maternal side could carry though only in constant and tense contest with the paternal elements. Again and again an eruption would be necessary to give these elements room, and often the eruptions would lead to extremes. Classical composure and harmony were not part of my heritage. This is probably one of the reasons why Goethe's classical aspect remained alien to me, and why I found Greek antiquity more accessible in its pre- and post-classical periods. Here are also certain psychic premises for my interpretation of history: advocacy of the line forging ahead and making for a point, as against the classical circle that is closed in itself; the positing of two principles wrestling with each other, whose struggle composes the content of history; the theory of dynamic truth, according to which truth itself dwells in the midst of struggle and fate, not in an immobile beyond, as Plato would have it. My essays (See below, pp. 77 ff. and 123 ff. respectively.) "The Demonic: A Contribution to the Interpretation of History," and my essay "Kairos And Logos," develop this as my fundamental attitude perhaps most adequately.

## **2. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRY**

From my fourth to my fourteenth year I lived in the singular medley of a small trans-Elbian town. My father was chief pastor there and superintendent of a church district. In many parts of Germany the small town is characterized sociologically by the curious type of the "plowland townsmen," commonly a well-to-do burgher who manages a relatively good-sized peasant holding from his home in the town. Towns of this sort are endowed with a markedly rustic character: many of the town houses have yards, barns, and gardens attached to them; just a few minutes walk will take one from any part of the town out into the fields; mornings and evenings cattle and sheep are herded through the streets. Nevertheless, these are true towns with their own civic rights and traditions going back to the Middle Ages, surrounding town walls with ancient gates, through which one enters upon narrow streets with serried rows of houses, merchants, and artisan shops. The shielding, sheltering, protective quality of the town, and at the same time its animation, as against the weirdness of forests at night, of silent plowlands and somnolent villages—all that belongs to the first and strongest impressions of my childhood. These were heightened by visits to Berlin, when the railway itself struck me as something half mythical; and thus there developed a yearning, overpowering at times, for the big city.. This resulted later on in many decisions, both with respect to outward and inward matters; and received philosophical expression in the essays "Logos und Mythos" and "Die Technische

Stadt" (The Technical City).

Thus I was saved from romantic enmity against technical civilizations and was taught to appreciate the importance of the big city for the critical side of intellectual and artistic life. Later there was added to this a vital and thoughtful understanding of the world of Bohemianism, possible only in the large cities and also an esthetic appreciation of the internal and external immensity of the metropolis; and finally I gained personal experience of the political and social movements that are concentrated in the capital. Without these experiences, and without their resonance in me—without the mythus of the great city, as it were—I should never have come in possession of the material that gave my book *The Religious Situation* its wide circulation.

And yet my tie with the country lies still deeper down in my soul. Nearly all great memories, and all strong longings are interlaced with landscapes, with the soil and with weather with corn fields, and the smell of autumnal potato foliage, with the forms of clouds, with wind, flowers, and woods. On all my later journeys, too, through Germany and through southern and western Europe, the impressions of the land were the strongest. Schelling's philosophy of nature, which I read in a state of intoxication, as it were, surrounded by the beauties of nature became for me the direct expression of this feeling for nature.

Most important, however, was the fact that from my eighth year onward annually I spent some weeks, later even months, by the seaside. The experience of the infinite bordering upon the finite, as one has it by the sea, responded to my tendency toward the border and supplied my imagination with a symbol from which feeling could win substance and thinking productivity. It is likely that my development of the theory of the human border-situation in *Religiöse Verwirklichung* (Religious Realization) and its more anthropological formulation in lectures at Yale University, might not have turned out as it did without that experience of nature. But there is also another element in the contemplation of the sea: the dynamic, the aggression upon the land in its tranquil finiteness, the ecstatic quality of gales and waves. Thus the theory of the "Dynamic Mass" in my essay "Masse und Geist" ("The Mass and the Spirit") was conceived under the immediate impression of the agitated sea. Also for the doctrine of the Absolute as both ground and abyss of dynamic truth, and of the religious essence as the eruption of the eternal into finiteness, the sea supplied the imaginative element needed for these thoughts. It was Nietzsche who said that no idea could be true unless it was thought in the open air. Obedient to the saying, many of my ideas have been conceived in the open, and even much of my writing has been done among trees or on the seaside. A regular rhythm alternating between town and country has always been and still is part of the little that I consider indispensable, and inviolable for my existence.

### **3. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES**

The particular features of small town life made this border line visible to me at an early age. I attended the common school throughout its grades; I had my friends in it and I shared their

animosity against the upper social class, represented by my own parents as also by the families of the burgomaster, the doctor, the apothecary, some merchants, and a few others. Although I had private lessons in Latin in the company of some of the children of this select group, and, later on, attended the *gymnasium* in a nearby city together with them, my real chums remained the boys of the common school. This led to a good deal of tension with the children of my own social stratum. Throughout my schooldays we remained mutually strangers. My belonging to the privileged class, therefore, early aroused in me that consciousness of social guilt which later was to become of such decisive importance for my work and the course of my life. As far as I can see the encounter, early and intimate, of a sensitive child of the upper classes with children of the lower classes offers only two possibilities: development of a consciousness of social guilt, or social hatred as the response to an aggressive resentment of the lower class children. I have met both types frequently.

This, however, did not exhaust my border-situation in respect to social issues. The church district of which my father was the head included a great many landed proprietors of the old nobility with whom, as church patrons, my parents were in professional and social contact. I was proud of being able to visit these manor houses and to play with the children of these squires. A life-long friendship unites me with a descendant—one indeed of uncommon mental abilities—of one of these families. My position on this border resulted in my opposition to the bourgeoisie, to which in point of class I belong myself, and prevented me from becoming myself bourgeois, as was so often the case among socialists; on the contrary, I made the attempt to incorporate into socialism those elements of the feudal tradition which have an inward affinity with the socialist idea. The special elaboration of religious socialism attempted by me first in the *Grundlinien des religiösen Sozialismus* (Principles of Religious Socialism), then in my book *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (Socialistic Decision) has its roots in this attitude. It was, therefore, only with difficulty and under the compulsion of the political situation that I could make myself join the party which had become as bourgeois as the social-democratic party of Germany. The essay "On the Problem of Power," (See also pp. 179ff.) which has to do with those experiences of my youth, has missed comprehension probably for this reason at the hand of the bourgeois pacifism even of some of my friends.

This is the place also for a word about the civil service which in Germany, more than anywhere else, forms a separate stratum with its own particular traditions. In the narrower sense I must be reckoned as belonging to it, both as son of a pastor who was at the same time a church and school functionary, and as one-time professor at a Prussian university. What Prussian "bureaucracy" means finds perhaps its clearest expression in Kant's *Practical Philosophy*: Superiority of the idea of duty over anything else, the valuation of order and law as highest norms, the tendency to centralize the power of the state and subjection to the military and civil authorities, and a conscious subordination of the members of the organic whole. It would be justifiable, therefore, if one derived from this very ideology of the Prussian bureaucracy the tendency of many German philosophies toward an harmonious system in philosophical theory and political practice. At any rate, as far as I am concerned, I am most conscious of this

interrelation which is evident both in my *Entwurf eines Systems der Wissenschaften* (Outline of a System of the Sciences), and in the promptness with which I subordinated myself to the military and civil authorities during peace and war times; and finally, in my adhesion to a political party, the program of which I opposed in a large measure. Of course I am quite conscious of the limitations of this attitude: the tremendous weight and pressure of conscience, which every personal decision and every violation of the traditions bring with it, the lack of decision toward the new and unexpected, and the desire for an all-embracing order, which would reduce the venture of personal decisions.

The deep-rooted protest against the distinct bourgeois type of life was expressed in my affection for the small social group, for which the name "Bohême" is actually no longer an adequate term; which, however, has kept a joint relation of intellectual productivity and criticism and genuine non-bourgeois life in theory and practice. Artists, actors, journalists, and writers had a decided influence within this group.

As theologian and academician I stood at the border line. This group recognized itself by an obvious lack of certain bourgeois conventionalities in thought and manners, and by an intellectual radicalism and a marked ability for ironical self-criticism. They met not only in certain cafés, houses, parlors, but also at certain places at the seashore, not frequented by the lower middle class. They were inclined toward radical political criticism and felt more akin with the communist worker than with the members of their own class. They lived in the international movements of art and literature, were sceptical, religiously radical and romantic; influenced by Nietzsche, antimilitaristic, psychoanalytical and expressionistic.

The opponent of this group was neither the feudal man nor well-to-do bourgeois; both were represented in the "Bohême." They sought admittance to it successfully and in exchange offered social and economic privileges. Its opponent was the small bourgeois, the middle class with its prejudices, its pretensions, its remoteness from the intellectual, especially from problems of artistic nature, its need of security and its distrust of the intelligentsia. The fact also, that I never stood seriously on the border of the small bourgeois type of life, but rather, like many of the same group repudiated it with an apparent, even if half-unconscious, arrogance, brought about an intellectual and personal destiny; intellectual, insofar as the striving to come out of every sort of narrowness brought constantly into the range of vision new possibilities and realms, and made the limitation, which is necessary for every intellectual and social realization, difficult; personal, insofar as the middle-class militaristic revolution affected the described group most forcibly and destroyed it with its intellectual and economic presuppositions. The answer to this partly justifiable, partly unjustifiable repudiation of the lower middle class by the intelligentsia, was the hateful persecution of German intelligentsia by the representatives of the romantic middle-class ideology.

#### **4. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN REALITY AND**

## IMAGINATION

The difficulties I experienced in coming to terms with reality transported me at an early age into the life of phantasy. For some years certain imaginative worlds constituted true reality for me, into which I withdrew as often as possible from the external reality not taken seriously by me. That was the time from my fourteenth to my seventeenth year of age. At the end of that period the romantic imagination was ultimately transmuted into the philosophical imagination, which ever since has stayed by me, for good and ill: for good, in that I owed to it my ability to combine what is far off, to perceive things abstract concretely, I would almost say colored, to experiment with possibilities in ideas; for ill, inasmuch as this ability involves the danger of mistaking the creatures of imagination for realities; that is, to neglect experience and rational critique, to think in monologues instead of dialogue, to isolate oneself from the communal work of science. No matter whether advantages or disadvantages preponderated in this disposition, it prevented me (in conjunction with secular circumstances) from becoming a "scholar" in the typical sense of that word—I might add, a widely prevalent phenomenon in that generation of transition to which I belong.

The imagination manifests itself, among other things, in the delight in play. This delight has accompanied me throughout my life, in play proper, in sports, taken by me playfully, and in spirit of dilettantism, never seriously, in the social play, in the playful emotion that accompanies the productive moments and makes them the expression of the most beatific form of human freedom. The romantic theory of play, Nietzsche's preference for play to "the spirit of heaviness," Kierkegaard's "esthetic sphere," the imaginative element in mythology have ever been attractive to me and ever dangerous. Perhaps it has been the sense of this danger which drove me more and more toward the uncompromising seriousness of prophetic religion. What I wrote in my book *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (Socialistic Decision) about mythological consciousness was written not only in protest against the ultimate lack of seriousness of nationalist paganism, but as much against the conquered mythical-romantic element in myself.

The highest form of play and the truly productive abode of imagination is Art. Though I am myself productive in no field of artistic creation or re-creation, I yet gained a connection with art which in some respects acquired controlling importance for my scientific labors. My father carried on the musical traditions of the evangelical pastor's household, himself creating musical works. With architecture and the fine arts he had no commerce, in line with the great majority of typical Protestants. Since I am not musical, and there was at first no access to the graphic arts, my longing for art turned to literature, which was in line with the humanistic education of the German *gymnasium*. Shakespeare became particularly important for me, in the classical German translation by Schlegel. With figures like Hamlet I have identified myself to the danger point. My instinctive sympathy for what in contemporary Germany is called existential philosophy undoubtedly goes back, to a certain extent, to the excitement created in me by this most precious work of secular literature viewed existentially. Neither Goethe nor Dostoevsky had an equal effect upon me. Dostoevsky came too late into my line of vision, and Goethe's

work seemed to me to express too little of the "border-situation" in Kierkegaard's sense; it did not appear to me existential enough, a judgment indeed which I feel will have to be revised as I grow more mature. Even after the Hamlet period, which lasted some years, my capacity for complete identification with creatures of the poetic fancy was preserved. And the specific mood, the odor, as it were, of certain weeks, of months, of my life would be determined by this or that literary work, later, above all, by novels, of which I read few, but those with great intensity.

Literature still contains too much philosophy to be able fully to satisfy the desire for pure artistic contemplation. Thus the discovery of painting was for me an experience of decisive importance. It happened during the four years of war, as a reaction from the gruesomeness, the ugliness, and destructiveness of war. From my pleasure in the poor reproductions that were obtainable at the military bookstores in the fields there grew a systematic study of the history of art. From this study came the experience of art, chief of all that first experience, like a revelation, of a picture by Botticelli when I went to Berlin on my last furlough of the War. Upon experience followed reflection and philosophic and theologic interpretation, which led me to the fundamental categories of my philosophy of religion and culture, namely, form and content. It was above all expressionism, developed in German painting in the first decade of the twentieth century and winning public recognition after the War though not without severe struggles against "Philistine" incomprehension, that opened my eyes to the form-destroying power of the content and the creative ecstasy which is its necessary result. The concept of the "break-through," dominant in my theory of revelation, was one in connection with it. Later when a turn from the initial expressionism to a new realism set in, I obtained from the contemplation of the thus originated style the conception of the "beliefful realism," the central conception of my book *The Religious Situation* which accordingly is dedicated to an artist friend. The impression of various representations of personalities and masses in the art history of the Occident yielded inspiration and material for a lecture which I prepared on "Mass and Personality." My growing inclination toward the old Church and her solutions of the problems of "God and the World," "State and Church," were nourished by the overwhelming impression made upon me by early Christian art in Italy. What no amount of study of church history had brought about was accomplished by the mosaics in ancient Roman basilicas. My relations to painting found a direct precipitate in the article "Stil und Stoff in der bildenden Kunst" (Style and Material in Plastic Art), in my address at the opening of the exposition of religious art at Berlin, above all in the relevant parts of the "System der Wissenschaften" (System of the Sciences), in my *Religionsphilosophie* (Philosophy of Religion), and in my *The Religious Situation*.

The living experience of modern painting at the same time opened for me the way to modern German literature, as especially represented for me by Hofmannsthal, George, Rilke, and Werfel. The strongest impression was made on me by Rilke's late poetry. Its profound psychoanalytical realism, the mystical fulness, the form charged with metaphysical content, all that made this poetry the expression of what in the concepts of my philosophy of religion I

could seize only abstractedly. To me and my wife, who made poetry accessible to me, these poems became a book of devotion, to be taken up again and again.

## 5. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

There was never any doubt in my own mind or in the judgment of others that I was marked out for theory, and not for practical activity. Beginning with the first crisis, at the age of eight when I encountered the conception of the "Infinite," through the passionate absorption of Christian dogmatics in school and in pre-confirmation instruction, and through the eager devouring of popular books on *Weltanschauung*, it was clear that theoretical and not practical mastery of existence would be my task and destiny. Education in a humanistic *gymnasium*, enthusiasm for the Greek language and literature strengthened the given disposition. I have verified innumerable times Aristotle's conviction expressed in the *Nikomachean Ethics*, that pure theory alone offers pure eudæmonia. My internal struggles for the truth of traditional religion also held me fast in the sphere of theory. In the life of religion, however, theory means something other than philosophical contemplation of Being. In religious truth the stake is one's very existence and the question is to be or not to be. Religious truth is existential truth, and to that extent it cannot be separated from practice. Religious truth is *acted*—in accord with the Gospel of St. John.

It soon revealed itself, moreover, that one-sided devotion to theory rested upon the same escape from reality as the flight into phantasy already mentioned. As soon as this escape was overcome and practical tasks confronted me, I threw myself upon them with full ardor, partly with profit, partly with harm to my further progress in theory. The first instance of this kind was in the student organization *Wingolf*, of which I was an active member throughout my student days. The tensions between the Christian principles of that organization and modern liberal ideas in theory and practice, and the personal tensions that readily assume radical forms in communities of fifty or more young men, gave rise to a great many problems of practical policy, especially during the time when I had to direct such an organization. The conflict over the principles of a Christian community was then so thoroughly fought out in the *Wingolf* union, that all who took an active share in it carried away a life-long acquisition. From that source I gained understanding for objective constructions like the confessions of a Church, the meaning of which transcend subjective belief or doubt, and which are thus able to support communities, in which all tendencies of doubt, criticism and certainty are admitted, provided only that the confessional foundation of the community is given general recognition.

My university studies were succeeded by two years of church work and four years as field chaplain on the Western Front. After the War there was a short period of participation in tasks of church administration. In these years of practical activity theoretical work was not interrupted, although, of course, much restricted. This period of immersion in practical work, however, in no way shook my basic devotion to the life of theory.

The conflict between theory and practice became harder for me when, on the outbreak of the revolution, politics for the first time forcefully impressed themselves upon my attention. Like most of the intellectuals of Germany before the War, my attitude toward politics had been essentially one of indifference. Neither did the ever-present consciousness of social guilt express itself in a political will. Only in the last year of the War, and in the months of collapse and revolution did the political backgrounds of the World War, the interrelation between Capitalism and Imperialism, the crisis of bourgeois society, the class cleavage, and so forth, become visible to me. The immense pressure that had rested upon us during the War, threatening to obscure the idea of God, or to color it demonically, found relief in the discovery of the human responsibility for the War and in the hope of the refashioning of human society. Thus, when soon after the revolution the call was sounded for the religious-socialist movement I could not and would not refuse it. At first, indeed, that meant only theoretical work on the problem of "religion and socialism." The working circle I belonged to was a group of professors: Mennicke, Heimann, Löwe, and others, all explicitly concerned with theory. But the goal of the work was ultimately political; thus it was inevitable that a number of problems of practical politics developed, leading to conflicts between theoretical and practical attitudes. This was the case in three directions: religious socialism touches the Churches, the political parties, and, insofar as we were professors, it touched the universities also.

In the Evangelical Church a "league of religious socialists" had been formed with the aim of closing the chasm between the Church and the social-democratic party, by measures of church policy as well as by theoretical reflection. Under the impression that the theoretical foundations were not laid deep enough, I kept, perhaps unjustifiably, aloof from this group and thus from the opportunity of being active in Church politics. In this case the conflict between theory and practice was decided wholly in favor, though perhaps not altogether for the benefit, of theory.

It was not otherwise in my relation to the social-democratic party, to which I belonged in recent years, so that I might be able to influence it by elaborating the theory. To that end I, together with my friends of the religious-socialist working group and a group of young socialists, founded the periodical *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus*. We hoped that in this way we might revitalize the ideology of German socialism that had become rigid, and to refashion it from the standpoint of religious and philosophical reflection. I myself kept aloof from practical political activity, whereas many of my co-workers were in the thick of it, and our periodical was thereby drawn into the tension of the existing political situation. I did not decline participation in the face of definite tasks. But I did not look for such tasks—perhaps again to the detriment of a theory which was to serve the political aim and supply a conceptual expression to the movement of the political group. On the other hand, even the relatively rare contacts with practical politics impaired the scientific concentration which just in those years was demanded with special urgency by my profession. This tension reached basic expression in the considerations and discussions that turned about the reconstitution of the German university.

After the revolution the demand arose ever more insistently for a reconstruction of the

university. In the course of the nineteenth century the old humanistic ideal of classicism had been destroyed by the specialization of the sciences, and by the increasing quantitatively and qualitatively demands of professional training. The rush of students that set in after the War made a course of education in the spirit of a universal humanistic development of personality completely impossible. Weak compromises sought to cover up this contradiction between ideal and reality. I then set forth, in an essay published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which prompted a storm of endorsement and protest, a scheme of the twofold course of study: on one side professional schools, on the other a humanistic faculty, free from the tasks of professional training, as a representative of the old university idea; both interrelated, yet different in aim and method. The humanistic faculty was to be ruled by a philosophy which, according to the original idea of philosophy was to answer the question of our human existence by means of the Logos; there was to be radical questioning without respect to political or religious allegiances, but the philosophy was to be at the same time fully informed by the spiritual and social problems of contemporary life. This is the demand to be made upon any great creative philosophy. It was a sign of its weakness that philosophy in the nineteenth century, with few exceptions, became ever more a thing of the schools, of the "professors of philosophy." It is, however, no less destructive to philosophy when the twentieth century endeavors to suppress radical questions by political means and confers forceable validity upon a political view of the world. The "political university" aimed at in these days has sacrificed theory to practice, which, like its opposite, is fatal to both. The border between theory and practice has become a battlefield, on which the fate of the university to come, and therewith of humanistic culture in the civilized world, will be decided.

## **6. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN HETERONOMY AND AUTONOMY**

It was only in severe struggles that it was possible for me to break through to the affirmation of mental and moral autonomy. My father's authority, which was at once personal and intellectual, and which because of his position in the Church, coincided for me with the religious authority of revelation, made every manifestation of autonomous thinking a piece of religious daring, and involved the critique of authority in a sense of guilt. The immemorial experience of mankind, that new knowledge can be won only through breaking a taboo, that all autonomous thinking is accompanied by a consciousness of guilt, has been a fundamental experience of my own life. It had as positive consequence that every step in theological, ethical, and political criticism encountered inhibitions, which often could be overcome only after conflicts lasting for years. That heightened the significance such insights had for me, their seriousness, and weight. When I would advance, often much belated, to some knowledge that long before had become matter-of-course and commonplace to the average intelligence, it assumed in my apprehension the character of surprise, pregnant with revolutionary implications. Intelligence freely afloat, as it were, was, therefore, suspect to me. My trust in the creative power of autonomous thought was slight. Thus I delivered a series of university lectures that dealt explicitly with the inwardly necessitated catastrophe of purely autonomous thought. The development of Greek philosophy

from the first appearance of rational autonomy up to its decline into scepticism and probabilism and its inversion into the "new archaicism" of late antiquity were for me the great historical proof of the inability of autonomy to create a world with any content from within itself. In lectures on medieval philosophy, the intellectual history of Protestantism, and in my essay *The Religious Situation*, I applied this leading idea to the development in the Occident, and derived from it the demand for a theonomy, that is, an autonomy filled with religion.

The critique of pure autonomy was not meant to smooth the way to a new heteronomy. Submission to divine and secular authorities, *i.e.*, heteronomy, was precisely what I, for my own self, had rejected; and to it I neither want to, nor can return. If the trend of events in Europe is currently quite doubtlessly under the sign of a return to old and new heteronomies, that can awaken only passionate protest in me, even when I realize the fated inevitability of this development. An autonomy won in hard struggle cannot be surrendered so readily as an autonomy that had always been accepted as matter-of-course. Whoever has once broken determinedly with the taboos of the most sacred authorities cannot subject himself to a new heteronomy, whether religious or political. That such a submission should have become easy for so many in our day is caused by the circumstance that their authority had become empty and sceptical. Freedom that has not been fought for, for which no sacrifices have been made, is easily cast aside. Only so (sociological causes aside) does the yearning of European youth toward a new bondage become intelligible.

From earliest times I was opposed to the most potent system of religious heteronomy, Roman Catholicism, with a protest which was at once both protestant and autonomous. This protest was not directed and does not direct itself in spite of theological contrasts to the dogmatic values or the liturgical forms of the Catholic system, but is concerned with its heteronomous character, with the assertion of a dogmatic authority, which is valid even when subjection to it is only external. Only once in my life the thought of possibly joining Catholicism penetrated into a deeper realm of my consciousness,—even if not the deepest,—when during the year 1933, prior to the resurgence of German Protestantism the alternative seemed to confront me, between either Christian or heathen Catholicism, the Roman Church or national heathenism in Protestant garb. In choosing between these two heteronomies, the decision for the Christian one would have become imperative. The choice was not necessary, because the German Protestant Church remembered its Christian principle.

But the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy returns on a higher plane in Protestantism. Precisely in the protest against the Protestant orthodoxy (even in its moderate form of the nineteenth century) I had won my way through to autonomy. Thus at this point, my fundamental theological problem arose: the relation of the absolute, which is assumed in the idea of God, and of the relative, which belongs to human religion. The dogmatism of religions, including that of Protestant orthodoxy and the ultimate phase of dialectic theology is established in the fact, that a portion of human-religious reality is garbed in the unconditioned validity of the divine. Such a reality, like a book, person, a community, an institution, or doctrine, claims

absolute authority and lays claim to submission of every other kind of reality, life, and doctrine; for no other claim can exist beside the unconditioned claim of the divine. But that this claim is established by a finite, historical reality, is the root of all heteronomy and of all demonry. For the demonic is something finite, something limited, which puts on infinite unlimited dignity. Its demonic character is evident therein, that sooner or later another finite reality with the same claim will stand in opposition to it, so that the human consciousness will be severed between the two. Karl Barth said that my negative attitude to heteronomy and my use of the word demonic for it, is a continuous struggle against the "Grand Inquisitor," (in the sense of Dostoevsky's story) a struggle which is no longer necessary today. I think that the development of the German Confessional Church in the last two years has proved that it is necessary. The "Grand Inquisitor" is about to enter the Confessional Church, and strictly speaking, with a strong but tight-fitting armor of Barthian Supranaturalism. This very narrow attitude of the Barthians saved the German Protestant Church; but it created at the same time a new heteronomy, an anti-autonomous and anti-humanistic feeling, which I must regard as an abnegation of the Protestant principle. For Protestantism is something more than a weakened form of Catholicism, only when the protest against every one of its own realizations remains alive within it. This protest is not rational criticism but a prophetic judgment. It is not autonomy, but theonomy, even if it appears, as often in prophetic struggles, in very rational and humanistic forms. In the theonomous, prophetic word, the contradiction of autonomy and heteronomy is overcome. But if protest and prophetic criticism are a part of Protestantism every moment, the question arises: How can a realization of Protestantism come about? Realization in worship, sermon, and instruction assumes forms, which can be imparted. Ecclesiastical reality, the reality of the personal religious life, yes, even the prophetic word itself assumes a sacramental foundation, an abundance from which they live. Life cannot stand only on its own border, but it must stand also in its center, in its own abundance. The critical principle and the Protestant protest is a necessary corrective, but it is not constructive. In conjunction with a number of co-workers I attempted an essay on *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung* (Protestantism as Criticism and Construction) in my second volume in the series entitled *Kairos*, to give an answer to the question concerning the Protestant realization. The title of my chief theological work, *Religiöse Verwirklichung* (Religious Realization), was prompted by this problem. Protestantism must exist in the constant tension between the sacramental and the prophetic, the constitutive and corrective element. Were both these elements to fall apart, the former would become heteronomous and demonic, the latter, empty and sceptical. Their unity, as symbol and reality, seems to me to be given in the New Testament picture of the crucified Christ, insofar that here the highest human religious possibility is assumed and annulled at the same time. The final events in the German Church and the arising of new pagan movements upon the soil of Christianity have given a new importance to the problem of religious autonomy and heteronomy. The question of the final criterion for human thinking and acting has become acute today, to an extent never seen since the struggle between Roman Paganism and ancient Christianity. The attack upon the cross as the criterion of every form has made visible anew the meaning of the cross. The question of heteronomy and autonomy has become the question of the final criterion of human existence. In the struggle regarding this question, the fate of German Christianity, of the German Nation, and generally of the Christian nations is being

decided now.

Every political system has need of authority, not only in the sense of possessing instruments of force, but also in the sense of a silent or implicit consent of the people. (Cf. my essay "Problem of Power.") (See pp. 179 ff.) But such consent is possible only when the group carrying the power represents an idea which is both potent and decisive. Out of it a relationship of authority and autonomy in political life follows, which I have characterized in my essay: *Der Staat als Erwartung und Aufgabe* (The State as Promise and Task) as follows: every political structure presupposes power, consequently also, a group which has power. But, as this group, which has the power is at the same time always a group of interests, which is opposed to other groups of interests, it is therefore in need of a corrective. Democracy is justifiable and necessary, insofar that it is a method, which injects correctives against the misuse of political authority. But this method is impossible as soon as it hinders the appearance of a group which has power. That was the case in the German Republic, the democratic form of which made it impossible for any group to gain authority from the start. On the other hand, the corrective against the misuse of authority by the group, having power, is lacking in the dictatorial systems, resulting in the enslavement of the entire nation and in the corruption of the ruling classes. As early as the time of my first political decision, which I had to make a few years before the War, after reaching voting age, I stood on the side of the political Left, even though the strongest conservative traditions had to be defied. It was a protest against political heteronomy, that prompted me at an earlier time in political life, just as previously the protest against the religious heteronomy had guided me to the side of liberal theology. In spite of all later criticism of economic liberalism, it was and is impossible for me to associate myself with the all too-common criticism of "liberal thinking." I would rather be accused of being "liberalistic" myself, than aid in discounting the great and truly human element in the liberal idea, autonomy, with this disparaging phrase.

Nevertheless, the question of political authority remains urgent in a period in which the most difficult inner-political problem is the re-integration of the disintegrated masses of late capitalism. I have dealt with this problem in connection with the German events, in an essay: "The Totalitarian State and the Claim of the Churches," published in *Social Research* (November 1934), and stressed in it the inevitability of an authoritative incorporation of masses, when they have become bereft of all meaningful life. Likewise, one can find fundamental thoughts to the problem in my book, *Masse and Geist* (Mass and Spirit), which appeared soon after the War, especially in the chapter, "Masse und Persönlichkeit" (Mass and Personality). In this chapter I suggest that only specialized groups of esoteric character ought to realize the autonomous attitude. The retreat to an esoteric autonomy seems to me to be demanded on account of historical destiny, both in late antiquity and at the present time. Just how this retreat might be effected, without too great a loss of truth and justice is the problem of intellectual strategy of future generations, both in the political and religious spheres. I am determined to stand on the border of autonomy and heteronomy, not only principally but also historically. I have concluded to remain on this border, even if the coming period of human history should stand under the emblem of heteronomy.

## 7. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

The border-situation from which I am endeavoring to explain my existence, is in no way more openly revealed than here. From the time of my last years at the *gymnasium*, it had been my wish to become a philosopher. I used every free hour to read philosophical books, which came into my hands by chance. Thus, I came upon Schwegler's *History of Philosophy* (*Geschichte der Philosophie*) in the dusty corner of a country parson's bookshelf; Fichte's *Theory of Science* (*Wissenschaftslehre*) on top of a wagon of books on a street in Berlin; and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the Reclam edition, which was purchased with a beating heart from a bookstore for the immense sum of one mark. Exact excerpts, namely those of Fichte's *Theory of Science*, put me in touch with the most difficult phases of German philosophy. Discussions with my father, who was an examiner in philosophy on the Theological Examining Committee, enabled me, from the first semester on, successfully to carry on discussions every night with older students and young academicians about idealism and realism, freedom and determinism, God and the world. Fritz Medicus, who was formerly professor at the University of Halle, and who at the present time is professor in Zurich, became my teacher in philosophy. His writings on Fichte gave the first impulse to the rediscovery of Fichte's philosophy in the first decade of the present century, which broadened out soon to a renaissance of German Idealism in general. Partly by chance of a bargain purchase, and partly by inner affinity I came under the influence of Schelling, whose collected works I read through several times with enthusiasm, and concerning whom I wrote my theses both for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Licentiate of Theology. The latter has been published under the title, *Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung* (Mysticism and Sense of Guilt in Schelling's Philosophical Development).

During the writing of these works, I was a student of Protestant theology, and at the conclusion of my studies became assistant pastor at various parishes of the Old Prussian United Church. At that time, Martin Kähler and Wilhelm Lütgert from Halle were my most important teachers. The former was a personality of overwhelming ethical and religious power and intellectual concentration; as teacher and writer difficult to understand; the profoundest and in many respects the most modern representative of the theology of mediation of the nineteenth century; an opponent of Albert Ritschl, herald of the theological doctrine of justification, and critic of idealism and humanism, out of which he himself evolved.

I am indebted to him primarily for the insight he gave me into the all-controlling character of the Pauline-Lutheran idea of justification. The doctrine of justification on the one hand rends every human claim in the face of God and every identification of God and man. On the other hand, it shows how the decadence of human existence, guilt, and despair, is overcome by the paradoxical judgment, that the sinner is just before God. My Christology and Dogmatics were determined by the interpretation of the cross of Christ as the event of history, in which this

divine judgment over the world became concrete and manifest. From this point of view it was easy for me to make a connection between my own theology and that of Karl Barth and to accept the analysis of human existence as given by Kierkegaard and Heidegger. However, it was difficult and even impossible for me to find an approach to liberal dogmatics, which replaces the crucified Christ by the historical Jesus, and which dissolves the paradox of justification into moral categories.

This negative attitude, to be sure, pertains only to the liberal dogmatics, not to the energetic historical accomplishment of the liberal theologians. At this point I parted soon from the teachings of the theologians in Halle and became less and less in accord with the new Supranaturalism, which has grown up within Barth's theology, and wishes to repeat the dogmatic doctrines of the Age of the Reformation, by discarding the scientific work of two hundred years. At first it was the interpretation of the Old Testament by Wellhausen and Gunkel, the so-called *religions- geschichtliche Methode*, which fascinated me and revealed to me the Old Testament in its fundamental meaning for Christianity and humanity. My preference for the Old Testament and the spirit of prophetic criticism and expectation has stayed with me, and through the bearing of this upon my political attitude, it has become decisive for the shaping of my life and thought.

My historical insights into the New Testament I owe principally to Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and Bultmann's *Synoptische Tradition*. Ernst Troeltsch caused my final transfer of interest from all mediating-theological and apologetic remnants in Church History and in the problem of historical criticism. An authoritative proof for my development are those theses, presented during Whitsuntide in 1911, to a group of theological friends, in which I raised and attempted to answer the question, how the Christian doctrine might be understood, if the non-existence of the historical Jesus should become historically probable. Even today, I maintain the radicalism of this question over against compromises, which I encountered at an earlier time, and are now attempted again by Emil Brunner. The foundation of Christian belief is not the historical Jesus, but the biblical picture of Christ. The criterion of human thought and action is not the constantly changing and artificial product of historical research, but the picture of Christ as it is rooted in ecclesiastical belief and human experience. The fact, that I took this position, resulted in my being regarded as a radical theologian in Germany, whereas in America, one is inclined to place me among the Barthians. But agreement with the Barthian paradox, the paradox of justification, does not mean agreement with the Barthian Supranaturalism; and agreement with historical and critical achievement of liberal theology does not mean agreement with liberal dogmatics.

The possibility of uniting the doctrine of justification and radical historical criticism was accomplished by an interpretation of the idea of justification, which was of greatest importance to me, both practically and personally; namely, the application of the doctrine of justification to the realm of human thought. Not only our action, but also our thought is under the divine "No." No one, not even one who believes, and not even a Church can boast of the truth, just as no one

can boast of love. Orthodoxy is intellectual pharisaism. The justification of the one who doubts corresponds to the justification of the one who sins. Revelation is just as paradoxical as forgiveness of sins, and can become an object of possession as little as the latter. I have presented the development of these thoughts in my pamphlets, "Rechtfertigung und Zweifel" (Justification and Doubt) and "Die Idee der Offenbarung" (The Idea of Revelation).

The relation of these fundamental thoughts of theology to my philosophical development was determined, first of all, by the work of Schelling, particularly the ideas of his later period. I thought that, fundamentally, I had found the union of theology and philosophy in the philosophical explanation of the Christian doctrine through the older Schelling, in his founding of a Christian philosophy of existence in contrast to Hegel's humanistic philosophy of essence and in his interpretation of history as the History of Salvation. I must confess, that even today, I find more "theonomous philosophy" in Schelling than in any of the other idealists. But to be sure, not even Schelling was able to bring about a unity of theology and philosophy. The World War in my own experience was the catastrophe of idealistic thinking in general. Even Schelling's philosophy was drawn into this catastrophe. The chasm, which without doubt, Schelling had seen, but soon had covered up again, opened itself. The experience of the four years of war tore this chasm open for me and for my entire generation to such an extent, that it was impossible ever to cover it up. If a reunion of theology and philosophy should again become possible, it could be achieved only in such a way as would do justice to this experience of the abyss of our existence. Thus, my philosophy of religion came into existence as an attempt to satisfy this demand. My philosophy of religion abides consciously on the border of theology and philosophy. It takes care not to lose the one in the other. It attempts to express in philosophical concepts the experience of the abyss and the idea of justification as limitation of philosophy. A lecture, "Die Ueberwindung des Religionsbegriffes in der Religionsphilosophie" (The Elimination of the Concept Religion in the Philosophy of Religion), delivered before the Berlin Kant Society, expresses in its title the paradox of this attempt.

But philosophy of religion is not only determined by the religious reality but also by the philosophical concept. My own philosophical attitude developed itself in the critical analysis of Neo-Kantianism, of the Philosophy of Values, and Phenomenology. From all three I accepted their denial of Positivism, particularly in the form in which it is important for the philosophy of religion, namely as Psychologism. Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (Studies in Logic), in which Psychologism is overcome in a most forceful way, were for me the most satisfying confirmations of what I had learned from Kant and Fichte. But I could not quite attach myself to any of the three tendencies: not to Neo-Kantianism, because, in consequence of his panlogistical tendency, he was not able to give expression to the experience of the abyss and to the paradox; not to the philosophy of values, because it is still Neo-Kantian and because its attempt to comprehend religion as a sphere of values contradicts the transcendence of values, which is assumed in the experience of the abyss; not to phenomenology, because in it the dynamic element is lacking, and because it furthers catholic-conservative tendencies, as can be proven by the biography of the majority of its representatives (corresponding to the affinity of

Neo-Kantianism to the Jewish principle). As I stood in opposition to all three, I felt myself most attracted to the philosophy of life under the overpowering impression of Nietzsche, whom I did not come to know until my thirtieth year. In his philosophy of life the experience of the abyss has been expressed more clearly than in any of the other types of thought. The historical dependence of the philosophy of life on Schelling made it easy for me to approach it. The ecstatic form of existence, which prevailed so widely during the first years after the War, as a reaction against the years of death and hunger during the War, made "the philosophy of life" very attractive even in the esthetic sense. Thus, it is quite probable that my philosophical development would have gone in this direction and assumed pagan elements in place of Jewish and Catholic ones, if the experience of the German Revolution in 1918 had not given to my thinking a new decisive direction: to a sociologically oriented and politically formed philosophy of history. The philosophy of history was prepared and supported by Ernst Troeltsch. I remember clearly his assertion in his first lecture in Berlin on the philosophy of history, that this subject was being treated for the first time since Hegel's death in a philosophical lecture at the University of Berlin. But I distinguished myself from Troeltsch, in spite of far-reaching agreements in the problems, by repudiating his idealistic point of departure, which made it finally impossible for him to lift the ban of historical Relativism, which he sought to oppose. The breach with historical Relativism did not come about until there was a generation which was brought face to face with final historical decisions. In the light of such a decision, which was founded and likewise limited by the Christian paradox, I attempted to conceive a philosophy of history which has gone into philosophical discussion as a philosophy of history of religious socialism.

Any one, standing on the border of philosophy and theology, will find it necessary to get a clear conception of the scientific relation of both. I made this attempt in my book, *System der Wissenschaften* (System of the Sciences). My final concern here was the question: "How is theology possible as a science? How is it related, like its several offsprings, to the other sciences? What is outstanding in its method?"

I tried to win for theology a legitimate place in the totality of knowledge in the following way: division of all methodical knowledge into sciences of thinking, being, and culture; further, by the development of a philosophy of meaning as a foundation of the whole system; then by the definition of metaphysics as an attempt of the human mind to express the unconditioned in terms of rational symbols; and finally, by the definition of theology as theonomous metaphysics. The presupposition of the success of this attempt is, of course, that the theonomous character of knowing be acknowledged; that is to say, that thinking is rooted in the absolute as the foundation and abyss of meaning. Theology makes its subject expressly that which is the assumption of all knowledge, even though the assumption be unexpressed. Thus, theology and philosophy, religion and knowledge embrace each other, and it is precisely this, which seems to me, as judged from the border, to be the true relation of both.

By the appearance of the so-called "Existential Philosophy" in Germany, I was led to a new

understanding of the relation between philosophy and theology. The lectures of Martin Heidegger given at Marburg, the impression of which on my Marburg students and upon some of my colleagues I experienced; then his writing, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), also his interpretation of Kant, were of greater significance to followers and opponents of this philosophy than anything else since the appearance of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (Logical Studies). I, myself, was prepared in a threefold way to accept this philosophy. First, by an exact acquaintance with Schelling's final period, in which he attempted, in opposition to Hegel's philosophy of being, to pave a way for a philosophy of existence. Secondly, by my—even if limited—knowledge of Kierkegaard, the real founder of the philosophy of existence; and thirdly, by my dependence upon the philosophy of life. These three elements, comprised and submerged into a sort of Augustinian-colored mysticism, produced that which fascinated people in Heidegger's philosophy. Many of its chief terms are found in sermon literature of German Pietism. By its explanation of human existence it establishes a doctrine of man, though unintentionally, which is both the doctrine of human freedom and human finiteness; and which is so closely related with the Christian interpretation of human existence that one is forced to speak of a "theonomous philosophy," in spite of Heidegger's emphatic atheism. To be sure, it is not a philosophy, which includes the theological answer and explains it philosophically. Such an undertaking would be idealism and the opposite of the philosophy of existence. However, the philosophy of existence asks the question in a new and radical manner, the answer to which is given in theology for faith. By means of these ideas, which I developed in my lectures at Yale University, the border between theology and philosophy has been drawn more acutely than in my earlier philosophy of religion, without abandoning the mutual relation of comprehension.

To these ideas, which are characterized as standing between philosophy and theology, corresponded my professional career: Doctor of Philosophy in Breslau, Licentiate of Theology and later Doctor of Theology (*honoris causa*) in Halle; Privat Dozent of Theology in Halle and Berlin; Professor of the Science of Religion in Dresden and at the same time Professor Honorarius of Theology in Leipzig; Professor Ordinarius of Philosophy in Frankfurt-on-the-Main; and visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York. A constant change of faculties and yet no change in the subject! As a theologian I tried to remain a philosopher, and conversely so. To have left the border and decided on the one or the other would have been less difficult. But inwardly it was impossible; and external fate met the need of the inward necessity with peculiar opportuneness.

## **8. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

The Church has always been my home in spite of all criticism, which I had to exercise at an early time upon Church doctrine and later upon Church practice. I have felt this never more forcefully than at that moment when the neo-pagan ideas made their entrance into the Church, and I feared that I should lose not only my political but also my religious home. This peril made me conscious of the fact that I belonged to the Church. The years of my youth laid the

foundation of this feeling, not only by the Christian attitude of a Protestant parson's home, but also by a rather uninterrupted religious custom of a small city east of the Elbe at the end of the nineteenth century. My love for the church building with its mysticism, my love for the liturgy, singing, and sermon, for the great Church festivals, which for days, even weeks, determined the life of the town, for the mysteries of Church doctrine and their effects upon my spiritual life as a child; the thrilling experience of holiness, of guilt, of forgiveness; the language of the Bible, particularly its pithy sayings—all this together was effective and created an indestructible foundation of ecclesiastical and sacramental feeling in me. It was decisive in leading me to the decision to become a theologian, and to remain one in spite of all tensions. The canonical examinations, my ordination, my activity as a parson for a number of years, my interest in sermons and liturgy, even long after my final transfer to the university, are consequences of that feeling of active relationship with the Church.

Yet even here, the destiny of the border revealed itself. With increasing criticism of the doctrine and institutions of the Church there arose a growing practical alienation. Decisive in this was my experience of the society of both the intelligentsia and the proletariat outside the Church. My contact with the intelligentsia outside the Church came about rather late, not until after the completion of my theological education, and was characterized by an apologetic attitude which resulted from my standing on the border. To be apologetic means to defend oneself in the face of an aggressor before a mutually acknowledged criterion. The Apologists of the Ancient Church vindicated themselves in the face of aggressive paganism before the instance of the LOGOS, acknowledged by both sides, which was identical with theoretical and practical reason. Because they put Christ on an equal basis with the LOGOS, and the divine commands with the logical law of nature, they could attempt to defend the Christian doctrine and attitude before the consciousness of their pagan opponents. Apologetics today does not mean the struggle for a new principle against existing intellectual and moral powers, but its task is to defend the Christian principle against newly arising powers. Decisive for the ancient and modern Apologetics is the question of the common criterion, of the court of judgment, where the dispute can be settled. As I was searching for this criterion, I discovered that the modern trends of thought which are rooted in the period of enlightenment are substantially Christian, in spite of their critical attitude toward ecclesiastical Christianity. They are not pagan as is often said of them. Paganism—especially in nationalistic garb—did not appear until after the World War in connection with the complete disintegration of Christian Humanism. In the face of Paganism there is no such thing as apologetics, but only the struggle for existence or non-existence, which prophetic Monotheism has always carried on against demonic Polytheism. In ancient times Apologetics was possible only because Polytheism had suffered a change by Humanism, and consequently Christianity and Antiquity had at their disposal a common criterion in Humanism. But while the ancient apologetics was opposed to a humanism, which was pagan in substance, the peculiar fact about modern apologetics is that it opposes a humanism, which is Christian in substance. (See my essay: "Lessing und die Idee eines christlichen Humanismus" (Lessing and the Idea of a Christian Humanism)). With this view in mind, I tried in various private houses in Berlin to conduct lectures and discussions on Apologetics with invited guests. The experiences,

which I gathered from these meetings, were assimilated in a memorandum that was forwarded to the governing body of the Church, and which later on led to the founding of "Die Apologetische Zentrale der Inneren Mission" (The Committee for Apologetics in Home Missions).

Not until after the War did the reality and nature of this Christian Humanism become totally evident to me. The contact with the Workers' Movement, with the so-called de-Christianized masses, revealed clearly to me that here also, within the humanistic form, Christian substance was hidden, even though this Humanism bore the character of a materialistic popular philosophy, long since overcome in art and science. Here Apologetics was even much more necessary than to the intelligentsia, but also much more difficult, because the religious opposition was made more acute by class opposition. Apologetics, without any regard for this class opposition such as the Church was attempting, was condemned to complete failure from the very beginning. A successful activity on the part of the defenders of Christianity was possible only by their active participation in the class situation, *i.e.*, Apologetics among the proletarian masses was and is possible only to "Religious Socialism." Not Home Missions, but Religious Socialism is the necessary form of Christian activity among the proletarian workingmen, and is in particular the necessary form of Christian Apologetics. This apologetic element in Religious Socialism has often been obscured by its political element, so that the Church has never understood the indirect importance of Religious Socialism for the Church. It was understood much better by the leaders of social democracy, who expressed to me their fear that, as the result of Religious Socialism, the masses might come under the influence of the Church, and thus be alienated from the socialistic struggle. A further reason for the repudiation of Religious Socialism by the Church was the fact that Religious Socialism was obliged to discard, or to use only after sufficient preparation, the traditional symbols and concepts of ecclesiastical thought and action. Their use without any preparation resulted in an immediate, implicit repudiation on the part of the proletariat. The task was to show that in the peculiar forms of Christian Humanism, as represented by the Workers' Movement, the same substance is implied as in the entirely different sacramental forms of the Church. A number of young theologians conceived the Church situation as I did, and transferred to non-ecclesiastical positions, especially social ones, with the expressed intention of influencing religiously those whom no Church official could reach in any way. Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange this line of activity in such a way that many might have embraced it. It remained the business of a few. Since, at the same time, the Barthian theology deprived the problem, "Church and Humanistic society," and particularly "Church and Proletariat" of any significance among young theologians, the chasm was never bridged by the Church. The disintegrated humanistic society thus fell a victim to a large degree to the new pagan tendencies. The Church was compelled to assemble its defensive resources against these and restrict itself still more anti-humanistically. The proletarian masses sank back again to religious passivity. The intelligentsia now admire the resources which have revealed themselves in the Church contrary to their expectation. They stand aside, however. The gospel, for which the Church is fighting, does not and cannot touch them. In order to do that the Church would have to proclaim its gospel in a

language which could be understood on the soil of the Humanism outside the Church. It would have to give the society, the intelligentsia as well as the masses, the feeling that this gospel is of absolute concern to them. But this feeling cannot be awakened by designedly anti-humanistic paradoxes such as those used in the theology of the Confessional Church. The reality, on the basis of which the negations are asserted, would have to be clarified. Yet, theologians such as Gogarten and Brunner, do not even attempt this. They lean upon Humanism by denying it, for their descriptions of the positive, which interests them, consist of nothing but negations of that which they are opposing.

Wherever the question of the language of the Christian gospel is taken seriously, for example in the *Neuwerk-Kreis* and in the magazine of the same name, edited by my old friend and fellow-combatant, Hermann Schafft, great difficulties arise. It is certain that the original religious terminology, as it is used in the Bible and in the liturgies of the Ancient Church, cannot be supplanted. There are religious original or archetypal words (*Urworte*) of mankind, as Martin Buber remarked to me some time ago. But these original or archetypal words have been robbed of their original power by our objective thinking, and the scientific conception of the world, and thus, have become subject to dissolution. In face of what the archetypal word "God" means, rational criticism is powerless. In face of an objectively existing God, atheism is right. A situation is hopeless and meaningless in which the speaker means the original word, and the listener hears the objective word. Thus, we may understand the proposal which is meant symbolically rather than literally, that the Church impose a thirty-year silence upon all of its archetypal words. But if it should do this, as it did in a few instances, it would be necessary to develop a new terminology. But all such attempts to translate the archaic language of liturgy and the Bible into a modern one have been deplorably futile. They represented disintegration and not a new creation. Even the use of the terminology of the mystics, especially in sermons (an attempt which I have made myself), is dangerous, since it conveys a different content with the different word; a content which hardly comprises all facts of the Christian gospel. Thus, the only solution is to use the religious "original words," and at the same time make clear their original meaning, by disavowing their secular and distorted usage, *i.e.*, to stand between the two terminologies and recapture anew the original religious terminology from the border. The present peril of society has driven many to this border where the religious terminology can be heard in its original meaning. It would be regrettable if a blind and arrogant orthodoxy should monopolize these words and thus confuse many who have a feeling for religious reality, either driving them into paganism or thrusting them finally out from the Church.

The problem of the Church and society prompted me to distinguish in an essay on "Church and Humanistic Society" between a "manifest" and a "latent" Church. It was not the old Protestant distinction between the visible and the invisible Church which was to be discussed in that essay, but I was concerned with the differentiation within the visible Church. The existence of a Christian Humanism outside the Christian Church seems to me to make such a distinction necessary. It will not do to designate as non-churchly all those, who have become alienated from the organized Churches and traditional creeds. My life in these groups for half a

generation showed me how much latent Church there is in them: the experience of the finite character of human existence; the quest for the eternal and the unconditioned, an absolute devotion to justice and love; a hope which is more than any Utopia; an appreciation of Christian values; and a most delicate apprehension of the ideological misuse of Christianity in the Church and State. It often seemed to me as if the latent Church, which I found in these groups, were a truer church than the organized Churches, because its members did not assume to be in possession of the truth. Of course, the last few years have shown that only the organized Church is able to carry on the struggle against the pagan attacks upon Christianity. The latent Church has neither the religious nor the organized weapons necessary in this struggle, though their use threatens to deepen the chasm between Church and society. A latent Church is a concept belonging to the situation of border, and it is the fate of countless Protestant men of our day to stand on this border.

## **9. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN RELIGION AND CULTURE**

If any one, being impressed by the mosaics of Ravenna or the ceiling paintings of the Sistine Chapel, or by the portraits of the older Rembrandt, should be asked whether his experience was religious or cultural, he would find the answer difficult. Perhaps it would be correct to say that his experience was cultural as to form, and religious as to substance. It is cultural because it is not attached to a specific ritual-activity; and religious, because it evokes questioning as to the Absolute or the limits of human existence. This is equally true of painting, of music and poetry, of philosophy and science. And that which is valid in the intuition and knowledge of the world is equally valid in the practical shaping of law and custom, in morality and education, in community and state. Wherever human existence in thought or action becomes a subject of doubts and questions, wherever unconditioned meaning becomes visible in works which only have conditioned meaning in themselves, there culture is religious. Through the experience of the substantially religious character of culture, I was led to the border of culture and religion, which I have never deserted. To its theoretical comprehension my philosophy of religion is primarily dedicated.

The relationship must be defined from both sides of the border. Religion cannot relinquish the absolute, and therefore universal, claim which is expressed in the idea of God. It cannot permit itself to be forced into a special realm of culture or to a place beside it. Under such an interpretation as is frequently given by Liberalism, religion becomes superfluous and disappears, for the system of culture is completed and closed in itself without religion. On the other hand, culture has a claim upon religion, which it cannot surrender without surrendering its autonomy, and thus also, itself. It must decide the forms, in which every content, including the "absolute" one, expresses itself. It cannot permit truth and justice to be destroyed in the name of the religious absolute; As the substance of culture is religion, so the form of religion is culture. There is only this difference, that in religion the substance which is the unconditioned source and abyss of meaning is designated, and the cultural forms serve as symbols for it; whereas in culture the form, which is the conditioned meaning is designated, and the substance, which is

the unconditioned meaning becomes perceptible only indirectly throughout the autonomous form. The highest stage of culture is attained where human existence, in complete and autonomous form, is comprehended in its finitude and in its quest after the Infinite. And conversely, religion in its highest form must include the autonomous form within itself, the "Logos," as the Ancient Church termed it.

These ideas laid the foundation for the principles of both a philosophy of religion and philosophy of culture. They made a treatment of cultural movements from the point of view of religion possible. Therefore it is to be understood that my book, *The Religious Situation*, treats the intellectual and social movements of the recent past and the present in their whole breadth, while the more restricted religious sphere occupies only the lesser part. There is no doubt that this corresponds to the actual religious situation of the present; for the political and social elements have absorbed the religious energies to such a degree that religious and political ideals coincide for great masses of European men. The myth of the nation and the myth of social justice are widely replacing Christian doctrine and are resulting in consequences which can be interpreted only as religious, even though they appear in cultural forms. The program of a theological analysis of culture which I developed in my lecture on "Die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur" (The Idea of a Theology of Culture) has been confined in its limits by history itself.

I have drawn the theological deductions from these thoughts chiefly in my essay, "Protestantismus und Profanität" (Protestantism and the Profane). It concludes with the conviction that if Protestantism has any passion, it is for the profane. In this thought the Judaistic-Catholic separation of a sacred and profane sphere was to be negated in principle. In face of the unconditioned, or religiously speaking, of the Majesty of God, there is no preferred sphere, there are no persons, Scriptures, communities, institutions, or actions that are holy in themselves: nor are there any which are in themselves profane. The profane work can possess the quality of holiness, and what is holy can remain profane. The priest is a layman, and the layman can become a priest at any time. This was for me not only an expression of theological perception, but also an attitude I have maintained practically and personally. As clergyman and theologian it seemed to me impossible to be any one else than a layman and philosopher, who ventured to say something about the borders of human existence. I had no intention of concealing my theological qualities. On the contrary, I exposed them where they were naturally concealed; for example, in my activity as Professor of Philosophy. But I did not desire to have any particular theological conduct develop which would be strikingly different from that of the profane and would mark its bearer immediately "religious." It seemed to me that the unconditioned character of religion becomes much more manifest if it erupts out of the profane, disturbing and transforming it. Conversely it seemed to me that the dynamic character of the religious becomes veiled if some institutions and personalities are considered religious in themselves. To regard a group of clergymen as though they were men, whose faith belonged to the requirements of their profession, seemed to me to border on blasphemy.

From this conviction my attitude toward efforts of reforming the ritual of the Protestant Church

was oriented. I attached myself to the so-called *Berneuchener* Movement, which, led by Wilhelm Stählin and Karl Ritter, urged more rigorous reforms than all other reforming groups, and did not limit itself to matters of ritual. It sought, above all, for a clearly thought-out theological basis and thereby afforded me the possibility of fruitful theological collaboration with it. Ritualistic acts, forms and attitudes do not contradict the "passion of the profane," if they are comprehended for what they are: symbolic forms, in which the religious substance that bears our entire existence is represented in a unique manner. The meaning of the ritualistic act as of the sacraments, is not to have holiness in itself, but to be a symbol of the unconditioned, which alone is holy, and which is and is not in all things at the same time. In two lectures, "Nature and Sacrament" and "Soul and Sacrament," I have tried to disclose the original meaning of sacramental thinking which was buried in the late medieval period and which is to be distinguished from the non-sacramental, intellectualistic thinking of Protestantism and Humanism. This is a particularly difficult but also necessary task upon Protestant soil. No Church is possible without a sacramental presentation of what is holy. My conviction of this necessity binds me to the followers of Berneuchen. The perhaps inevitable trend of the followers of Berneuchen from the border of the profane and sacramental on which we met to an exclusive concern for sacramental realization (often in archaic forms) made it impossible for me to go with them all the way. Here also, I believed it to be my duty to remain on the border.

## **10. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN LUTHERANISM AND SOCIALISM**

It is comparatively easy to make the break into Socialism from Calvinism, especially in its more secularized forms. However, it is very difficult to do so by way of Lutheranism. I, myself, belong to Lutheranism by birth, education, religious experience, and theological reflection. I have never stood on the borders of Lutheranism and Calvinism, not even now, after having experienced the fatal consequences of the Lutheran social ethics and having had occasion to see the inestimable value of the Calvinistic doctrine of the idea of the Kingdom of God for the solution of the social problems. The substance of my religion is and remains Lutheran. It embodies the consciousness of the "corruption" of existence, the repudiation of every social

Utopia, including, the metaphysics of progress, the knowledge of the irrational demonic character of life, an appreciation of the mythical elements of religion, and a repudiation of Puritan legality in individual and social life. Not only my theological, but also my philosophical thinking expresses the Lutheran substance. Lutheranism up to this time has found immediate philosophical expression only in Lutheran Mysticism and in its philosophical representative, Jakob Böhme, the "philosophus teutonicus." With him as mediator, Lutheran Mysticism had an influence on Schelling and German Idealism, and through Schelling, again on Irrationalism and the philosophy of life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Insofar as the anti-socialistic movements of the present borrow a great part of their ideologies from those philosophical movements, Lutheranism works indirectly through philosophy, as well as directly, as a check against Socialism. The well-known developments in German theology after the War show most

clearly that it is almost impossible for a nation, educated in Lutheranism, to proceed from religion to Socialism. Two theological tendencies, definitely Lutheran, opposed religious Socialism. First of all, the religious Nationalism, which calls itself Modern Lutheran Theology, as represented by Emmanuel Hirsch, a former fellow-student of mine, but now my opponent in theology and politics; and secondly, the falsely so-called "Dialectic Theology," established by Karl Barth which, in spite of the Calvinistic elements in Barth himself, has accepted a decisive Lutheran element in its conception of the idea of the Kingdom of God as purely transcendent. Both tendencies—and the "dialectic" indifference toward what is social, still more than the Modern Lutheran consecration of Nationalism—corresponded to German traditions in religious, social, and political life so thoroughly, that the opposition to them by Religious Socialism was hopeless. But the fact that Religious Socialism is hopeless on German soil is no refutation of its theological right and its political necessity. The impossibility of uniting religion and Socialism may be revealed in the near or distant future, as the tragic element in German History.

To stand on the borders of Lutheranism and Socialism demands, first of all, a critical discussion of the problem of Utopianism. The Lutheran doctrine of man, even in the naturalistic form of the philosophy of life, makes any kind of Utopia impossible. Sin, cupidity, will to power, unconscious urge, or whatever names there may be for it, is so involved with the existence of man and nature—not with its essence or creative endowment—that the realization of the Kingdom of Justice and Peace within this existence is impossible. The Kingdom of God can never become an immanent reality, and the absolute can never be realized in space and time. Every Utopianism must end with a metaphysical disappointment. However mutable human nature may be, it is impossible to stretch this mutability to the moral realm.

If by education and favorable circumstances the plane, on which moral decisions are made, be raised and original crudeness be suppressed to a large degree, morality as such, the freedom to do good or evil, would not be touched by that fact. Humanity does not become better, but Good as well as Evil are raised to a higher plane.

With these ideas, derived directly from the Lutheran interpretation of human existence, I have touched on a problem which has moved steadily into the foreground of Socialistic thinking, and which is also in particular a problem of religious Socialism—the doctrine of man. It seems to me that a false anthropology, particularly on German soil, has robbed Socialism of every bit of persuasive force. A politician, who does not know "What in man is" cannot be successful. On the other hand, I do not believe that the Lutheran conception, especially in its naturalistic transformation through the philosophy of life and Fascism, has the last word to say about man. Perhaps in this instance also, the prophetic message may point the way. Prophecy speaks of changing human nature along, with a transformation of all nature. Therein, even if at the same time it assumes a miracle, it is more realistic than concepts which leave nature unchanged and want only to transform man. *That* is Utopianism, but not the paradox of prophetic expectation.

But long before the anthropological implications of the problem of Utopianism appeared in the

foreground, this problem itself had become evident as the central problem of religious Socialism. When shortly after the Revolution at our first meetings, the theme of which was the problem "Religion and Socialism," it was disclosed that the question regarding the relationship of religion to a Social Utopianism was to be the basis for everything else. At that time I first used the New Testament concept of Kairos, the fulfillment of time, which as a border-concept between Lutheranism and Socialism has become characteristic of German Religious Socialism. The term is meant to express the fact that the struggle for a new social order cannot lead to a fulfillment such as is meant. by the Kingdom of God, but that at a special time special tasks are demanded, and one special aspect of the Kingdom of God appears as a demand and expectation. The Kingdom of God will always remain as transcendent; but it appears as a judgment to a given form of society and as a norm to a coming one. Thus, the decision for Socialism during a definite period may be the decision for the Kingdom of God, even though the Socialist ideal remains infinitely distant from the Kingdom of God. (In the two volumes published by me under the title *Kairos*, and provided with the introductory essays, the idea of Kairos has been developed further in its philosophical and theological assumptions and implications.)

An important concept belonging to the Kairos doctrine is that of the demonic, which I developed in a particular work— "The Demonic: A contribution to the Interpretation of History," (See below, pp. 179 ff.) and which, in the interpretation there given, has passed over into discussion both theological and philosophical. This concept would not have been possible without the previously mentioned Lutheran mysticism and philosophical irrationalism. It describes a power in personal and social life that is creative and destructive at the same time. Those possessed of demons in the New Testament know more about Jesus than those who are normal, but they know it as a condemnation of themselves in their condition of cleft-consciousness. The Ancient Church called the Roman Imperial Government demonic, because it made itself equal to God, and yet prayed for the Emperor and gave thanks for civic peace, which he assured. In a similar way religious Socialism attempted to show that Capitalism and Nationalism were demonic powers, insofar as they were at the same time sustaining and destructive, attributing divinity to their highest values. The development of European Nationalism and its religious interpretation of itself has fully confirmed this diagnosis of mine.

It is a matter of course that the thoughts which I had previously developed regarding the relation of religion and culture, of sacred and profane, of heteronomy and autonomy, should have passed over into the concepts of religious Socialism, so that they have increasingly become the crystallization of all my thinking. Above all they gave theoretical foundation and practical warmth to my attempt at a theonomous philosophy of history. An analysis of the character of "historical time" as distinguished from physical and biological time led me to a concept of history, in which the movement toward something, toward the new, which is claimed as well as expected, is constitutive. The content of demand and expectation, the principle that gives history meaning and goal, I called the "Center of History," which from the Christian viewpoint is one with the appearance of Christ. The powers which struggle with one another in history may be termed according to the different points of view, as either the demonic, the divine, or

the human; or as the sacramental, the prophetic, and the profane; or as heteronomy, theonomy, and autonomy. In so doing, the given middle term is the synthesis of the other, too, that one toward which history is moving in ever new beginnings successfully or disastrously; never perfected, but always driven by the transcendent power of perfection. Socialism is to be understood as one such beginning toward a new theonomy. It is more than a new economic system. It is a total system of existence. It is the form of theonomy demanded and expected in the present Kairos.

## **11. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN IDEALISM AND MARXISM**

I nurtured German Idealism, and I do not believe that I can ever unlearn what I learned there. Above all I am indebted to Kantian criticism, which showed me that the question of the possibility of scientific knowledge cannot be answered by pointing to the realm of things. The point of procedure of every analysis of experience and every concept of a system of reality must be the point, where subject and object are at one and the same place. From there, I came to understand the idealistic principle of identity—not in the sense of a metaphysical speculation, but in the sense of an analysis of the final elements implied in every knowledge. Up to now no criticism of idealism has convinced me of the inadmissibility of this procedure. This analysis has guarded my thought from every kind of metaphysical and naturalistic positivism. Thus I have remained an idealist as far as the method of procedure is concerned in a theory of knowledge. I am an idealist if idealism means the assertion of the identity of thinking and being as the principle of truth. Furthermore, it seems to me that the element of freedom is expressed in the idealistic conception of the world in a manner which corresponds best to the inner and outer experience. The fact of questioning a human possibility, the perception of absolute demands (categorical imperative) in thinking and acting, the observation of meaningful forms in nature, society, and art (compare the modern Gestalt Theory)—all that, according to my conviction, urges one to create a philosophy of freedom. Finally, it cannot be denied that a correspondence exists between the human spirit and reality, which is probably best expressed in the concept of "Meaning," and which led Hegel to talk of the unity of the objective with the subjective spirit in an absolute spirit. Whenever idealism seeks to elaborate the categories which give meaning in the different realms, it thereby fulfills the task, fulfillment of which alone justifies the existence of a philosophy.

A quite different issue led me to the border of idealism. It is the claim of the idealists that their system of meaningful categories portrays reality as a whole, instead of its being conceived as an expression of a definite and limited relation to reality. Only Schelling in his second period was conscious of the questionableness of the systems of the philosophy of essence. He recognized that reality is not only the appearance of essence, but also the contradiction of it and that, above all human existence is the expression of contradiction to its essence; furthermore, that our thinking is a part of our existence and shares the fate that human existence contradicts its true nature. Schelling did not develop this seminal idea. Exactly like Hegel, he put himself and his philosophy at the end of an historical process, by which the contradictions of existence are

overcome and an absolute standpoint is attained. The idealism in Schelling triumphed over his initial effort toward existential thinking. Kierkegaard was the first to break through the closed system of the idealistic philosophy of essence. His new and radical interpretation of embarrassment of life and of despair of existence made a philosophy possible which could really be called "existential." His importance for the German post-war theology and philosophy can hardly be overestimated. I myself, even, during my last days as a student, could not resist the impression which his aggressive dialectics made upon me.

At the same time opposition to the Idealistic Philosophy of Being became lively in another direction: on the part of Hegel's radical followers, who came out against their teacher, and "turned idealism upside down," proclaiming theoretical and practical materialism in idealistic categories. Marx, who came from this group, went even a step further: he denied along with the idealistic categories, even their materialistic reversal (compare his thesis against Feuerbach), and demanded an attitude which he placed in expressive contrast to the philosophical one, because it "does not want to explain, but change the world." According to Marx, philosophy as such (which he identified with philosophy of essence) seeks to obscure, the contradictions of existence, to disregard that which is of importance to the real human being, namely the social contradictions which determine his existence in the world. These contradictions, concretely expressed, the conflict of the social classes, show that idealism is an ideology, namely a system of concepts, whose function it is to cover up the contrast of reality. (Analogously, Kierkegaard saw the function of the Philosophy of Essence as that of concealing the contradictions in the existence of the individual.)

I owe to Marx, first of all, the insight into the ideological character, not only of idealism but of all systems of thought, religious as well as profane, which as the servants of power hinder, even though unconsciously, the more righteous form of social reality. (Luther's warning against the self-made God means in religious parlance exactly what ideology means in philosophical language.)

With the repudiation of the closed system of the doctrine of essence, a new conception of truth arises: truth is bound to the situation of the knower, to the individual situation in Kierkegaard and to the social situation in Marx. Only so much knowledge of essence is possible as the degree to which the contradictions of existence are recognized and overcome. In the situation of despair, in which according to Kierkegaard every human being exists, and in the situation of the class struggle, in which according to Marx. historical humanity has lived up to now, every system of harmony is untrue. That leads both Kierkegaard and Marx to the point of connecting truth to a particular psychological or social situation. To Kierkegaard truth is just that subjectivity which does not disregard its despair, its exclusion from the objective world of essence, but which holds on to it passionately; whereas to Marx, truth is found in the class-interest of that class, which becomes conscious of itself as destined to overcome the class struggle, the necessarily non-ideological class. Thus arises the peculiar idea, though intelligible from the Christian standpoint, that the greatest possibility of obtaining an un-ideological truth is

given at the point of the greatest meaningless, of despair, of the broadest self-alienation of human essence. In my pamphlet, "Protestantismus und Proletarische Situation" (Protestantism and the Proletarian Situation), I have connected this thought with the Protestant principle and the doctrine concerning the human border-situation. Of course, this is possible only when the proletariat is used as a typical concept. The actual proletariat corresponds to the typical, one at times even less than non-proletarian groups, than intellectuals, for example, who have broken through their class-situation; and from this border-situation are capable of giving the proletariat the consciousness of itself. The confusion of the typical with the real proletariat has been one of the most important causes for the defeat of German Social Democracy.

The conception of Economic Materialism is bound up with the concept of "Marxism" for general thought. But thus the ambiguity of the word Materialism is intentionally or unintentionally overlooked. If materialism were necessarily metaphysical materialism, I should never have been found on the border of Marxism; likewise, Marx himself would be no Marxist in his struggle with materialism as well as idealism. But Economic Materialism is not a metaphysics, but a method of historical interpretation. Economic Materialism does not mean that the "economic" which is itself a complex reality, embracing all sides of human existence, could be the sole cause of all phases of human life. That would be meaningless. Economic Materialism shows rather the fundamental significance of economic structures and motives for the social and intellectual forms and changes of a period. It denies that there is a history of thought and religion which is independent of economic structure; and, thereby, confirms the theological insight, neglected by idealism, that man lives on earth and not in heaven; philosophically expressed, in existence and not in essence.

To a large extent, Marxism can be conceived of as a method of unveiling and can be compared in this with psychoanalysis. Unveiling is painful for those concerned, nay, even under certain circumstances, destructive. Ancient Greek tragedy, culminating in the King Œdipus myth, realizes that. Man defends himself against the unveiling of his actual existence as long as he can; for when he sees himself without the ideologies that surround his existence, on which, as with Œdipus, his self-consciousness rests, he collapses. The passionate denial of Marxism and psychoanalysis, which I have frequently encountered, is "the attempt of social groups and individual personalities to escape the unveiling which under certain circumstances would mean annihilation for them. But without such unveiling the ultimate meaning of the Christian gospel cannot be perceived. Therefore, the theologian most particularly should use these means in order to unveil human existence instead of upholding a harmonizing idealism. He can make use of them from the position at the border; he can—as I sought myself to do—criticize the partially obsolete terminology of psychoanalysis; he can reject the Utopian and dogmatic elements of Marxism; he can emphasize the scientific invalidity of numerous single theories of psychoanalysis and Marxism. He can and must resist metaphysical and ethical materialism, no matter whether it is or is not legitimately derived from Freud and Marx. But he must not deprive himself of the power which is contained in both, and which makes for an unveiling of human existence and a destruction of ideology.

But in Marxism there is not only an unveiling, but also demand and expectation in ideas of powerful historical impetus. There is prophetic passion in it, whereas idealism, insofar as it is influenced by the principle of identity, has mystical and sacramental roots. In the middle section of my book, *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (Socialistic Decision), I have tried to distinguish the prophetic element of Marxism from its rational-scientific terminology, and thus clarify its far-reaching religious and historical effects. At the same time I have attempted to attain a new comprehension of the socialistic principle by linking it to the attitude of the Judaic-Christian prophecy: idealistically, as many Marxists will say; materialistically, as many Idealists will say, but really remaining on the border of the two.

Marxism has become a slogan, with which to defame political opponents. My position on the border of Marxism adds nothing new politically to what I have already said about my relation to religious Socialism. It does not commit me to any party. But were I to say that, in spite of belonging to Social Democracy, I had stood between the parties, the "between" would have to be interpreted differently than it has been in many instances cited within these pages. It means that in my heart I have never, and do not belong to any party, because the most important point in the political realm seems to me to be one which is never expressed in political parties, except in distorted form. My longing has been and is a "fellowship" which is bound to no party, although it stands nearer to one than the other, and which shall be a vanguard for a more righteous social order in the spirit of prophecy and in accord with the demand of the Kairos.

## **12. ON THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN HOME AND ALIEN LAND**

To think that I am writing this portrayal of myself in an alien country is a fate which is also like every real fate, freedom. The border of home and alien land is not merely the external boundary, drawn by nature or history, but is likewise the border of two inner forces, two possibilities of human existence. The classical word for it is the command to Abraham: "Go out from thy country—into a land that I shall show thee." Abraham must leave his native soil, the community of his family and cult, people and state, for the sake of a promise which he does not comprehend. The God, who demands obedience from him is a God of an alien land, not attached to the native soil as are heathen gods, but a God of history, who means to bless all the races of the earth. This God, the God of the prophets and of Jesus, utterly destroys every religious nationalism: that of the Jews, which he combats constantly, and that of the pagans, which is repudiated in the command to Abraham. For the Christian of every faith there seems to me at this point no doubt any more: he is to leave his own country over and over again and to go into a land that is shown to him, and to trust a promise which is for him purely transcendent. The real meaning of "home" varies according to the situation of the individual. It may be home in the sense of soil and national community, and the demand may be "external emigration"; this is infrequent. More frequently, leaving of home signifies the demand to part from ruling powers, social and political tendencies, and to render them active or passive resistance, in other words, "inner emigration"—the attitude of the Christian communities in the Roman Empire.

The way into an alien land may also signify something purely inward: parting from one's habitual way of believing and thinking; stepping over the border of all, that is a matter of course; radical questioning and advancing to the new and unknown, into the "land of our children" in opposition to all "father and motherlands" (Nietzsche). In that case the alien land is not the geographically different one, but the temporally future one, the "beyond the present." Finally, in speaking of the alien, we can point to the feeling, that even the nearest and most familiar has an element of strangeness for us. I mean that metaphysical experience of strangeness in our world, which the philosophy of existence takes as an outstanding expression of human finiteness. In all these respects, I always stood between home and alien land. It was not as if I had one-sidedly made the decision for what was alien. That is true neither of the outer nor of the inner emigration, the latter having begun long before the outer one.

The attachment to my country in the sense of landscape, language, tradition, and common experience of historical fate, has always been for me so natural, that I could never comprehend why anybody should make it the subject of intentional thought and action. The overemphasis which cultural nationalism puts on national education and intellectual production seemed to me to be the expression of a feeling of insecurity in the national attitude. I am convinced that such an overemphasis occurs in people who come from the border—in an internal or external sense—and who, therefore, felt the obligation to confirm their true national character to themselves and others, and who were always afraid to return to the border. I have always felt myself so German by nature that I could not noisily emphasize this idea of being a German. A condition of birth and destiny cannot be questioned at all. The problem is, What shall we do with this material, with this given substance and what shall be the point of view, from which social activity, political form, intellectual and moral education, cultural and social life, shall be considered? The answer to these questions cannot be the substance and the given material, for the substance is a presupposition of the asking. If the presupposition is used as the answer, that vicious circle appears which is praised today as national, but which testifies to a lack of confidence in the power of the national substance and leads to a terrible emptying of the national life. (In my lectures at Frankfurt, concerning "Social Education," I have expressed this opposition to nationalistic tendencies.)

But the problem of Nationalism today is above all an economic-political one. In regard to it, I have held different attitudes. In the article: "The Totalitarian State and the Claim of the Churches," I have expressed myself in regard to the causes of the Militant Nationalism of Europe and its relation to the late-capitalistic disintegration. The essay, "Zur Philosophie der Macht" (On the Philosophy of Power) deals with the meaning and the limits of power from the *general problem of Being*, that is, ontologically. In *Die Sozialistische Entscheidung* (Socialistic Decision) I attempt to show the anthropological roots and political consequences of the national idea. The experience of the four years in the World War "was decisive for my attitude. In this experience, the demonic and destructive character of the national will to power became manifest particularly for one who went into war enthusiastically and with the firm belief in the justice of the national attitude. Consequently, I can see the European Nationalism

as only a means for the tragic self-destruction of Europe, even though, or perhaps because I understand its inevitability. But this insight never made me a pacifist in the exact meaning of this term. A specific type of pacifism is suspect to me, because of the effeminate character of its representatives. Another type, of the kind found in victorious and satisfied nations, had an ideological and pharisaic taint for me. Pacifism for such nations is too useful to be honest. In my opinion legal pacifism results in consequences opposite to those intended. Peace in human existence within the individual nation as well as in international relations depends on a power able to restrain the trespassers of peace. This is not said in justification of the national will to power, but in recognition of the necessity of overlapping unities, behind which there must be a power able to prevent the self-destruction of mankind. Mankind today is more than an ephemeral idea. Mankind has become a reality with respect to economics and politics, for the fate of every section is dependent on the fate of all sections of mankind. This increasing realization of united mankind represents and anticipates, so to speak, the truth which is implied in the belief in a Kingdom of God, to which all nations and races belong. Consequently, the denial of the unity of mankind includes the denial of the Christian doctrine, namely that the Kingdom of God is at hand. I feel grateful that in the life of this new continent, on which I am allowed to live through the hospitality of this country, an ideal is suggested which is similar to the picture of the unity of mankind in contrast to the self-destruction of Europe. A nation which unites the representatives of all nations and races can become a symbol for the highest possibility of history—Mankind. That is true, even though this picture reveals deep shadows and a large gap between ideal and reality. Mankind, as such, is a symbol for that which lies beyond history, the Kingdom of God, in which the border between home and alien land has ceased to be a border.

### **13. RETROSPECT: BOUNDARY AND LIMITATION**

In the foregoing pages many possibilities of human existence, both natural and intellectual, have been discussed. Several things were not mentioned, although they are a part of me, and many more things could not be dealt with because they do not belong to me. What has been discussed has been considered from the aspect of being united with other possibilities, by way of contrast and correlation. It is the dialectical character of existence, that each of its possibilities drives on its own accord to its border line and to the limiting power beyond the boundary. To stand on many border lines means to experience in many forms the unrest, insecurity, and inner limitation of existence, and to know the inability of attaining serenity, security, and perfection. That is true of life as well as of thought, and it may explain something of the fragmentary and groping character of the ideas I have recorded here. The destiny of the boundary, which has cast me upon the soil of a new continent, has again frustrated my desire to give my philosophy a definitive form. To complete it within the limits of my resources is a hope, the fulfillment of which is very uncertain at an age close to fifty years. But whether fulfilled or not, there is a boundary of human activity which is no longer the dividing line between two possibilities, but a limitation through that which is beyond any human possibility—the Good and the True. In its presence, even the very center of our being is only a

boundary, and our utmost perfection only a fragment.

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part Two: Philosophical Categories of the Interpretation of History

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

### I: The Demonic

#### *A. The picture of the demonic*

The art of primitive peoples and Asiatics, embodied in statues of their Gods and fetishes, in their crafts, and dance masks, has been brought closer to us in the last decade, not only as ethnological material but also as artistic and religious reality. We have noticed that these objects matter to us, since in them are expressed depths of reality which had, to be sure, escaped our consciousness, but in subconscious strata had never ceased to determine our existence. The history of art and religion, together with the new psychology of the subconscious have opened the way to these realities, whose description, interpretation, and evaluation, of course, are still in their beginnings, but must, when continued, decisively influence our culture.

It is a peculiar tension that these things contain, in consequence of which they were so long inaccessible to our Occidental consciousness. They bear forms, human, animal, and plant, which we understand as such, recognizing their conformity to artistic laws. But with these organic forms are combined other elements which shatter our every conception of organic form. We cannot interpret this as want of artistic power, as a primitive lack of development, as a limitation of an aptitude for artistic form, and thereby characterize this whole tremendous human production as without cultural value. We must rather watch these elements, which break through organic form, lead to a peculiar, in itself necessary and expressive, artistic form, in the face of which to speak of lack of form would betray only unfamiliarity and failure of comprehension. Those destructive elements themselves, which disrupt the organic form, are elements of the organic; but they appear in such a manner that they violate radically the organic coherence

presented in nature. They break forth in a way which mocks all natural proportion; they appear with a strength, a widespread frequency, in transformations which, to be sure, still permit one to recognize the organic foundation but at the same time make of it something completely new. The organs of the will for power, such as hands, feet, teeth, eyes, and the organs of procreation, such as breasts, thighs, sex organs, are given a strength of expression which can mount to wild cruelty and orgiastic ecstasy. It is the vital forces which support the living form; but when they become overpowerful and withdraw from the arrangement within the embracing organic form, they are destructive principles. That it is possible to grasp these creative primeval powers as they break through organic form and to subordinate them to the unity of artistic creation is perhaps the most astonishing thing which these sculptures and masks reveal to us. For it demonstrates one thing irrefutably: There is something positively contrary to form that is capable of fitting into an artistic form. There exists not only a lack of form but also a contradiction of form; there exists not only something less positive but also something contra-positive. Only by denying, on principle, the esthetic qualities of a negro sculpture or a Shiva picture, could one escape this conclusion, *i.e.*, by making classical esthetics absolute. Whoever cannot assent to this conclusion, must admit that human art reveals to us the actuality of that which is positively contrary to form, the demonic.

What human art reveals for the present, directly and impressively, the history of religion confirms with inexhaustible material. In the vital-orgiastic nature cults, as well as in the religions of social-ethical and mental formation even in the field of the religions of grace, innumerable events and ideas can be found which correspond to that artistic formation. Holy demonries are present alike in the orgiastic phallic cults with their ritualistic destruction of the creative potency, and in ritual prostitution with unconditional surrender of the generative faculties in the service of the divinity—attitudes which, with their demonic elements, are to be found in the highest forms of ascetic-erotic mysticism. Holy demonries in a highly purified form exist in the intoxicated laceration-myths and orgies, which reecho in the sacral sacrifice of the divinity; they exist in the blood sacrifice to the god of earth who devours life in order to create life—the original model of the man-destroying demonry of economics. Holy demonries are present in the cult of the war gods, who consume strength in order to give strength—the original model of the demonry of war. An outstanding symbol of holy demonry is Moloch, who for the sake of saving Polis devours their first-born—the original of all political demonry. The symbol most impressive for our time, comprehending the final depth of holy demonry, is the "Grand Inquisitor," as Dostoievsky visualized and placed him opposite Christ: the religion which makes itself absolute and therefore must destroy the saint in whose name it is established—the demonic will to power of the sacred institution.

These realities everywhere contain the same tension as the creations of pre-classic human art: the embracing form, which unites in itself a formative and a form-destroying element, and therewith affirms something contra-positive. Here, too, one could escape this conclusion only by denying the cultural character of the whole non-humanistic history of mankind, its state and legal construction, its mentality and cults.

The tension between form-creation and form-destruction upon which rests the demonic, comprises the boundary between the latter and the Satanic, in which destruction is symbolized without creation—is only symbolized—because the Satanic has no actual existence, unlike the demonic. In order to have existence, it would have to be able to take on form, *i.e.*, to contain an element of creation. The Satanic is the negative, destructive principle, inimical to meaning, which is effective in the demonic, in connection with the positive, creative meaningful principle. The symbol of Satan isolates the destructive from the creative element and makes an independent principle. Therefore, the Satanic cannot be carried into reality even where there is the will to do so; *e.g.*, the attempt to Satanize the Church Mass in the Black Mass is partly an unproductive imitation, partly a relapse into the orgiastic demonries of religious history. It is true that the demonic approximates the Satanic and becomes merely empty and negative. This similarity can reach a point where the impression of the absoluteness of the Satanic arises. A penetrating analysis, however, will always be able to ascertain the positive demonic residue. Even where Satan is characterized as the tempter, the demonic element is obvious. For a temptation which is not rooted in the creative powers of the created beings—has no point of contact, is not a temptation, because it contains no dialectics, no "yes" and "no." Mythologically speaking Satan is the foremost of the demons; ontologically speaking he is the negative principle contained in the demonic.

The dialectics of the demonic explain the vacillating verbal usage of the word "demonic." If the word has not yet become an empty slogan, its basic meaning must always be retained: the unity of form-creating and form-destroying strength. That is true of the demon who determines the great destiny which disrupts all forms of existence; it is true of the demon who drives the personality beyond the limits of its allotted form to creations and destructions it cannot grasp as its own. Where the destructive quality is lacking, one can speak of outstanding power, of genius, of creative force, not of demonry. And *vice versa*, where destruction is evidenced without creative form, it is fitting to speak of deficiencies, flaws, decline or the like, but not of demonry. In culture influenced by Humanism the tendency exists to place the demonic in closer connection with form and to trace back the great destiny as well as the great creation directly to the demon without reference to its negative character. But in the long run this results in an emptying of the concept. On the other hand, in deeply religious times the demonic is brought so close to the Satanic that the creative potency disappears and the concept therewith becomes unreal. The depth of the demonic is the dialectical quality in it.

### *B. The depth of the demonic*

The demonic contains destruction of form, which does not come from without, does not depend on deficiency or powerlessness, but originates from the basis of the form itself, the vital as well as the intellectual. To understand this connection is to grasp what is meant by the concept demonic, in its truth and inevitability, that is, in its metaphysical essence. The way to this understanding passes through an analysis of the basic relationship to existence underlying all our connections with existence, theoretical and practical. When we look through the strata of the

relation which joins every thing with every other, that is, through its interrelationship with the world, then a depth in the thing may be disclosed to us, which we can designate as the pure existentiality of things, their being supported by the basis of existence, their sharing in the abundance of existence. This foundation and this suggestion by things of "another thing," which is still no other thing, but a depth in the things, is not rational, *i.e.*, demonstrable from the interrelation of things with the world; and the "other," to which the things point, is nothing discoverable by a rational process, but a quality of things which reveals—or conceals—a view into its depths. We say of this depth, that it is the basis of being of things, whereby "being" is taken absolutely, transcendently as the expression of the secret into which thinking cannot penetrate, because, as something existing, it itself is based thereon. In order to say this, however, we must also say something else: that the depth of things, their basis of existence, is at the same time their abyss; or in other words, that the depth of things is inexhaustible. If it were not inexhaustible, and if it could be exhausted in the form of things, then there would be a direct, rational designable way from the depth of things to their form; then the world could be comprehended as the necessary and unequivocal unfolding of the basis of existence; then the supporting basis would pour out entirely into the cosmos of forms; then the depth would cease to be depth, ceasing to be transcendental, absolute. Every one of our relations in existence, however, suggests that it is directed to something which, despite its finiteness, shares the inexhaustibility of existence. Only through this is it guarded from plunging into the abyss of exhaustibility and emptiness, from succumbing to lack of being and meaning. The inexhaustibility denoted here, however, is not to be interpreted as passive inexhaustibility, as a resting ocean, which any subject, form, or world fails to exhaust, but it is to be understood as an active inexhaustibility, as a productive inner infinity of existence, *i.e.*, as the "consuming fire," that becomes a real abyss for every form. Thus the inexhaustibility of being is simultaneously the expression for the fullness, the power of being and meaning of everything and the expression for the inner insecurity, limitation and the fate of everything to succumb to the abyss.

Form of being and inexhaustibility of being belong together. Their unity in the depth of essential nature is the divine, their separation in existence, the relatively independent eruption of the "abyss" in things, is the demonic. An absolutely independent eruption of the "abyss," a mere devouring of every form, would be the Satanic, which for that very reason cannot take form or come to existence. In the demonic, on the other hand, the divine, the unity of bottom and abyss, of form and consumption of form, is still contained; therefore the demonic can come to existence only in the tension of both elements. The tension is really in everything which is produced by the creative power. The impulse for formation inherent in everything and filling it and the horror of decay of form is founded on the form-quality of existence. To come into being means to come to form. To lose form means to lose existence. At the same time, however, there dwells in everything the inner inexhaustibility of being, the will to realize in itself as an individual the active infinity of being, the impulse toward breaking through its own, limited form, the longing to realize the abyss in itself. The living form with the fullness and limits of its existence results from the conjoined effect of both tendencies. From the isolation and formless eruption of the abyss results demonic distortion. Demonry is the form-destroying eruption of the creative basis of things.

### *C. The existence of the demonic*

The demonic is fulfilled in the spirit, not in "spirits," *i.e.*, beings which are defined only through being demons. Even "spirits"—if this concept has an objective meaning—are first living forms, that is, "natures," in which demonic phenomena, ecstasies and frenzies, can appear or not appear. The affirmation of the demonic has nothing to do with a mythological or metaphysical affirmation of a world of spirits. But it is true that only in personalities does the demonic receive power, for here the form not only grows by nature, is not only imprinted on existence, but confronts existence by demanding something and appealing to the freedom and self-mastery of living persons. Therefore here the destruction of form becomes an intellectual contradiction, the actual uprising of the abyss against the form. And yet here only is completed the movement inherent in everything existent and observable in all nature: namely, the vital original forces, which rush out beyond all form into the boundless and yet can enter reality only through form, the inner restlessness of everything living, the inability to have power over oneself and grasp one's own being as one's own and come to rest therein. Therefore mystical and artistic symbolism likes to descend into the sub-human sphere for a presentation of the demonic; for there the vital powers with their creative-destructive force are expressed unhindered by the human spiritual form. And yet, for example, the forms of the animal-like demons are given a connection with the human form through which they are raised above the mere animal. Thus there exists here again a peculiar kind of dialectics: the demonic comes to fulfillment in the mind, but the forces which rule destructively in the demonic, are directly visible in the sub-mental. The strongest picture of the demonic is a union of elements of the animal sphere and elements of the mental sphere but in a distorted form, for it contains this dual dialectics of creative and destructive, of mental and sub-mental.

The demonic comes to fulfillment in personality, and personality is the most prominent object of demonic destruction, for personality is the bearer of form in its totality and unconditioned character. Therefore, the contradiction of it, the cleavage of personality, is the highest and, most destructive contradiction. Therewith the inner tension of the demonic is disclosed in a new stratum: the personality, the being which has power over itself, is grasped by another power and is thereby divided. This second power is not the law of nature. Demonry is not a relapse to a pre-mental stage of existence. Mind remains mind. In comparison with nature it remains the being which has power over itself. Something else, at the same time, takes possession of it. The other, thing contains the vital forces; at the same time, however, it is spiritual and—spirit-distorting. It is the "possessed" state, through which demonry is realized in personality. The possessed state, however, is cleavage of the personality. The freedom of the personal, its power over itself is founded in its unity, in the synthetic character of consciousness. The possessed state is the attack on the unity and freedom, on the center of the personality. Cleavage of consciousness has always been held a sign of the possessed state. Hence the myth of the demon dwelling in the spirit, who bears other witness than the spirit itself and does other things than the personal center would permit. The statement that this is a case of illness, of physical origin does not

change the metaphysical evaluation of the fact. Furthermore, not every spiritual disease can be interpreted as a possessed state. Simple physical decay is exactly the opposite of demonic might. The demonic is visible only when the cleavage of the ego has an ecstatic character, so that with all its destructiveness, it is still creative. Thus, *e.g.*, do the possessed in evangelical history recognize Christ as Christ. There is a state which is the correlative of the possessed state and at the same time the conquest of it: namely, the state of grace; which the free, rational, synthetic consciousness does not achieve.

The possessed state and the state of grace correspond; the states of being demoniacally and divinely overcome, inspired, broken through, are correlatives. In both phenomena it is the creative original forces which, bursting the form, break into the consciousness. In both instances the spirit is raised out of its autonomous isolation; in both instances subjugated to a new power, which is not a natural power but grows out of the deeper stratum of the abyss which also underlies nature. The paradox of the possessed state is as strong as the paradox of the state of grace; the one is as little to be explained as the other by causal thinking by categories of rational observation of nature. The difference is only that in the state of grace the same forces are united with the highest form which contradict the highest form in the possessed state. Therefore grace has a fulfilling and form-creating effect on the bearer of the form, while demonry has the consequence of destroying the personality through robbing it of being and emptying it of meaning. Divine ecstasy brings about an elevation of the being, of creative and formative power; the demonic ecstasy brings about weakening of being, disintegration and decay. Demonic inspiration does indeed reveal more than rational sobriety; it reveals the divine, but as a reality which it fears, which it cannot love, with which it cannot unite. This relationship of divine and demonic ecstasy is the explanation of why in religious history the state of grace could so often change into a possessed state and why the moralistic attitude in religion denies both alike.

The demonic appears as a breaking into the center of personality, as an attack on the synthetic unity of the spirit, as a superindividual and yet not natural power. Its dwelling is in the subconscious level of the human soul. The peculiar disunity between the natural-character and the strange-character of frenzy results from the observation that in the possessed state elements of the subconscious arise which, to be sure, constantly give the personality its vital impulse, its immediate fullness of life, but which in a normal state are prevented from entering into consciousness. What we name these elements depends on the symbols by which the subconscious is interpreted. The symbols can be poetic, metaphysical, psychological, but always remain symbols, that is, indications rather than concepts. Whether one speaks of the "will to power" or of the "chaos" or of the "ego-instinct" or of the "libido"—in each instance feelings or events of the formed consciousness are used as symbols of unformed psychic depth. Only thus can be explained the universal and therefore improper use of the will to power in Nietzsche, the sexual in Freud. The choice of symbols, of course, is not accidental, but shows the direction in which the character of the soul is sought. If, without the purpose of fixation, we designate impulse for power and impulse for Eros as the two polar and yet related forces of the

subconscious, we best arrive at a comprehension of the demonries pointed out above, represented in art and ritual, and we do justice best also to the various aspects of the possessed state. The poetical, metaphysical and psychoanalytic explorations of soul have equally shown how the vital forces of the subconscious support even the finest and most abstract mental acts and instill them with the "blood" that makes the spirit creative, but that can also limit and destroy the spiritual form. This dialectical opposition of the vital and the mental is to be seen in every conscious act. It rules the whole process of personal life. The subconscious rises to demonic power when it subjugates the consciousness, but in such a way that consciousness is driven above itself first to creative-destructive, finally only to destructive, eruptions. If, therefore, it is also justifiable to designate the demonic as the eruption of the subconscious and its vital forces, this definition is still not sufficient. The peculiar "abysmal," ecstatic, overpowering, creative quality, the power of bursting the limits of personality must be added to the description. This quality, however, is not necessarily added to the subconscious. It is something new, which cannot be exhausted by the alternative, conscious-subconscious. Psychologically, the demonic belongs just as much to the subconscious, from which it originates, as to the conscious, into which it pours. Just as in the demonic picture, here is shown that the duality of the categories does not suffice to grasp the object. The demonic, as well as the divine, forces us to form a third category, for which, to be sure, we seek the approach from the other two, but which cannot be resolved into them.

The dual relation of the demonic to the conscious and the subconscious, to the mental and the sub-mental, to the human and the animal, to form and chaos, will perhaps become most distinctly visible if from the personality we turn to society, from the psychical to the social demonry. Here, too, the psychology of the subconscious helps us to come closer to the things, insofar as it has sociological application. The same vital original forces that we have summed up as the impulse of Eros and the impulse of power, also control the social demonry. But again—and here still more emphatically—it must be said: Not only the elevation of the will to power and the forces of Eros is demonry, but their ecstatic, spirit-supported, spirit-forcing and spirit-destroying outbreak. It is the character of abyss, the overpowerful, the possessed state, which also characterizes social demonry. Therefore sacral demonry is the root and original type of all social demonry, for in the sacral, in the holy sphere, the abyss, the absolutely powerful, the transcendent which breaks into reality is at stake. But the sacral sphere is not the only dwelling of the demonic, for the "abyss" also gives power to the acts of mind and fields of meaning, in which not the abyss is immediately at stake but the norms and forms of culture which grow out of it. And therefore in the devotion of the mind to these fields of culture the abyss can also show itself as creative-destructive, mental-sub-mental, without being the intention of an expressly religious act.

Social demonry, like all demonries, becomes effective in a spiritual, meaningful form. The simple lack of form, the weakness of a social structure is naturally not demonic. Demonry is the reign of a superindividual, sacred form which supports life, which at the same time contains the force of destruction in such a way that the destructive power is essentially connected with its

creative power. Such are the holy demonries of the sphere of power and Eros, which are suggested above; such the profane demonries of the same sphere, of which we shall come to speak below. Not in chaos, but in the highest, most strongly symbolic form of a time is the social demonry to be sought. Only there does it win its power. The object of demonic destruction is the personality standing in social connection and the social structure itself, which is built up by the former. Thus we have here not a question of the cleavage of the personality by the powers of its own psychical depth, but of the breaking, of personality by the superindividual social structure. There is, on the part of society, a need of destroying the individual will, going as far as the destruction of its physical foundation, which must be affirmed as a sacrifice of the natural arbitrary will for the sake of moral demands. In this very sacrifice of direct existence the personality reveals its freedom, the character of being personality. Insofar as the claim to this sacrifice is made by the community, it is not demonic. The breaking of the personality becomes demonic at the moment when Will to Power and Eros abuse the social form and its just claim to sacrifice for their destructive aim. There it can come not only to an annihilation of the physical foundation of the personality, but also to a breaking of the personal quality itself. The demonry of the state, church, and economics is visible when the holiness of these social forms, their right to sacrifices, is misused destructively—wherewith as a result the self-destruction, namely the shaking of the belief in their holiness, is connected. Here, too, the dual face of the demonic shows itself in its terrifying dialectics as it does in the sculptures of primitive religions.

#### *D. Demonry and sin*

The demonic is the perversion of the creative, and as such belongs to the phenomena that are contrary to essential nature, or sin. In the creative act in itself the demonic is bottom and depth, but it does not break out as demonic; it supports, but it does not appear; it is bound to the form. It may break through the given form for the sake of a higher one, but it does not break for the sake of breaking. The reality of the demonic is bound to the reality of that which is essence-defying, a sin. It is not, however, justifiable to confuse fuse the two concepts. Sin does not always appear in demonic form. There are certain phenomena, namely those described, in which it rises to demonry. Normally it remains within the limits of uncreative weakness. That does not change its character as sin. It is contrariness to essential nature and therefore is plainly to be denied as contrary to meaning, the separation from absolute being; and it is this, no matter whether it appears as weakness or as ecstatic strength. This difference is not decisive. It does not concern the concept of contrariness to true nature. Rather it concerns its appearance in the life process of the individual and the whole community, and here it is of fundamental importance, for the demonic is that form of contradiction of essence in which the contradiction is united with the essential and creative powers of life.

The significance of the demonic for temptation has already been suggested. It is necessary to understand temptation from the standpoint of the demonic, for thus only can be indicated the positive force that constantly urges us beyond the state of innocence, a force which can become temptation only because it is at the same time the creative power. This connection is seen in the

myth of the fall of the angels as well as in the Biblical myth of the serpent. In both instances sin approaches man from a level that lies outside his freedom, although it appeals to his freedom. And both times it is the creative ambition to be like God that leads to the fall, not simply being overcome by sensual nature.

The natural and social existence of sin cannot be understood, either, without the concept of the demonic. The fact of common sin points beyond the freedom of the individual into the pre-conscious strata of nature and into the super-personal existence of the community. What was meant by the doctrine of original sin cannot really be understood without the concept of the demonic. The factor of necessity which clings to sin, the paradox that responsibility and inevitability combine in the essence-defying act, corresponds thoroughly to the dialectics of the demonic, for the latter is characterized by its simultaneous reaching down into the depth of the pre-personal, natural state and out into the super-personal, social state, and yet finds its realization in the center of the personal being. The view of the demonic overcomes the moralist concept of sin. It is no accident that the Enlightenment in the battle against the superstitious understanding of the demonic (a well-founded protest), lost not only the concept of the demonic but also the religious concept of sin.

According to theological tradition the root of sin is distrust of God. In this definition, the religious character of sin is most sharply expressed. This definition also gives us the deepest insight into the nature of the demonic: For distrust of God is demonization of God in human consciousness. Man does not dare surrender to the unconditioned, because he sees the unconditioned as that which judges him, destroys, breaks him. All religious history is filled with this demonization of the divine. It appears most terribly where, with the elimination of all sacramental mediation, man is placed directly before God and experiences his absolute claim and his rejecting wrath; or where, with the disintegration of all life contents, the unconditioned appears as the abyss of nothingness. Here the divine receives a purely demonic character and the battle for grace and for meaning becomes a battle for conquering the demonic gods by the one who is in truth God. Men, in experiencing this terrible view of God as a demon, cannot retain any natural relationship to God. The divinity of God becomes the absolute paradox, which can never be expected and proved. Outside of grace, God is a law, a judgment which drives one to despair. He becomes God—in contrast to the demon—through grace. That is the deepest relation of sin and demonry.

Thus it is shown that a doctrine of sin without the comprehension of the demonic must be robbed of its content. Moreover the present spiritual problem forces one to awaken the understanding of sin from the view of the demonic, for this view becomes more and more universal and stirring and prevails even where the traditional concept of sin remains incomprehensible.

## **2. THE DEMONIC AND HISTORY**

## A. *Myth and history*

The myth traces the great catastrophes of cosmic events back to the battles of the gods and demons. The most significant consideration of the world as history, the Persian, contains the dualism of the divine and demonic power. And this is the principle of its interpretation of history and cosmos, embracing beginning and end. Mythical thinking realizes that ultimate importance can be claimed only by that event in which the absolute is supposed to appear in time. This principle is valid, however, for all historical writing, even the unmythical; or rather: All historical writing which is to be taken seriously must have in it this mythical element by means of which it is raised above a mere description of successive stages of finiteness. This is true also of the rational, the Utopian, of progressive and conservative interpretations of history. They all have within them the myth of original epochs and final epochs or primitive innocency and the fall, but they weaken the mythical element by taking from the absolute the quality of the "beyond" and by being directed exclusively to realization in this world. The myth is rationally superficialized. Historical things lose their transcendence, their symbolic power. Utopianism overlooks the fact of the demonic as an element of all historical creation. It expects an immanent period of history without the demonic powers. It knows nothing of the interrelation of mankind and nature and all being, subject to ambiguity and contrariness to itself. But progress (revolutionary Utopianism that has become tame, so to speak), devaluates every moment of history in favor of the ideal that lies in infinity instead of in eternity. It does not know the creative depth of every moment, its direct contact with the eternal and the character of decision by which the moment is placed between divinity and demonry, being enabled by its decision to take the path of destruction just as well as the path of progress. The conservative interpretation of history, finally, attempts to evade the attack which is directed and must be directed against every historical situation from the point of view of the eternal, because no form, no matter how traditionally holy, can escape demonization. These critical remarks show that an interpretation of history is demanded which is based on the mythical consciousness, the insight into the dialectics of the divine and the demonic. It must not speak in the mythological symbols of the past, but in symbols which, in all their rationality, contain the indication of the transcendence of history.

Only when viewed as history of salvation has history an absolute meaning. This character, of course, lies in its depth; it cannot become a principle of presentation. It cannot be brought to the surface of historical reports. Then it becomes one principle among others and loses its power of giving meaning to history. It must remain background and depth. The real observation of history has to do with the phenomena which are perceptible but in which the depth can manifest itself: the battle of the divine against the demonic, the powerful coming of "salvation."

Every historical event can become a symbol for this view—fates of nations and individual figures, the battle of political groups and mass movements. The meaning of historical growth takes on a conscious symbolic form, however, in the cultural forms of a time, a group, an individual: first and fundamentally in the religious symbols, then, secondarily, but of decisive

significance for certain times, in artistic, philosophical, and social symbols.

We shall speak of individual symbols of this kind and developments of symbols. They shall be interpreted as the expression of a definite creative situation, a factor in the conflict of the divine and the demonic. The certainty that this conflict is decided in eternity does not relieve us of the duty of working toward a concrete solution in finite time, in which the eternal decision appears. Every one is bound to those solutions at every moment, and knowingly or not, works along in one direction or the other. No individual consciousness of salvation can relieve one of the responsibility for history and its concrete decisions.

### *B. The battle against the demonic in the history of religion*

The demonic is the negative and positive presupposition of the history of religion. From the demonic depth arise all the higher, individual, historically wrought forms of religion; in the battle with the demonic they gain their peculiar form; in the demonic element, which never disappears as the basis, they exert their compulsory power over consciousness.

Aside from the peculiar, as yet unfathomed phenomena of the apparently undemonic, unritual and uncultural creator-divinities, one can say: The less formed a religion is, the less is the demonic distinguished in it from the anti-demonic, the divine. The sacral quality, which is adjudged to most things and events, even to the parts of many things, gives everything a simultaneously divine and demonic character. That which is formed and that which is contrary to form, that which is meaningful and that contrary to meaning are alike considered holy. In the great cultural religions, all-embracing systems of a theoretical and practical kind are achieved. The individual, accidental thing receives its holiness from this general, necessary thing and has no holiness outside it. The holy is embraced in divine figures which have symbolic force for this sphere, for this field of meaning. But the relation of these realms of meaning remains doubtful and distorted in this instance also. To each other they remain single, accidental, and therefore demons. Even the raising of one divinity over the others as a monarch does not essentially change this situation. For this monarch among the gods himself rests on a limited, finite foundation. He cannot lose it without becoming the abstract absolute and therewith removing the multiplicity altogether. Therefore it is natural that the other divinities—of strange nations or of his own monarchy—arise against him. The highest god of monarchial monotheism is not capable of overcoming the demonry of the cleavage of the absolute. He remains a demon, a finite thing that wants to exhaust the absolute, and breaks down with his nation through the destructive effects of his demonry. All the gods of the great national cultural religions contain a certain element of contradiction of meaning; indeed, because of their high civilization and meaningfulness the contradiction reaches its fullest expression only in those religions. Because their divinity has become mightier, their demonry has also become more terrible. For the strength of contradiction of meaning grows with the height of the meaningful thing in which it appears. Primitive cannibalism has not by far the demonic strength of the highly cultivated service of Moloch. As a result it also means no liberation from the demonic, if divine figures of

defeated cultures are forced into the role of demonic hybrid creatures. Even in this deprivation of might they do not lose their demonic force completely and are prepared at all times to step again into the foreground at a crisis of the ruling divine figures. They have not lost their power, because the victorious gods are themselves full of the demonic.

Nevertheless this division can lead in the sphere of the holy to a radical dualism and with that to one of the most important phenomena in the history of religion, particularly from the point of view of demonry. In the radical dualism all the demonic elements are concentrated in the one and all divine elements in the other divinity, and both confront each other with equal power. It is no accident that the fundamental mythical-metaphysical interpretation of history, in its rhythm and its aim, originated from this ground of highest tension of the anti-demonic battle. But such an interpretation of meaning would not have been possible, indeed this religion would have had to divide the consciousness and therewith conclusively submit to the demon, if the God of light had not been in truth regarded as the final victor and therewith as the true god. The equivalence of the divine and the demonic is impossible. If it is affirmed, then the demonic is in truth dominant. That, however, is not intended in any real religion. The predominance of the divine is maintained, but this predominance is not absolute might. And therefore the dualism is not a victory over the demonic, and cannot be one, because its god of light still bears demonic traits. The light is not a symbol of the absolutely meaningful, of the perfect spiritual figure and unity, but it is the symbol of a natural sphere of being which confronts another natural sphere of being. In this, however, the god of light lacks the real clarity of God, namely that he has absolute control over himself and all being. The religious dualism is the form in which the problem of the history of religion (of heathenism) is most clearly put. The answer, however, is not given in it. Therefore the religions, in which as a principle the conquest of the demonic is striven after, lead beyond the national cultural religions as well as beyond religious dualism.

The oldest form in which consciousness tried to free itself fundamentally from the demonic, is ascetic mysticism. Particularly impressive from this point of view appears the figure of the Hindu penitent, before whom the god-demons tremble, because he drives the world to dissolution with which they are inseparably connected. The radical negation of all forms of being also removes the demonic basis of all being. Only absolute being, pure divinity, is disentangled from the demonic. It is clear that in such a conception, existence is perceived as essentially demonic. The Brahman world-births are just as demonic for the Buddhist, as the Maya-world for later Brahman speculation. That is shown very distinctly when these world-creative principles approach the penitent or monk with the tempting purpose of leading him back from the path of renunciation. If the temptation is refused, that is a shaking of the demonic kingdom, namely the existing world. In Occidental mysticism, the original type of which is Neoplatonism, the demonic elements are exceptionally weakened. That is caused by the preceding profane-antidemonic development of Greece. Here, unlike India, existence is not evaluated purely as decline. It is an overflow of the absolute, superbeing. Yet it has in it a demonic element, matter, the  $\mu\eta\delta\nu$ , *i.e.*, more than a nothing, that even in Greek philosophy always designated the place of resistance against creative forms and that in Plotinus expresses

the changing of light into darkness, of the divine into the anti-divine. The necessity of asceticism, the striving to unite in ecstasy with the superbeing, root in this demonic-material element which clings to existence. Ascetic mysticism knows an overcoming of demonry; but only through overcoming existence. Within existence the demonic can be overcome only in the rare anticipation of perfection through ecstatic experiences. Except for that, it remains in power. The creative forms of being and mind are not considered the expression of divine nature, but as products of demonic delusion or of demiurgic powerlessness. Consequently, the absolute being has the quality of standing beyond the creative forms, and also beyond community and personality. Now, insofar as the destruction of these forms is a mark of the demonic, the absolute of ascetic mysticism itself has a semi-demonic character. When we consider mystical asceticism, this assertion is confirmed. The character of many kinds of this asceticism—destroying personality, community and all form—reminds one of the strongest types of demonry in the primitive and national religions.

In contrast to the mystical way, which eliminates all single forms, is the exclusive way, which excludes all forms in favor of one single one that is freed of demonic quality. Here the form of personality is affirmed as divine. Everything that confronts it with destructive quality is denied. The entire holy sphere, which stands outside the perfect ethical-social idea, is questioned and, insofar as it appears independently, it is combatted as demonic. The multiplicity is not surpassed by an embracing unity or some negative absolute but is combatted and subjugated by one definite power, but exclusively, not monarchically. The "jealous" god is the exclusive anti-demonic one, who bears the spiritual form, and therefore is the true god. For the divinity of God is maintained only where the absoluteness and unity of meaning stand untouched over against all demonic isolation and cleavage. In the development of Jewish prophecy all the essential anti-demonic battle positions are worked out. Jewish prophecy determines the antidemonic character of the Christian-Occidental history of religion up to the present time. In this line of development the dualistic element of ascetic mysticism is excluded. Historical personality is a creation of God and as such undemonic. The opposition to meaning, destruction of form, grows from the will of the creature, not from a demonic-creative principle. It has originated through freedom, not through transcendental creation. The demonic creatures of the past linger on as subordinate attendant figures without divine quality or their own character of holiness. And yet this line of development also tends to a peculiar return of genuinely demonic motives. The exclusive god is the god of a special nation with special cultural character. Now insofar as he makes an exclusive claim he must oppose himself as the god of one particular nation. If his particularity is maintained, as for example in Jewish nationalism, then the god loses the inner right to absoluteness and exclusiveness. If the particularity is rejected, then the presence, the directness, and concreteness of the divine are lost. He disappears in an unapproachable transcendence which severs the immediate relationship between God and man.

A third way of overcoming the demonic is taken on the ground of the sacramental religion itself. One can designate it as the way of the mysteries. It is essential to his character that the god voluntarily turn the demonic destruction against himself and thereby overcome it. The myth of

the suffering and dying, of the lowly and incarnated god is the expression of this way. The demonic contradicts itself; the divinity takes the demonic destruction upon itself. The divine appears as an individual, but in such a way that this individual subjects himself to the transcendent negation of every existence. The divine is present as a concrete reality united with man and the creature; but his character as unconditioned remains untouched. His very suffering and death safeguard his divine character insofar as they deny the claim of an individual as an individual to be unconditioned even in the instance that he is the incarnation of God Himself. The antidemonic force of these conceptions depends on how far the mediator-god has overcome the demonic in his character, on the other hand, on how far there has been success in avoiding a cleavage of the divine and therewith a relapse into the folk religions. A mediator-god, who is not the bearer of spiritual personality, but reveals arbitrary elements, is a demon; furthermore a mediator-god, who has divine quality independent of God and not through Him is a demon.

The three ways of overcoming the demonic in the history of religion do not reach the goal through themselves, through their own dialectics. They have an inner limitation which can only be overcome by an original act in history, by a self-manifestation of the unconditioned. Such a manifestation, however, can no longer be grasped by a dialectical interpretation of religious history. It is accessible only to an equally original act, a manifestation of God in the soul. But if it is comprehended thus, it is afterward possible and necessary to point out in what sense it is the attainment of the goal aimed at in religious history, that is, the conquest of the demonic.

The Christological work of the old Church was devoted to this proof. All its formulæ have the purpose of warding off demonic distortions on every hand. The Christological and trinitarian dogma is the powerful evidence of the victorious antidemonic battle of early Christianity. That is its meaning. Therefore it has basic significance for the Church and is more than the mere consequence of the theoretical wish to unite the Gospel and Greek philosophy.

Yet it is beyond any human effort, even the Christian, to escape from the demonic control of everything real. Therefore even the Church has again and again succumbed to demonry. This is true of the sacramental hierarchy of the Catholic Church with its reconstruction of numerous demonries once overcome in earliest Christianity. It is true, despite its fundamentally antidemonic tendency, of the Protestant orthodoxy with its demonry of the pure doctrine. It is true of the total development of Christianity and of the development of every individual in it. And yet the Christian confession contains the certainty that the demonic has been overcome, that there exists the possibility of approaching the God who is truly God. Everything further in this relation is a subject of Christian dogmatics, which in the future, much more than heretofore, must work with the consciousness of being engaged in the battle between the divine and the demonic and therefore of serving the one or the other with every decision which it makes.

### *C. Profanization and overcoming the demonic*

Profanization stands opposite all inner-religious forms of overcoming the demonic. It, too, is a

form of combatting the demonic. But it overcomes it by tearing itself free from the divine at the same time. That is naturally not the purpose of the proponents of this method. They combat the demonic for the sake of the purity of the divine; so Greek philosophy opposes the demonry of the Homeric gods, as the Enlightenment attacks the demonries of the Christian confessions. But this battle takes place with weapons other than the inner-religious ones. It takes place with the weapons of rational form. Originally neither the Greek nor modern philosophy felt a contrast between divinity and rational form.

Rather they sought to see and make visible divine clarity in the perfection, completion, and rationality of form. But in the emphasis on divine clarity, the divine depth was lost: that which is inexhaustible, self-manifesting, unconditioned, and transcendent. The divine became the principle of a finiteness resting in itself, statically completed or dynamically moved. Every agitation by demonic depths was warded off. Together with the demonries of the past which really should be combatted, the divine-creative depths of existence were also denied. The fear of demons was removed, Epicurus the perfect naturalist was acclaimed as saviour—which he was to a great extent as regards the heathen fear of demons. The belief in the devil and its gruesome consequences dissolved before the glow of the Enlightenment—and it was indeed enlightenment compared with that possessed state of a whole era. With the fear of demons; however, the fear of the divine also sank away. In Greece the gods were exiled into the sphere between the worlds, where they led a blissful life—according to the picture of the gardens of Epicurus—without the possibility of breaking into the inner and outer world. In the Occident, God becomes the central monad, the synthesis of world forms, the mediator of the objective and subjective spheres, the guarantor of the moral order of the world, a mere limiting concept. He is the consecrating word for the closed world system, for the completed immanence and its rational structure. Thinking is reduced to the two dimensions of form and matter, either in such a relationship that the matter is assumed as already formed, or in such a way that there exists the infinite task of impressing the form on the matter, or as a synthesis of both. The third dimension upward and downward, the divine-demonic, breaking through form, bestowing grace and destruction, is not seen. The negative element is finiteness, deficiency, laziness, but not active resistance, nothing contra-positive. In this manner it is possible to perceive the world and rule it. It offers no basic active resistance. It is capable of rationalization, even though in infinite labor. The mythical categories of creation, origin, miracle, of grace and frenzy, disappear or are sentimentally reinterpreted. The mythical fear of the strangeness in things, which makes it dangerous to touch them, the awe of the traditional holy social powers, which are removed from rational criticism and change, disappears. There is no more taboo, which hinders the will for knowledge and control from subjugating all being. The individual is considered free. The possibility of forming much or little matter, of pushing the limits of the rational far or not so far out, is not limited by anything. For an unfree will, a "*servum arbitrium*," for this demonic paradoxical thought, there is no room in the two-dimensional world.

And yet there is no possible complete rationalization. In Greece there remains the  $\mu \eta \_ \delta \nu$ , the matter, which is not only nothingness but is active, unconquerable resistance to form. The

religious method of freeing the world of demonry had not penetrated as far as the idea of creation and therefore the profane freeing could not progress further than to this dualism of form and actively resisting matter. With Epicurus and the Stoics matter seemed to be freed of the demonic. But the Stoic concept of fate shows that here, too, the goal was not reached. Thus it came about that at the beginning of the Christian era, antiquity was almost completely overrun with the belief in demons and the Christian Apologists made Christ's conquest of the demonic a main argument of their defense against heathenism. In the Occident the situation was quite different, since the Christian idea of creation and providence were in the background. The Renaissance therefore begins with an affirmation of the world, such as antiquity never knew, and in Protestantism the final remains of ascetic mysticism which Christianity had accepted are thrust off, and it is affirmed more and more clearly that things are created by God in perfect innocence.. But with this new affirmation of nature is combined a deep realization of the discord in nature itself. Not matter, not the creature as such, but the freedom of the creature creates the dissension. The doctrine of original sin, which Protestantism carries through to the most radical consequences, and which drives it to the boundary of Manichæan dualism, is the expression of the new, view of the Demonic. In certain mystical trains of thought, as with Jakob Böhme, it is expressed in formulations which endow the demonic will with a metaphysical necessity and question the rational freeing of reality from the demonic, indeed actually eliminate it. The heritage of these thoughts, metaphysical pessimism, is the conscious expression of a demonic view of the world in secular philosophy.

Both the tendency to radical overcoming of the demonic and the constant pessimistic reaction characterize the profane. Insofar as the profane is the realization of a pure rational form, it means the overcoming of the demonic; insofar as it must recognize the resistance to the realization of rational form, it falls back into the demonic. It is particularly significant that Kant, the purest representative of rational form, was forced to recognize a principle in the "radical evil," which falls completely outside the rational world view. This doctrine of his was the gateway for the penetration of the demonic pessimistic turn in German Idealism.

The religious situation in the profane, consequently, is this: insofar as the demand that pure form be realized is contained in the divine, profanization is affirmation of the divine. Insofar as absolute transcendence over every form is contained in the divine, the profane means negation of the divine. That is the price which it pays for the overcoming of demonry. As a reaction to this, the demonic constantly enters into the profane, but now as a contrast to the divine, now as that which is destructive of form, actively negative. In the profane the divine is without the depth of the demonic and the demonic without the clarity of the divine. Still the situation is not yet exhausted with this alternative. In the profane there are also recurring combinations of the divine and demonic, realization of form and creative abyss. Through them the profane lives. Pure rationalism, just as pure negation, are the poles toward which the profane always strives. But these poles are never reached, because they contain no possibility of existence. Reality lives between the poles; between them proceeds the mythical battle of the divine and demonic, which fills the profane, too. Of course, it is not directly visible there, for the symptom of the profane is

the rational not the mythical. But the battle is still there; and, as in religion, it is a battle between priests of the demonic and prophetic proclaimers of the divine.

An important example of the profane conquest of the demonic is the development of Greek sculpture. The archaic period of Greek art is still completely filled with the mythical-demonic content of the past, and yet the gods of the archaic period are no longer demons in the manner, for example, of Asiatic polytheism. They have the tendency toward the pure form of the human, even if this goal is not yet reached. They are still bound to the severely, hieratical gesture. In the short climax of classicism complete liberation and perfect formation are reached simultaneously. The demonic has disappeared; the divine has remained. The divine has received the character of clarity, of ideal form. The abysmal character, the horrible, consuming quality lingers only insofar as it is needed to protect the clarity from mere shallowness.

This, like all classicism, is a fine dividing line. The form already begins to take over control. Austerity disappears in favor of motion, divinity in favor of human ideality and finally reality. Not even a faint trace of the demonic quality of the archaic period remains. The forms become emptier or fill up with finite dynamics, purely of this world, *e.g.*, of intellectual individuality. At the same time there appears in peculiar dialectics a new demonry. The vital original forces, of course, cannot be expelled, and the eye of realism cannot pass them by. Thus erotic symbolism, the gesture of brutal will to power, the representation of all forms of intoxication, returns in naturalistic dress: a demonry of the profane, which points to the sub-human, because it has lost the demonry in the superhuman.

Later epochs, finally, with their archaic tendencies and their slow loss of formative strength, are the expression of that return to holy-demonic subjection, which shows in all fields, and which found effective realization in the religions of late antiquity. Not demonic-grotesque figures of gods appear here, but a new metaphysical subjection of all earthly creatures and events to the ruling spiritual-transcendental principle: an archaism on a mystical-monotheistic basis.

Another example is the Greek-Occidental development of the drama. It is important above all, because it shows the limits within which there has been any conquest of the demonic in Greece in any sense. The Greek tragedy contains two elements: the continued rule of the demonic in the sphere of fate and the protest against this rule on the part of the heroic, spiritual personality. The personality is ruined through this conflict in the sphere of fate. It over comes the conflict in the sphere of personal freedom. This last division remains unbridged. The power which supports destiny and which forces one to guilt, is a different one from that on which the spiritual-personal formation of the individual and the community is based. Heroic autonomy rises against demonic heteronomy. Insofar as the tragic contains this conflict, tragedy is possible only on a demonic foundation. To this extent there is no Christian tragedy. The Shakesperean drama shows no objective guilt. Guilt arises in the center of the personality, in the sphere of decision. And yet it is not morality that takes the place of demonry. It is the peculiar interweaving of fate and responsibility, to which the Christian doctrine of original sin testifies and upon which the

Occidental drama rests. The judgment passed on the guilty one is affirmed, insofar as he bears responsibility for the guilt. No heroic defiance of fate in the name of a higher order is expressed. For it is just the higher order which is injured and passes judgment. But the higher order does not exercise it against the moral misdeed but rather against the demonic powers breaking out in the individual, as at once his creative greatness and his ruin. Therefore, what there is of tragedy in Occidental drama is based on the demonic element in it, except that in contrast to the Greek, the demonic here has no power rooted in existence, but can come into reality only through the responsible will. Therefore there is a salvation, rather than merely the heroism of destruction.

In modern drama, with the victory of demonic realism, the tragic element of the drama has experienced considerable strengthening. Even the play of social criticism revealed superindividual connections, which often made the individual become guilty through an inevitable fate, but it still contained considerable social ethical moralism. On the other hand, the psychological drama of the present time, with its comprehension of subconscious powers, has often become very strongly demonic and therewith tragic. Particularly the conflict between the generations—a social analogy with the division of consciousness—has opened up the view to genuinely demonic connections. Yet no inclination to return to the Greek conception is apparent in it. The pure objectivity of the concept of guilt and fate is unreal for Christian culture. The passage through consciousness and responsibility conditions our concept of guilt— despite all domination of the subconscious.

### **3. DEMONRIES OF THE PRESENT**

The profane method of overcoming demonry—in contrast and in common with the prophetic-Protestant method—has caused the demonic to disappear almost completely from the general consciousness of the present. The two-dimensional manner of thought has become a matter of course. Where the demonic is spoken of, it is in the weakened sense of superior force or indeed in the sense of erotic piquancy. Least of all is a consciousness of the demonic to be found in the social sphere. Here, to be sure, one sees problems, needs, lacks, or even sinfulness or corruption, but one does not see the peculiar dialectics of the great forces supporting social reality. And yet only when this dialectics is understood, is a fundamentally correct attitude in social affairs possible. Otherwise we find either the will for improvement in the progressive attitude or will for preservation in the conservative. The first sees everywhere material which at some time or other will be formed in correspondence with the ideal; the second sees everywhere the unconquerable sinfulness which renders a decisive change impossible. The perception of the demonic dialectics leads one beyond this contrast, and to the recognition of something contra-positive which is to be overcome, neither through progress, nor through mere revolution, but through creation and grace. It leads at the same time to the comprehension of the particular demonry at every point in society so that it may be isolated and opposed. The battle against the demonries of a time becomes an unavoidable, religious-political duty. Political activity gains the deeper meaning of religious activity. Religious activity gains the concreteness of, a struggle against the "principalities and powers."

Of course, this cannot be interpreted as though one phenomenon could be designated simply as demonic and another simply as divine. The contrast of both principles is effective in every person and every phenomenon. An institution or community that should seek to withdraw from this judgment, would by this very act succumb to the pharisaic demonry. But it is necessary to interpret some structures on which society is built as symbols of demonic powers, and it is necessary, in making these symbols manifest to open the struggle against the demonry of a period. There is no other way at all, as everything that points to the unconditioned has a symbolic character and can never be grasped actually, empirically. In symbols and only in symbols shall we speak now of the demonries of the present.

Profanization is always rationalization, *i.e.*, comprehension of things through resolution into their elements and combination under the law. This attitude, which is in accord with the nature of things and suited to the relationship of subject and object, is demonically distorted through the will for control, which masters it and robs the things of their essential character and independent power. It is the attitude to reality meant by the concept of intellectualism, which is not to be thought of as too much of intellect and rationality, but as a violation of the whole of reality on the part of the rational subject. The description of this state of affairs and its destructive results has frequently been given and need not be repeated here. The demonic quality of intellectualism is that it contains the rational comprehension of things and essentially must contain the consequence of infinite progress, but that, on the other hand, with every step forward it destroys the living, independently powerful quality in the things and therewith the inner community between the knowing and the known. The supporting element is at the same time destructive. The inevitability of this fate becomes especially clear, when one observes the fate of the anti-intellectual movements and notices how, unconsciously, they constantly use the weapons of intellectualism and thus succumb to intellectualism. A theology which demands religious indifference and practical objectivity in the face of this, does not see the indissoluble relation between the real and the meaningful with the meaningless. Such a theology does not see that practical realism remains an abstract demand and that the reality of knowledge, like all reality, is engaged in the struggle of the divine and demonic.

The esthetic observation of reality claims to overcome intellectualism, and indeed not only in its peculiar field of art, but beyond this in metaphysics and sciences. This is not incorrect, for the unbroken rule of intellectualism is indeed shaken by esthetic interpretation. But the esthetic attitude itself succumbs to demonry. It becomes *estheticism*. A broad stream of this spirit flows through our culture. Here too the typical double face of the demonic appears: The ability of the esthete to identify himself with everything dissolves the fixed limitations in our relation to things, but on the other side takes away the independence and power of things. The maintenance of the esthetic-distance, which characterizes all estheticism, cuts off the true community between man and things and leads to a domineering attitude, implying inmost instances some erotic element. This violence is done to the object no less than in intellectualism. Finally, it must be said that the demonry of estheticism is only a counterpiece of the demonry of intellectualism and is subject to it. It might appear that this attitude is less universal and more easily countered;

but that is not so. Our whole period and all classes in it stand before the abyss of meaninglessness, are engaged in a vain search for an absolute reality in which they can take root. For estheticism is by no means bound to a development or predominance of the esthetic function but is a quite general attitude. And it is a necessary attitude. It is not possible to create artificially situations in which the esthetic-distance is overcome, in which a concrete community with things is gained anew. The awkwardness of all such attempts and their final failure shows that the esthetic demonry was not overcome but merely covered. What places us constantly before the abyss of senselessness and voidness of meaning, at the same time constantly opens up to us the approach to everything existing. That is the dialectics of estheticism.

In the practical sphere two demonries likewise surpass all the others in significance and symbolic force and shape the face of our times. They are the demonries of autonomous economics: capitalism, and the demonry of the sovereign people: nationalism. The situation, however, is such that the second is in part a counter-movement against the first and never quite loses this character. Yet it not only assumes demonic character itself, but finally succumbs to the first— an analogous relationship to that of the theoretical sphere.

Autonomous economics, with the help of the means technical science has placed at its disposal, is the most successful form of production of goods which has ever existed. The mechanism of the free market is the most artful machine for the equalization of supply and demand, as well as for the constant increase of needs and satisfaction of needs, which can be conceived. There can be no doubt that the capitalist form of economics has to the highest degree the supporting, creative, and transforming character of the truly demonic, but it is just as true that this creative force is combined with a destructive one of horrible strength. The descriptions of this destruction among the masses and the individuals, spiritually, psychically, and bodily, are so numerous and of such irrefutable impressiveness that it is unnecessary to repeat them here. It is also impossible to drive the demonic factor of economics down to the plane of general sinfulness, with religious-moral categories such as Mammonism, in order to separate the technical quality of capitalism from it. The depth of the demonic is just this, that the meaningful and meaningless elements in it are inseparably combined. Thereupon rests its inevitability, its surpassing power, in the face of which all moralizing is doomed to impotence. The sinfulness to which the service of Mammon also belongs, is indeed the general presupposition of every demonry. But real demonry—if this word is to have any special content—occurs only in connection with a positive, sustaining, creative-destructive power.

This is true also of the last great demonry of the present, nationalism. To all pacifism of impotence, to all mysticism and to a rationalistic bourgeois or proletarian internationalism must be said first of all that: the national impulses of the bourgeois era were the only ones which had, and to a great extent still have, the strength to offer resistance to the technical economization of the whole of Occidental existence. They constantly break through pure rationality. They create a vital, immediate consciousness, which is still but slightly disintegrated by intellectualism and again and again stirs up estheticism. At the same time it preserves the consciousness from

complete meaninglessness by filling it with concrete symbols. National things receive sacral untouchability and ritual dignity. But just there demonization begins. With the creative-supporting forces, destructive ones combine: the lie with which the self-righteousness of one nation distorts the true picture of its own and foreign reality; the violation, which makes other nations an object whose own essence and independent might is despised and downtrodden; the murder, which in the name of the god pledged to the nation is consecrated to holy war. Beyond this, it is the peculiarity of the national demonry of our time that it has subjected itself to capitalism. The nations entered the World War as capitalistic groups of power; and the chief bearers of the will for war were at the same time the bearers of the capitalistic domination in their own nation; not from any personal demonry, but themselves supported by the demonic figure of capitalism which they represent. Thus the social demonry of the present is revealed in its duality, in its immense supporting and destructive strength. Shattered for a moment, it is at present on the point of re-establishing itself, in order better to sustain and—better to destroy.

There is no way which could be invented to overcome the demonries, spiritual and social. The question of ways and means is the question of intellectualism, thus even as a question grown out of the demonic situation and strengthening the demon with each answer. Demonry breaks down only before divinity, the possessed state before the state of grace, the destructive before redeeming fate. It is probably possible and in accordance with the prophetic spirit to see in the events of a time signs of redeeming fate, and it is necessary and absolutely demanded to unveil the demon and to seek and use all the weapons of resistance; but there is no certainty of success, for there is no certainty that a finite reality, even if it be Christian culture, is indestructible. The demon inspires such a false certainty. There is only one certainty, that the demonic is overcome in eternity, that in eternity the demonic is depth of the divine and in unity with divine clarity. Only in view of the eternal may one speak of overcoming the demonic, not in the view of any time, a past or future. But that we can regard the eternal in this way, that we need not grant the demon the same right as the divine and therewith the higher, the only right, that we need not, in the face of the world, grant the ultimate victory to the negation, to the abyss, to meaninglessness—that and that alone is the salvation in finite time, which again and again becomes reality; that is the fundamental destruction of demonic dominance over the world.

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part Two: Philosophical Categories of the Interpretation of History

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## II: Kairos and Logos

When one considers the development of philosophy from the Renaissance to the present, from certain points of view, two directions in spiritual history become dear: a main stream, infinitely fruitful and boundlessly effective, which can be called the actual line of fate of Occidental culture, and an accompanying stream as yet but little developed, of no great practical effect, that has often flowed off subterraneously and perhaps still deserves to be called a threat rather than a fate. The main stream, which upon closer observation soon resolves itself into several smaller parallel streams or lines of thought, is characteristically methodical. The *Discours de la méthode* of Descartes is its classical formulation; Kant's *Critiques* its mightiest expression. Along with this methodicism—the strongest, main line—run other corollary lines. One is the mystic metaphysical line that starts from Nicolaus Cusanus' *Docta ignorantia*; another, the mathematic Neoplatonic, never to be separated from the mystic metaphysical, that finds its climax in Spinoza's *Ethics*; and again, the line of English empiricism from Bacon to Hume and later the Positivists of the nineteenth century. All this, however, is one main stream, united in its variety of motives by a methodical self-consciousness, a predominance of the Greek view of nature and the world.

Beside this main line and its variations runs a side-line whose symbol is the name of Jakob Böhme. It goes back to the mysticism and nature-philosophy of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and has received no small impulses from Duns Scotus and Luther. It becomes visible afar at the moment when Romanticism grasps it and tries to merge it with the first main line. Schelling in his second period starting with his extraordinary book, *Inquiries about Freedom*, etc., is the leader of this trend. Hegel absorbs numerous motives, but subordinates

them much more strongly than Schelling to the methodical main line, while the later Schelling brings the development into Mythology and Dogmatics. The second line takes on a very different form in the nineteenth century, where it more closely approaches the empirical and naturalistic branch of the methodical main line and yet retains in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche its old character, strongly differentiated from the methodical movement. Finally as a philosophy of life at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it raises a protest against the methodical formalism of the Kantians.

It is easy to understand that the consideration of Occidental philosophy has turned almost exclusively to the first, methodical movement. Here was the clear, unequivocal line, here the overwhelming success, here the power creating reality in technical science and society. Every doubt of the correctness of this method can be dispersed by experiment, and technical science is the constantly present, and the constantly growing experiment proving the methodical basis of Occidental science. Against this proof from transformed life itself, all criticism is untenable. And even in historical knowledge there is a stratum which can be proved by the experiment of new documents and other experiences. Modern philosophy, however, from its beginnings with Descartes, was methodical reflection of scientific work, was explanation of its premises and basic concepts, was creation of a general view of the world, in which science could pursue its path undisturbed. All advances into metaphysics effected no change in this. Partially indeed they served this very purpose. For example, the elimination of those elements of the religious view of life which disturbed the rational consistency of world and knowledge, as miracles; or the battle against the miracle of psycho-physical causality, served this purpose. Partially metaphysical encroachments were again eliminated, as, *e.g.*, the methodically disturbing inspirations of the romantic philosophy of nature and history. The way of the epistemological reflection, however, went further and is even now effective in a rational interpretation of the present revolution in physics.

Quite different was the development of the second approach. It was not methodically connected with rational science. It was metaphysical in its innermost nature. As a result it created no scientific method and could be subjected to no experiment. Its development was erratic; it stopped and began anew. Its breadth was small. Its attitude was an intrinsic resistance to the methodical main approach, but on the whole an unsuccessful resistance. It therefore was in keeping with the actual situation, if histories paid it comparatively little attention, and if it played hardly any part in philosophic discussion. That, in spite of this, it effected a deep spiritual and religious upheaval like Protestant Mysticism, the later Romanticism and reaction, pessimism, the spiritual and political revolution proceeding from Nietzsche and irrationalism—has counted little in its philosophical valuation. Perhaps, therefore, the emphasis of it as a particular line of philosophical spiritual history will be considered questionable.

One could also ask in regard to the whole conception: Is not the mystic-Neoplatonic element, which was designated as an attendant phenomenon of the methodical main line, in reality an element of the opposition against the methodical-rational character of the main line? Did not this

conflict become especially clear in German Idealism and lead finally to the separation of both elements? Would it therefore not be more correct to combine both mystic-metaphysical lines and to separate them from the philosophy of method? Through this separation not two lines, but two planes would be created: a mystic-metaphysical and a rational-methodical one! Doubtless this suggestion is tempting: it produces a simpler picture, but it can produce it only at the cost of historical accuracy. For modern philosophy did grow out of the Neoplatonism of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and took over from it the methodically decisive principle, mathematics. This connection shows that the mystic-intuitive and rational-reflective elements, which are combined in Neoplatonism, despite all possibilities of tension, rest on a common ground—the ground which bears also the contrast of Democritus and Plato, of Spinoza and Goethe, of Criticism and phenomenology. The consideration of this common ground will at the same time make clear the great contrast between the second line and the main line and everything that belongs to it.

The philosophy of the Renaissance, just as of Greece before it and modern science after it, wants to recognize the form of the world, the elements and the laws of their combination. There are two ways, however, of grasping the form of the real: from the form to the elements and their laws, or from the elements and their laws to the form. Both ways have been taken at all times. The first is intuitive-descriptive; it seeks to grasp the object in its entirety. The second is reflexive-explanatory; it breaks up a thing and puts it together again. The second has proven itself stronger in natural science, the first way in historical sciences; biology, psychology, and sociology waver between both and at the present time are influenced by the ascendancy of the Gestalt-conception. But no matter how significant this fact for the spiritual situation of the present, the fundamental contrast with the second line is not removed thereby, for it lies deeper than those contrasting pairs; it meets the premise common to them, the will for knowledge of the world as form, element, and law.

In the second line the world is to be understood as creation, conflict, and fate. With Democritus and Plato, Spinoza and Goethe, the Kantians and the phenomenologists, the eternal form of being is the goal of knowledge. Whether this form is thought of as a law of the movement of atoms or as a transcendental idea, whether as the mode of the resting substance or as living form, whether as the function of the spirit or as an essential being intuitively perceived, ever it stands under the eternal law of form. With Böhme, however, and the later Schelling, with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the form-creating process itself is to be perceived. In the religious-pessimistic version of the idea, the given forms are derived from a catastrophe; the dissension of the principles drives them upward and dissolves them again. Therefore it is impossible to regard their unity as a resting cosmos. For the process of the living, the battle of the principles rushes further, toward unknown fates, perhaps divined but never seen. "Historical philosophy," Schelling called the observation of this occurrence—historical because it deals with a single, underivable happening, inexplicable as the realization of any universal law.

While time remains insignificant in that static type of thinking in terms of form, and even

history presents only the unfolding of the possibilities and laws of the Gestalt "Man," in this dynamic thinking in terms of creation, time is all-decisive, not empty time, pure expiration; not the mere duration either, but rather qualitatively fulfilled time, the moment that is creation and fate. We call this fulfilled moment, the moment of time approaching us as fate and decision, *Kairos*. In doing this we take up a word that was, to be sure, created by the Greek linguistic sense, but attained the deeper meaning of fullness of time, of decisive time, only in the thinking of early Christianity and its historical consciousness. The thinking in the *Kairos*, which is the determinant of the second line explained in our historical consideration, is opposed to the thinking in the timeless *Logos*, which belongs to the methodical main line. Thus the correctness of our original distinction becomes apparent, and at the same time the question of the essential relationship between *Kairos* and *Logos* becomes urgent. For it must become apparent that the consideration of reality in the sense of the timeless *Logos* is at best an immense abstraction which cannot do justice to the passing fate and decision of immediate existence. As soon, however, as this fact is realized, we stand in the midst of the problems of the second line, to the systematic examination of which the subsequent arguments shall contribute.

## 2. KAIROS AND LOGOS AS A PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

### *A. The absolute subject and history*

In order to judge both lines of philosophy it is of basic importance to note what position is given to the perceiving subject in relation to reality. For in this question the possible antithesis of *Kairos* and *Logos* is clearly expressed. For the philosophy of method with all its assumptions, the emptying of the subject is an unavoidable demand. The subject must be without content in order to receive the eternal forms. In this it remains a matter of complete indifference, whether the most naive theory of image or the most exaggerated idealism is valid for the epistemology, since even an idealism, which with Fichte, asserts that the world is created by the productive imagination of the ego, thinks of the creative forms, which are quite universal and necessary for each individual subject. Idealism and naive realism both believe in an absolute, contentless position of the subject. The perceiving one simply accepts the perceived, whether he makes place within himself for the images of the things, or whether the suggestion of the single things arouses the "recollection" of the eternal essentialities. But how is such an absolute position of the subject, how is its complete emptying and then again its objective filling conceivable? To emptying belongs asceticism; to filling, *Eros*: asceticism— not, of course, with respect to earthly things, but to the historical fate, the *Kairos*; and *Eros*—not, of course, toward the creative depth of life, but toward the pure form, the *Logos*. That is the attitude of pure theory; asceticism toward the *Kairos*, *Eros* toward the *Logos*; thereon rests the possibility of regarding the world as a system of eternal forms. Starting out from this attitude, the opposite attitude, namely pure practice, can be defined with analogous formulæ. It would be asceticism toward the *Logos* and *Eros* toward *Kairos*. The minister, the politician, the economist, the officer, the man of society would be devoted to the *eros* in the immediate historic situation; likewise asceticism toward the *Logos* would be demanded of them. But this conclusion must raise doubts. To be sure, the

unavoidable asceticism toward the Logos is felt by many men of practical life. It is then felt, however, as a defect in regard to practice as well, not as a merit, not as an essential element of practice. On the contrary, the practice which is guided by clear consciousness and scientific insight deserves preference over the purely instinctive. For the practical person, at any rate, asceticism toward the Logos is of no merit. Yet the questions must be raised, whether the same is also true of the reverse, that is to say, whether adherence to the Kairos is an advantage for theory. In recent times, argument has arisen about this question. Max Weber turned against the connection of science and life, making a demand of scientific asceticism, and not only opposed the bombastic, unclear conception of the necessary unity of both, but also the serious acceptance of this unity. And even in the younger generation the demand for pure devotion to objectivity is raised in opposition to growing irresponsibility in the employment of concepts. Yet, no matter how justifiable this demand, still it does not solve the epistemological problem. This is the question: Is there any possible asceticism toward the Kairos? Is this a real attitude? Or is it an abstraction, which can succeed to a certain degree, but which is only fruitful when the deepest forces of the Kairos work in the background?

Only one assumption is conceivable according to which an asceticism toward the Kairos would be essentially possible, namely, that the perceiving subject were to become timeless,—timeless not in the sense that it should step out of the current of passing time, but in the sense that it could be without qualitative time, "akairos." This possibility was natural for eras that had a static interpretation of life. Examples would be the Greek civilization with its tendency toward the eternal forms of nature; or the Middle Ages with their tendency to the eternal forms of revelation. In the Greek interpretation of nature, time is accidental. Modern natural science dissolved it into a dimension of space (the fourth dimension). The intuitive mind is assumed to have an absolute position beyond time. According to its genuine character it has an immediate intuitive view of the eternal forms. Even when it has lost this immediate contact with the eternal truth, it is still capable of reawakening the lost within itself. This is true of the greatest part of Greek and Occidental philosophy and also of the medieval consciousness. One believes that one is standing in a holy tradition, the unfolding and exposition of which has to be accomplished by the recognizing subject. More a mystical than a rational emptying, more a mystical Eros than an Eros toward rational forms is demanded here. Fundamentally, though, every one is capable of it who stands in the holy tradition, who belongs to Catholic Christianity. Thus nature and super-nature correspond. Only in one respect is there a difference: pure nature is at all times accessible to every one, super-nature only to the Christian. Here a historic fate cuts through the unity of humanity. The great question of the relationship of Kairos and Logos comes forward, but it is easily settled. The knowledge of nature is open to the non-Christian as well. The knowledge of super-nature is possible only through revelation. Whoever is not reached by it, stands quite outside the truth, a heretic or heathen. But whoever is illuminated by it, finds in this very fact the historical fate which links him to all others of the same destiny. Revelation eliminates individualization in thought and gives every single person an absolute position.

The question of the knowing subject became more serious only when historical thinking

penetrated into the sphere of super-nature through Protestantism, and into the sphere of nature through humanism. The unity of the holy tradition was broken, the rational, ever identical character of the human being became more individualized and differentiated. This individuality, this difference, however, was no longer the insignificant passing of time, but was rather a fateful history. It is all the more remarkable, how long a philosophical school, which had learned to think historically, felt itself to be simply super-historical in the sphere of knowledge. The question whether knowledge also belongs to history was not asked for an unbelievably long time. The latent belief in the possibility of an asceticism toward the Kairos, a basic "untimeliness," was maintained. For some time one surrendered oneself to the illusion that the idea of development might help. But it cannot help. For it nowise overcomes the fact that knowledge was supposed to be outside of history. Development only means common asceticism through the generations, but contains nothing of conflict and historical fate. One sees humanity as a pupil marching in a straight line toward the knowledge of the eternal forms. Through this, however, the absolute position of the subject is in no respect shaken. The knowing individual subject is merely broadened into the knowing universal subject. But the idea which distinguished the Middle Ages from the Greeks, the cleavage between nature and super-nature is lost.

The absolute position of the knowing subject became doubtful when the break which the Middle Ages sought between nature and super-nature was found in nature itself, and when super-nature was done away with, as happened in Protestantism. While the Protestant interpretation of life, like the whole Renaissance, has a new affirmative attitude toward nature; in contrast to the Renaissance, it realizes the deep contradictions in nature. It does not flee from it into super-nature, as do the Middle Ages. It remains in nature; but it cannot remain naïvely in it, like Renaissance thought and Humanism, but remains in nature as the sphere of decision. The fundamental Protestant attitude is to stand in nature, taking upon oneself the inevitable reality; not to flee from it, either into the world of ideal forms or into the related world of super-nature, but to make decisions in concrete reality. Here the subject has no possibility of an absolute position. It cannot go out of the sphere of decision. Every part of its nature is affected by these contradictions. Fate and freedom reach into the act of knowledge and make it an historical deed: the Kairos determines the Logos.

From this point of view asceticism toward the Kairos is impossible and essentially contradictory. There can indeed be a scientific asceticism: the expedient abstention from the multiplicity of life for the purpose of concentrating the desire for knowledge. In this sense all successful action demands asceticism. But there can be no asceticism toward the demand of the Kairos, no avoidance of the decision. Idealism and supernaturalism, inner-worldly and super-worldly establishment of an absolute position of the subject, are flights from decision. Asceticism is a flight from the decisions which continually have to be made in this distorted existence.

But this conclusion has not been clearly drawn by Protestantism. There is a classical-humanistic

conception of knowledge. It is rational and static. And there is a medieval-Catholic conception of knowledge. It is super-rational and static. But there is no Protestant conception of knowledge. It has to be irrational and dynamic. That is the subject of this chapter.

There are religious attitudes which tend to assume an absolute position of the knowing subject. There is a *religious* attitude from which the absolute position of the subject is attacked. This attitude is the consciousness of standing in separation from the Unconditioned, and in the sphere of cleavage and decision, without being able to evade this situation

## *B. History and decision*

The religious consciousness of standing in the sphere of cleavage and alternatives opens up a stratum of being which is of the utmost importance in the metaphysics of knowledge. In order to understand it we ask: Which is the decision wherein according to the religious consciousness human knowledge participates? Generally speaking this decision can refer only to the Unconditioned, *i.e.*, a decision for or against the Unconditioned. For it is not a question of *any* cleavage in nature, but of contradiction in the human attitude to the Unconditioned. In regard to the Unconditioned, however, only a yes or a no is possible. And yet this formulation is abstract, for it expresses in no way what this yes or no signifies in the concrete situation, which alone has importance. Even more! If one uses the abstract formulation, is not a decision implied in this use? Is not the situation of deliberation with respect to the Unconditioned in itself a decision against the Unconditioned? Is not, religiously speaking the wavering between yes and no—a no toward God? And does not this consideration prompt the rejection of this whole strain of thought and therewith a negative answer to the question regarding the possibility of truth?

Such thoughts lie behind the Catholic doctrine of the supernatural grace, which raises one out of the world of unequivocal darkness into the world of unequivocal truth. Similarly they are behind certain forms of radical Protestantism, which point to the transcendent reality of God but rigorously deny his reality in this world. It is clear that by this means the doctrine of the decision-character of knowledge, the introduction of the knowing subject into the historical fate, is lost. Catholicism knows only two possibilities of an historical fate: to belong to the church or not to belong to it. Radical Protestantism knows only the one historical fate: to stand under divine judgment.

But the conclusion which is drawn from the abstract formulation of the matter does not lie in the nature of the matter itself. A decision in the direction of the Unconditioned cannot have the character of a single decision; it cannot stand beside other decisions, for then the Unconditioned would stand beside something else conditioned. The decision which is discussed here can be only a hidden, transcendental decision which is never apparent, but which may be the innermost meaning of each single decision. Not beside but within the single decision, does the decision regarding the Unconditioned find expression. However—and in this radical Protestantism is right—it is not true that the concrete single decision is unequivocal, that either a yes or a no is

expressed in it. The conflict indeed, is not eliminated, and therefore every decision is equivocal. The abstract assertion that in a cleft world there cannot be a final decision for God means practically that every human decision with respect to God is equivocal. Indeed, this ambiguity is the actual mark of concrete existence. In answer to radical Protestantism one can only say, that while there can be no unequivocal decision for God in the world-of cleavage, there can no more be an unequivocal decision against Him, and consequently that existence is not Satanic. The Satanic would consume all concreteness. Our decision, and that means our concrete, individual existence, our freedom and our fate, is anti-divine insofar as it is equivocal, but insofar as it is not unequivocally opposed to God, it is not Satanic. Being concrete and human, it is subject to divine judgment, but yet it is not entirely annihilated.

With these observations the essential character of history has become manifest. History exists where there is decision, namely a decision which is concrete, on the one hand, and which is rooted in the depth of the Unconditioned on the other hand. Decisions in the conditioned sphere mean nothing in themselves. As long as they do not have an unconditioned element in themselves they are, absolutely speaking, meaningless and do not contribute to the meaning of history. The critical school of German philosophy had the merit of emphasizing that individual events are the subject of historical research, while in natural sciences the general laws are sought. This distinction, is meaningful only if individuals are more than samples of some thing universal, either some being or some value. If individuality is to have unconditioned meaning, it must be interpreted as the appearance of a concrete, genuine decision which transcends itself. That such individualism is possible nowhere else but in the personal sphere, that is, where there is freedom and where there is fate, requires no proof. Everywhere else individualization remains imperfect. Everywhere else the individual is subjected to the universal.

### *C. Knowledge and decision*

It becomes necessary to ask whether we are really justified in drawing knowledge into the historical sphere of decision. One might say: If the center of the personality may stand in the concrete decision, knowledge lies to the side of this center. It is an extra-personal, therefore a technical occupation, and, like all technical things, is to be settled purely objectively according to the objective relations of things. There may indeed be a decision for science, but there is no decision *in* science which is more than a passing of judgment in doubtful cases. There is rational necessity in all knowledge and therefore possible progress in rational analysis of things.

At this point, of course, naturalism and supernaturalism which we previously treated jointly, separate. The supernatural conception does not approve of a truth without decision although limiting this decision to one moment in the history of mankind and of individuals. Indeed, even within philosophy there are conceptions, not only in what we called the second line of Occidental thinking, but also in the first, in which the decisive character of knowledge is brought to clear expression. Take, for example, Fichte and the manner in which he makes every philosophy dependent on the character of the philosopher. Such an idea accords with the

supernatural trend of thought. The main tendency of the methodical line, however, interprets knowledge without referring to history as a realm of decision.

The reverse is true of the second line. Although the philosophers of this trend of thought did not grasp the consequences of their interpretation of the world as a world of discord, some of those consequences still affected their systems. This, for example, is so with Schelling's presentation of the history of religion. Here it is clearly discernible that the dynamics of the historical powers must likewise draw the theoretical consciousness into the historical process. Consciousness is not capable of turning freely to the eternal forms at all times. It is always the battlefield of divine and demonic forces, and its knowledge is determined by the position of this battle. We will subsequently consider the operation of this thought in Hegel's philosophy of history. In Nietzsche it is essentially different. His position is remarkably equivocal. He fights for pure science, into whose waters, even if they are dirty, the truth seeker likes to dive, as long as they are not shallow. He offers energetic resistance to all interferences from the sphere of wish and feeling, even when religious. And yet he thinks consistently in terms of the Kairos. He knows that he is living in the hour of fate, the great moment, the beginning of the superman; he knows that one cannot think everything at all times and most surely not in all places of society. He knows that spirit is blood, and that only what is written in blood is worth reading and learning. With this, the decision-character of truth is brought to clear expression.

Thus far the question of the historical character of knowledge has never been put or answered with entire clarity. For even in Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others, the fateful character of their own decision is obscure because they place themselves as it were in the absolute era, in the last stage of history, at the beginning of the end. From this point to be sure they can admit that even knowledge has a fateful character for all the past. But they themselves are standing in an absolute place, which cannot be affected by history. They themselves are exempt from the danger of decision: a defiance of human limitations which led to catastrophe first of all with respect to Hegel's system.

The presupposition of all our thoughts was that truth is realized in a decision regarding the Unconditioned: stated in religious terms, that all knowledge of the truth in a certain stratum is knowledge of God. There is hardly a philosophy for which this statement would not be valid. In order to define it more exactly, we must consider the manner in which the relationship to God is to be understood. First of all, the possibility that is realized in rationalism of every form must be considered. God is identified with universality, eliminating by this means the element of decision in the relationship toward Him.

There is no doubt that an element of universal validity is contained in all knowledge. This, however, is not a contradiction but a presupposition of the historical character of knowledge. Decisions are made by the Ego, which insofar as it decides cannot itself be subjected to decisions. The profound quality of having a fate is peculiar to personality. Therefore the structure of personality itself cannot be subjected to change or fate. Only personality can be

confronted by the Unconditioned, can strive toward the Unconditioned. This means: Whether one is personality, whether one has fate, is not a possible subject of decision, since it is the necessary presupposition of decisions. This presupposition is implied in every act of knowledge. Without it there would be no situation of deciding at all. The question is: What is the character of this prerequisite of decision? Obviously all those structures which constitute an Ego and make it capable of deciding belong to it. As far as the self faces logical necessities and alternatives it rests within the security of the Logos.

But there is a second prerequisite of decision, namely the material in which it is carried out. The concrete decision, of course, is possible only in concrete material, in a formed, ambiguous world. This world is also a prerequisite of the decision. In order that personality can live in it as the material of its decision, it must stand opposite the Ego as a reality, foreign to it and yet capable of interpretation by it. Here, of course, no evidence but probability is demanded. The material is foreign to the Ego; it is given. It has the quality of not being part of the Ego. Its knowledge therefore can approach the ideal of evidence only in a slow progress. Here the Logos is estranged from itself, not, as before, remaining in itself. But even here the Logos is not in the Kairos, not in the sphere of decision. An epistemology whose problems lie between formal evidence and material probability, that is, an epistemology which lies between rationalism and empiricism, must miss the element of decision in all knowledge.

But such a doctrine overlooks a third element of knowledge which is neither formal nor material, and through which alone knowledge becomes a spiritual matter. It is not a question of the application of the form to the material, of the evident to the probable, that is, a question of "judgment." Judgment can be enhanced to the point of genius, but it does not therefore cease to be a technical function, withdrawn from decision in our sense. The third element of which we speak, is the meaningful interpretation of reality. We are not speaking of a religious-metaphysical interpretation of our world as a special task, but of an understanding of reality, such as is inherent in all scientific work. All knowledge, even the most exact, the most subject to methodical technique, contains fundamental interpretations rooted neither in formal evidence, nor in material probability, but in original views, in basic decisions. This third element is to be found not only in the method, not only in the philosophic and categorical foundations, with which the sciences work; rather does it penetrate deep into material knowledge. This becomes immediately clear in the productive understanding of norms, the religious, the moral, the esthetic, and so forth. The formal evidence here reaches only as far as the constitution of the field of meaning itself, no further, and no norm at all can be taken from the material. Where it comes to a concrete formation of norms, concrete decisions are effective, and only insofar as this is true are concrete sciences of norms meaningful. The situation is just as distinct in history. Where the collection of material and even ingenious judgment concerning the facts stop, historical understanding has manifestly the character of concrete decisions. But even in the three sciences that I would call sciences of Gestalt (biology, psychology, sociology) there is an element of interpretation, derived neither formally nor materially. And even in the physical sphere, yes, in the conceptions of logic and mathematics, this third element is noticeable. The

formative power of knowledge, its actual life as distinguished from its technical tools, is achieved in this third element. Now it is important to ascertain whether this aspect is not something which could become the object of perception itself in the act of knowing. If that were attempted, the third element itself, which is beyond the plane of form and material, would become a formed material. This, however, would rob it of its special character, and knowledge would again be withdrawn from the sphere of decision. Only in the metaphysical view can that which must remain in the background in science gain suggestive, symbolic expression.

The assertion that there is an element of decision in knowledge has nothing to do with the doctrine of the primacy of practical reason. The decision which is spoken of here is not a moral one. It is moral just as little as it is intellectual. It lies in the deeper stratum upon which both of these rest and which we designate but indistinctly when we term it religious, for it is also not a question of decision in the sense of a specifically religious attitude. What is meant is the attitude toward the Unconditioned, an attitude which is freedom and fate at the same time, and out of which action as well as knowledge flows. Therefore, in every period in which religion is dominant in social life, the will to truth is subject to a special and outstanding responsibility quite independent of the moral one. And no moral greatness can balance defection from the truth in such a period: the defection from truth is not equal to immorality, but to a conscious devotion to the demonic in practice. Both are considered as aspects of the one act in which the fundamental alienation from the Unconditioned is accomplished. Of course, there is a responsibility for the single act in the moral field as well as in knowledge. That provides the possibility of transferring the responsibility in the sphere of truth to the moral plane of technical exactness, conscientiousness or honesty, *i.e.*, of doing away with the element of decision contained in knowledge itself in favor of a moral attitude in scientific work. This conception, familiar to modern culture, is possible only because the transcendental relation to the true has been lost as well as the transcendental relation to the good. Whoever wants to understand knowledge through analyzing the single act, must necessarily divide it into a technical side (which can be expressed in scientific genius) and a moral side (which can be enhanced as far as asceticism). He cannot see the third element, the quality of freedom and fate belonging to knowledge. As soon as we break through this superficial consideration, the responsibility on both sides becomes infinite and direct: the responsibility toward the true is as great as the responsibility toward the good, or rather, it is *one* responsibility. There can be no question here of a primacy of practical reason.

In this third element of knowledge its decisive character, its genuine historic quality, its position in fate and in the Kairos is rooted.

#### *D. Method and attitude in knowledge*

We now ask what significance our line of thought may have for scientific work. Does it lead to a new method or merely an interpretation of old methods? In reply we must first repeat that the third element of perception is not an object which might occur in the act of perception itself.

Otherwise a new third element would have to be sought in turn for this act of knowledge, etc. The third element is that which can never become an object in the act of knowledge itself and which therefore naturally had to remain hidden from the formalistic and empirical epistemology. It can become an object only for the metaphysics of knowledge. In the same way, style never lies in the intention of the creative artist, not even when he consciously follows a previous style. He can never consciously give himself *his* style. The style (the third element in artistic creation) is apparent only to the historian or observer of art (who under certain circumstances can be the same person as the artist). In the act of knowledge, as well as in the act of artistic production, the duality of form and material is realized. As soon as attention is directed to the third element, freedom and fate are lost, and subjective arbitrariness controlled by psychological necessity replaces them. Only in the severest methodical concentration can that objectivity be reached which can become the fate of a time. Here lies the whole gravity of the task of knowledge, the necessary asceticism which is not an asceticism toward the Kairos but toward subjectivity. For subjectivity is always "akairos." (This warning is extremely important at the present moment, when servile philosophers in dictatorial Countries abuse the philosophy of Kairos by identifying truth and power, or truth and political leadership, or truth and blood. They distort the idea of decision in knowledge by confusing decision and subjective arbitrariness. I am afraid that there is a danger of this kind in Pragmatism too.) So, for example, in the interpretation of documents from the past, it is not permitted to pass over the methodically correct comprehension of the "actual meaning" of the text. All subjective interpretation is arbitrariness and servitude, separating us from the truth. In this respect progress, improvement, and successful steps of scientific asceticism are possible. And it is just when this happens, when methodical severity combines with pure devotion to matter, that the understanding of the past becomes a living, creative deed, re-creating the past— an achievement of great historians. This is the effect of the third element in knowledge. The same is true regarding nature, where every will to be creative is less important than the smallest exact observation. Here lies the reason for the dangerous and unconvincing character of the romantic philosophy of nature, in perfect analogy with the encroachment of moral or political tendencies on historical writing. If the third element of knowledge is intended, the consequence is a corrupt empiricism. It seems, therefore, that the statement regarding the fateful and decisive element in knowledge had no methodical significance at all; but this is not true. To be sure, the methodical technique is not directly touched by it. The scientific method has its own value which it validates and constantly perfects in its experiments. But this fact does not absolve the average scientist from a serious challenge in regard to his spiritual attitude toward the object of his research. His usual attitude may be characterized as one of estrangement from the object, of desire to dominate it. The vital relation between the scientist and the object is thus lost.

This attitude corresponds to the belief in the absolute object. The fateful connection of the scientist with existence is denied and from this the demand for uninterested perception is derived. Insofar as interest means subjectivity, its exclusion is a prerequisite of truth. Insofar as it means connection with life, its intensity is decisive in the value of knowledge. It follows that the attitude of knowledge must not be strangeness but intimacy, not distance from but nearness to life. The community between the knowing and the known must be expressed in every

scientific work. Such a community of fate, however, means a community before the Unconditioned. Thus, no contacts with the surface are demanded. No "stream of life" in some impressionistic, subjective sense is meant, but on the contrary the community in responsibility with the life that touches us—and that impinges, indirectly, on all life. In order to reach reality, we need not only a methodical technique but also a methodical attitude. Recent periods have brought the technical side of method to a high degree of perfection. Of the inner attitude they knew nothing. There were earlier times which knew much about the attitude in scientific work and little of the technique of method. We cannot return to them, but we can again appreciate them and above all, we can learn from them that the way to the innermost kernel of things is always simultaneously the way to the stratum in which they stand in fateful connection before the Unconditioned. The "Itinerarium mentis ad res" is possible only as an "Itinerarium mentis ad Deum." That is valid for the judgment of those movements in the present that try to assume a fundamental change in the attitude of knowledge, for example, the philosophy of life. To it indeed we owe a considerable step forward on the path to community with the living, but it remains stuck fast in the biological sphere and therefore does not lead on to the profound connection with the living. This is equally true of phenomenology, which was a still more important departure from the technical and dominating attitude toward things, but which came to a standstill in formality or threw aside the technical element of method with perilous haste. This is also true of the new view of history, which approaches history with the presupposition that it concerns the historian, and makes an effort to proceed to the depth of things, where they have an infinite meaning. A similar tendency may be found in part in the school of Dilthey and George. The measure of judging these attempts, however, must always remain in the stratum in which the union of the present with what is past takes place. And absolutely serious union and understanding is reached only when one approaches things with the question of the decision of life itself and with the expectation that they will contribute to this decision. Here lies the problem of "theological" exegesis. Exploration passes over into devotion; it takes on religious qualities without being allowed to lose its technical form. The right union of these tendencies, namely an inner tension leading to transcendence and a methodical technique is the ideal method of knowledge.

By this consideration, a fundamental insight into the limits of perception is gained. It is possible, indeed, to apply methods of scientific technique without limits to every object. This is both unobjectionable and necessary. It becomes questionable only when one forgets that preliminary conditions are furnished for truth in this manner but that the truth is not yet grasped. The possibility of recognizing truth is dependent on decision and fate and cannot be separated from the Kairos.

Not every reality is disclosed to even the most penetrating analysis and to the most exacting science. Only that reality can be grasped with which the seeker is connected through history and fate. This does not remove the obligation to make an effort for all reality, partly because each is connected with all, and partly because no one and no time knows *a priori* whether the way of knowledge is leading. Yet individuals and eras must sometimes know when to halt instinctively

and when to press forward is futile. It is necessary to realize this in order to meet the arrogance of the illusionary absolute standpoint in thinking and to point out the limits which the Kairos has set for the realization of the Logos.

In the last analysis this is valid even for pure method. Even method is not only technique; it is also conditioned and decisively conditioned by the attitude. That is the reason why, in spite of its technical aspect, that not every method is possible at all times; rather is it that just in the method is first revealed what is timely according to fate, what paths the Kairos opens up for the Logos.

### **3. KAIROS AND LOGOS AS A PROBLEM OF BEING**

#### *A. Reality and fate*

From the point of view of reality, the following objection can be raised to the whole train of thought which starts out from knowledge: Should not the real be grasped in knowledge, and is not the real a unity? Is not therefore every decision of the subject—subjective and thus untrue? Does not the impossibility of truth follow from the historical character of knowledge? Is not the dethronement of the absolute subject at the same time a dethronement of the knowing subject? Indeed, one could go further and say: Is not the pragmatic theory of knowledge renewed therewith; is not knowledge robbed of its material significance in the last analysis? Of course, when one speaks thus, one ought not to cite the usual biological pragmatism, but one might perhaps speak of a religious pragmatism. Let us examine this idea for a moment: Obviously a religious pragmatism would be one in which the norm for the formation of concepts was the attitude to God. The decision regarding the Unconditioned would be the origin of the formation of concepts, which would have no other meaning than to justify this decision and attitude. If we assume this statement to be true, then it would mean that the subject in its formation of concepts does not want to express anything subjective, but, on the contrary, just that object to which it sacrifices its subjectivity, the Unconditioned. As soon as pragmatism were to become religious, therefore, it would transcend itself, for to speak truth regarding one's attitude to the Unconditioned, would mean to speak truth altogether. The level would be reached in which the contrast of theory and practice, that is, pragmatism would be eliminated.

Yet it is necessary to answer the questions directly and positively. It is necessary to examine the concept of reality itself.

In this enterprise it is expedient to start from certain solutions which can be found in Hegel on the one side, in Marx on the other. Both are of outstanding importance for our problem. Both have attempted to unite ideal norms and historical reality, Hegel, by making history subject to ideality in interpreting history in logical terms; Marx, by making ideality subject to history in interpreting ideas as products of historical situations. It has never yet been shown with sufficient

clarity that in both the turn toward a fundamentally new definition of the relationship between reality and truth is present, namely in the direction of a dynamic concept of truth and reality.

For Hegel the ultimate reality of history is rational in it, *i.e.*, the rational concept which realizes itself in history. The important thing, however, is this, that the idea, or better, the series of ideas, is realized in such a way that it enters into a concrete historical form, not as a thought of somebody, but as the essential reality of an historical situation. Hegel calls the decisive historical power the *Volksgeist* (the spirit of a tribe or nation). In it the idea is incorporated. This raises a serious problem. The tribe or nation, aside from its spirit, is a biological-sociological reality with many-sided will to life and power, and consequently its relationship to any idea is ambiguous. The group can serve the idea as well as resist it. How does the fusion of vital and ideal tendencies take place? According to Hegel, in this way: the idea shrewdly uses even the resisting tendencies in order to reach its goal. But the picture of the shrewd idea is no solution of the problem. The idea in itself is not an acting creature; it becomes powerful only in unity with acting men. But this unity is possible only, if there is no real resistance to be overcome by the idea. The idea has no power of overcoming; it is powerless in itself. The solution of the problem from the point of view of Hegelian thought is the doctrine of the prestabilized harmony of idea and history, and there can be no doubt that this thought is in the background of Hegel's picture. This, however, means historical determinism, and therefore the destruction of real history because the new, the unexpected, the "leap" belong essentially to history.

In Marx—the genuine, not the materialistically mutilated Marx—productive society is the ultimate reality and ideas are only reflections of a special situation of society in the mirror of intellect. The totality of such ideas is the ideology of a social group. The word ideology has become more and more a designation of thoughts that are used by a social group in order to justify its political and economic power, especially in situations where this power contradicts the actual historic situation. This is not the original meaning of the word ideology, but a use of it for purposes of agitation. We must admit, however, that this use of the word is not entirely unjustified, since from the very beginning it was meant to question the objective truth of concepts.

If ideology designates the true expression of a certain situation of society and the situation of society at the time is the real thing, then the word ideology contains no negation of the idea of truth, insofar as truth demands the agreement of perception and reality. Only this is new that reality itself is interpreted as something changeable in its essence. Consequently the concepts in which the essence of reality is grasped, must themselves be changeable, if truth is claimed for them. This important problem is implied in the word ideology, but the answer that has been given thus far is insufficient. First of all the formal objection must be raised that the assertion of the ideological character of thinking must allow at least one exception, namely this assertion itself. If this also is nothing but ideology it is only the expression of a special social situation and cannot even try to claim universal validity. Furthermore, if we identify reality with social structure we lose the reality of nature as well as of past history. This was by no means the

intention of Marx, who agreed completely with a belief in objective sciences, but what position this belief takes toward the concept of ideology, what ideology is in the true sense, what objective truth is,—these questions Marx did not ask himself; and later Marxism was not even capable of it as a result of its materialistic naïveté.

And yet it was no accident that the question of the dynamic character of truth and reality was asked on the basis of intense activity by the leader of a movement for which that was a life-question, although it might remain only an interesting problem for the mere observer: the dependence of the intellectual life on the social and economic situation. A victory for the movement was not possible so long as its opponents could maintain the sanctity of their intellectual creations. The concept of ideology was a weapon of demonic power for the purpose of destroying all the hallowed truths of bourgeois and feudal culture. And it is easy to understand that Socialism does not renounce such a weapon despite the obvious difficulty of this concept. Moreover, it serves Socialism in other ways than as a weapon. The numerous endeavors which group around the concept of proletarian culture find there an ideological point of departure. It is urgent that "bourgeois science" should pay considerably more attention to these theories than before, not in order to "refute" them, but, on the contrary, to understand them, and that means to continue to develop them.

The further development is now to be tried in the following direction. The third stratum in knowledge besides pure form and pure material, the qualitatively changeable, actually historical stratum is to be interpreted not only from the point of view of knowledge, but from reality as well. Starting out from knowledge, we have defined it as the sphere of decision, and moreover we have seen that the decision is a decision with respect to the Unconditioned, and we had spoken of the ambiguity of every decision. In this concept of ambiguity we had found the root of individuality, the place where individuality gains metaphysical meaning. This assertion, however, is one-sided in that it starts out with the individual in his detachment from the community and world and therefore presupposes an abstract concept of freedom. We meant, however, only the freedom which is rooted in fate, and we have expressed this many times. Nevertheless the element of freedom implied in fate received primary emphasis. The time has come to ask about the element of fate implied in freedom. This question leads us directly to the question of the nature of reality. It becomes clear: In the "decision," the deciding ego is not opposite to reality but remains connected with it. If it were otherwise, the false presumption of an "absolute subject" would be defeated, but the arbitrarily relative subject would have taken its place and thereby the idea of truth would have been destroyed.

Then again, if decision is simultaneously taken to mean freedom and fate, isolation and connection, this failure is made impossible. The same can be shown in another way: if the accidentally filled subject were to take the place of the empty absolute subject in knowledge, the sphere of decision would not be reached at all, for subjectivity is given by nature; it is pre-intellectual, pre-personal, the material of decision but not actual decision. It is especially important to protect the doctrine of the historical quality of truth against the reproach that it

further subjectivity in scientific work. Subjectivity is a prehistoric category. The historical categories are freedom and fate. Where fate is discussed, the connection of the free deed—only what is free has fate—with the whole of existence is recognized, but not with existence insofar as it rests in itself but insofar as it stands before the Unconditioned. Only where this relation of existence is meant, rather than that which constantly vacillates between accident and necessity can one speak of fate. Just as freedom stands objectively before the Unconditioned, so fate stands objectively before it. Both are one in every event which constitutes history.

The free act of the decision in knowledge is therefore one with the fate of the existing thinker, in whom the deed occurs. The free decision in knowledge, at the same time, is the expression of the fate in which the thinker stands :—presupposing that his deed is free and not arbitrary and that his connection with reality is fate and not mechanical necessity. Knowledge is true insofar as it is subjectively free, and objectively fate. Then and only then is it the expression of existence and thus in agreement with its object. Even customary speech knows thoughts which are the fate of a time, and means thereby those thoughts wherein the actual profundity of an epoch, its position before the Unconditioned is given creative, *i.e.*, free expression.

In the third level of knowledge therefore the fatefulness of reality and the depth of life are effective. Reality also has an aspect which is subject to neither an empirical nor a rational necessity. It is fate and is therefore recognized only in the freedom of decision. But where such free—not arbitrary decision occurs, there this aspect of reality, fate, is effective. The third element of knowledge thus corresponds to a third element of being. The transcendental stratum of knowledge corresponds to the transcendental stratum of being.

## *B. Idea and fate*

The dynamic conception of reality, which we have approached in our last discussion, needs more thorough explanation so that its significance for knowledge can be made evident. We are led to the question how far knowledge that is the true interpretation of reality is possible, when reality itself is dynamic; while truth is usually considered the static element in every change. How is it possible to grasp the nature of that which is changing, if the nature itself is not withdrawn from the change? If reality has fateful character in the depth of its essence, how then is the perception of essence possible? This question brings us to the problem of the idea.

No matter how the idea in the Platonic sense is to be understood, whether more epistemologically, or ontologically; at all events one thing is included in its concept; that it means the immutable element in being, the unchanging element of reality, that which is withdrawn from time,—and from which everything temporal lives by participating in it. The static, resting character of the idea in the Platonic sense is indubitable. It cannot even be doubted when the idea is drawn from its transcendental place into the things themselves, as in Aristotle, or when it is considered as a thought or as the first Hypostasis of God, as with the later

academicians and Plotinus. The world of the eternal ideas is not touched by the flow of time; the eternal "son" is not subject to growth. These thoughts are all the more important, in view of their close connection to the practical attitude of antiquity. The will to overcome practical historical existence, the high estimate placed on pure observation, later asceticism, the goal of which is finally the unification with the super-being: all this is derived from the static conception of the idea. In the West, too, the state of things was not essentially different. To be sure, for the methodical line of modern philosophy, the Platonic doctrine of ideas was minimized to an increasing extent, but the concept of laws which took its place had a similar static character, notwithstanding all the dynamics of its application. And all *a priori* theory, critical as well as phenomenological, is static and can enter into the closest connection with the antique doctrine of ideas. For Schelling, too, there was no doubt of the static character of the idea. Yet at one point his departure from the opinion of antiquity showed plainly: he related the ideas in a polar relationship. The dualistic and dynamic principle of his natural philosophy entered into his interpretation of ideas.

This brings us to the second, irrationalistic line of Western philosophy, and above all to Jakob Böhme. Böhme also has a doctrine of ideas which in most of its formulations lies within the compass of Neoplatonism; and yet there is in it something that must break through these confines: the polarity and tension in the world of ideas. For Böhme the world of ideas is the revelation of the divine abyss, which unfolds in it, but the unfolding takes place dualistically, through the contrast of the dark, egoistic, contractive principle with the light, kindly, communicative principle. To be sure this contrast is eliminated in eternity. The dark principle in eternity is the ground of the light one. It is in the place where it belongs, in which it forms the depth and power of ideas. Therefore, unity, harmony, contrasts are in the world of idea, *i.e.*, in the unbroken, divine self-unfolding, but only in play. But this play contains within itself a threat; it can become serious. Namely, when the dark principle does not remain at the bottom, but rises, becomes excited and as fury destroys the harmony of love. That happened, and this happening is the fall of "Lucifer," in Schelling the fall of the "transcendent man of the idea" and with him of the world of idea altogether.

What is the logical content of this myth? Obviously, that the idea itself is the dynamic element that leads to history. The world of ideas is not only the principle of completion, but in it there is an ambiguity, a threat, a power to enter into conflict with itself, to rush forward to the historical revelation of the contrasting elements unified in it. Böhme's world of ideas and that of Schelling, in his later period, rushes toward history, not by rational necessity but with a leap, a leap that is potentially in the idea, so to speak, as its inner temptation. While the Platonic idea offers eternal rest, the idea of Böhme is a unity of rest and unrest, a movable, in itself questionable, being, pregnant with infinite tensions. The idea has inner infinity, not indeed for a supposed observer but for itself, and every one who regards it is drawn into the inner infinity of the idea. There is indeed a rest, an eternal, static element in it; otherwise it would not be idea, and the unrest would have no resistance, no immutable point through which it could become evident as unrest, but this static element is not to be severed from the dynamic. Therefore

whoever regards the idea can never come to rest in it. Since, however, no absolute subject of perception is possible without rest, all interpretations of the idea can be only ambiguous, just as every factor of the inner infinity of the idea is finite and therefore ambiguous. This means, however, that there can be no comprehension of the essential nature of things except in decision, because the nature of things itself stands in fate and ambiguity.

Only where the dynamic interpretation of the idea is applied, is history a genuine object of knowledge, and knowledge itself is drawn into history without a destruction of the idea of truth. A philosophical understanding of history and a corresponding metaphysics of history can be established on the basis of this dynamic concept of truth. But the next question is whether the dynamic doctrine of ideas has meaning for nature, too. Nature with its forms and laws is always a heavy weight on the scale of thought for a static and against a dynamic epistemology. This is particularly true where nature is under the rule of mathematical form, and therefore is removed almost completely from the decisive character of perception. Consequently it seems that one should feel that even as a static doctrine of ideas was the background of the perception of nature, so a dynamic doctrine of ideas must become the background for the perception of history.

But the contrast of nature and history is correct for our considerations only as far as there is a polarity of rest and unrest, of statics and dynamics, of eternity and infinity of the idea. To tear apart nature and history and distribute them to two kinds of metaphysics would mean to disrupt genuine elements of reality.

This can be clarified from both sides. We have seen that individuality gains its depth and significance in decision. Now it is obvious that individuality in the psychological and sociological sense rests on a natural basis, and that this natural basis is indissolubly joined with the biological, physical, indeed with the totality of microcosmic and macrocosmic happenings. This, however, means that history is not a separate sphere of abstract freedom over or beside nature; rather it is one aspect of events, which at every moment also contain the other aspect: nature and the totality of its relationships. All history is also nature. An idealism of freedom which overlooks this unity remains abstract and elicits a naturalistic opposition. It is therefore impossible to combine a dynamic metaphysics of history with a static metaphysics of nature. Historical dynamics become pure imagination, if there are no dynamic qualities in nature; and consequently, the static necessity of nature makes all historical happenings a complicated example of universal laws. The opposite is equally true: nature at every moment holds something within itself which is not to be determined by static and immutable laws. That nature is, as it is, with these qualities—and no matter how many of them could be traced back to quantities, the original quality cannot be eliminated—is not derivable; it is fate and therefore implies freedom. The meaning of this original quality of nature, of this underivable existence, finds its highest expression in history. In history, fate becomes visible as fate, implying freedom. In history, nature expresses its mystery: freedom and fate.

It is therefore shown that the metaphysics of history necessarily draw the metaphysics of nature

into new paths. Into paths which were never strange to the mythical consciousness, but which were neglected for a long time in the interests of rational knowledge and control of nature, although they present themselves most emphatically to the unbiased observation of nature.

Essence and fate are not strange to each other: that is the conclusion of this argument. Fate belongs to essential being. The idea is inwardly infinite; it does not contrast with existence as eternal completion, in which existence imperfectly participates, but drives on toward existence, toward the pouring out of its inner infinity in the historic fate. Recognizing reality is recognizing reality as it stands in the historical fate, not beyond it. Therefore the knowledge of ideas is never complete and cannot even approach this state, as phenomenology thought. The knowledge of ideas participates in the inner infinity of ideas. An intuitive view of ideas is not a view of the resting idea in an—perhaps outstanding but always accidental—example. It is a view of the idea in its historic fate. The participation of the things in the idea corresponds just as seriously to the participation of the idea in the things. The Logos becomes flesh; it enters into time and reveals its inner infinity.

### *C. Dialectics and fate*

Dialectics is the art of determining the relation of ideas to one another and to existence. One is led beyond this subjective use of the word dialectics by the reflection that dialectics grasps truth only when the ideas themselves bear a relationship to one another and to existence, to which the dialectic form is suited; in other words: when the ideas themselves are dialectical. Thus, from an art of discovering relationships, dialectics becomes an expression for a certain kind of actual relationship. The word is to be understood here in this latter sense. We ask therefore: Setting out from our presuppositions, what form does the relationship of the ideas to one another and to existence take, and what ways must dialectical thinking travel therefore in order to comprehend these connections?

If we begin with the consideration of the relationship of idea and existence we first establish the proposition that if the doctrine of the inner infinity of the idea is right, then existence means that the infinity of the idea becomes manifest. This manifestation, moreover, is realization. If the idea were complete in itself, if it were finished, if the picture of the circle returning into itself held good for it, existence could only be interpreted as the defection of the idea from itself, as a lessening of its reality, at best as existence in contrast to essence. If, however, the idea is infinite in itself, and therefore has within it, namely in its essence the element of unrest, of ambiguity, existence is realization, the idea has historic fate, the contrast of essence and appearance is removed.

We therefore reject the definition of the relationship of essence and existence, which makes the essence unhistorical, without fate, and degrades existence in the scale of being and value in comparison with essence. Dialectics is observation of the essence, insofar as essence is in the hands of fate; not of the essence, insofar as it remains without fate.

For the Greeks the idea is without fate, but the fate of existence is tragic; it is subject to the demonic law of the demiurge. In the whole of late antiquity and beyond it in wide strata of medieval thinking this conception remains effective. By inner necessity it changes dialectics into asceticism and pure theory.

The first important attempt to grasp the idea dynamically, to understand its inner infinity and with this its entrance into existence, is Hegel's dialectics. The idea becomes concrete; it becomes individualized; it enters into history; it experiences a fate. Here, and nowhere as much as here, the greatness of Hegelian thinking is manifest. He knows the meaning of historic fate; and yet his solution is inadequate. In the last moment essence triumphs over existence, completion over infinity, and the static over the dynamic. The philosopher places himself at the point in history where history has spoken its decisive word, where the whole road can be surveyed, where the circle has closed. With this, however, the idea is robbed of its fateful character. It became richer through its entrance into history; but it is not inexhaustible; its inner infinity does not hang as a threat over every existence, even the most filled. Therefore the Logos rules over the Kairos. In the emphasis on the necessity of dialectical progress, the ambiguity of every realization is overlooked. The possibility that the whole process gets a new meaning by a new realization of the infinite idea is denied.

With this we have come to the second basic question of dialectics, the question of the relationship of ideas among themselves. For the static conception of being, the world of ideas is just as much closed in itself as the single idea *is* complete in itself. It is a hierarchy, a completed structure, in which the one idea is implied in the other, in which there is no "seriousness of separation," as Hegel says of the idea in the stage of mere potentiality. The flight from one another, the impact against one another, the battle, are the fate of existence and are unessential for the relationship of ideas in themselves. "The war," of which Heraclitus spoke, his dual road of the real, his ambiguity of all things, is admitted for existence but not for essence. The relationship of ideas can be unequivocally determined, the world-structure can be intuitively grasped. Or, speaking in Kantian terms, the unity of the manifold, the synthesis of the syntheses, is the goal of the infinite process.

Here, too, the greatness of Hegel shows itself; he knows the "yes" and "no" in the idea itself; he knows the contradiction that rushes from idea to idea. No one has seen the ambiguity of the essence as he has. The employment of ambiguity as a principle of historical dialectics is an intellectual achievement of decisive importance. Hegel's limitation at this point consists in this, that in his thought the ambiguity is removed if we look at it from the point of view of the total process, the contradiction thus losing seriousness. The necessity of the synthesis makes the antithesis an element of the whole, and does not permit the advent of a serious contradiction of the whole. History is taken into the synthesis of syntheses, but it is not a challenge to every conceivable completed synthesis.

Thus the demand is substantiated, which must be made of future dialectics: it must try to grasp the relationship of the ideas, the structure of the essential, in such a way that the ambiguity of every solution becomes visible in the solution itself. The solution must not be renounced, for that would mean renunciation of dialectics and at the same time of knowledge of truth. Yet no solution can make the attempt to escape from the threat which is included in the inner inexhaustibility of the idea. And above all: the dialectics may be pictured neither as a straight line nor as a completed circle. The idea which is infinite in itself proves its inexhaustibility, its threat of every existence by entering into the real contradiction, by creating out of its depth the unexpected, the unordered, the new.

On the other hand, it does not therefore cease to be idea, and dialectics does not cease to be dialectics. To deny a straight line and a closed circle does not mean to affirm the meaninglessness of the world. As in the depths of the idea itself, identity unites with inner infinity, clearness with inexhaustibility, so dialectics must show that unequivocal elements and ambiguous elements are united in every being: the unequivocal elements, without which it would be impossible to name the beings, the ambiguous elements which question every name and concept; not for the sake of a better name—as in the idea of progress—but for the sake of a new name, which expresses a new emergence out of the profundity of the idea.

The idea stands in fate which finally means that our perception of the idea is not flight from existence to the idea, not approximation of existence to the idea, but the fate of the idea in existence. Our knowledge itself is not only an expression; it is at the same time a realization of the fate of the idea. Dialectics is the attempt to comprehend the fate of the ideas from our Kairos, from the fate of our period. Because this attempt recognizes itself as fate, it does not transcend fate but remains within it. It knows itself to be an expression of the essentially infinite being. It knows itself to be joined to the universal fate, and knows that it is possible at all in its various forms only because of this union. It also knows that the universal fate is connected with it and thus achieves a new reality. In this reciprocal effect of the understanding of present and past, of the self and the other, the unity of Kairos and Logos is realized.

#### **4. KAIROS AND THE ABSOLUTE POSITION**

The doctrine of the character of knowledge as a decision, like everything that makes truth relative, elicits the objection that this doctrine makes itself relative and thus refutes itself, if the doctrine of the character of knowledge as a decision is itself a decision, then its judgment about the ambiguity of being and knowing is also ambiguous. What is true, however, of all knowledge cannot be true of the knowledge of knowledge, otherwise it would cease to have universal significance. On the other hand, if an exception is admitted, then for one bit of reality the equivocal character of being is broken. The point of view of the Unconditioned would be reached at one point. Is that possible? It would be impossible if the removal of the ambiguity of existence were to occur at any place in existence. Whatever stands in the context of knowledge is subject to the ambiguity of knowledge. Therefore such a proposition must be removed from

the context of knowledge. It must arise from another sphere than that of knowledge. It must be the expression of the relation of knowledge to the Unconditioned and therefore the expression of a basic metaphysical attitude. Our exposition leads inevitably to this conclusion. The judgment that is removed from ambiguity, the judgment of absolute unequivocal truth, can be only the fundamental judgment about the relationship of the Unconditioned and conditioned. At this point the subjectivity of the knower and the ambiguity of the known are excluded. The content of this judgment is just this—that our subjective thinking never can reach the unconditioned truth, that it must always remain in the realm of ambiguity. This judgment is plainly the absolute judgment which is independent of all its forms of expression, even of the one by which it is expressed here. It is the judgment which constitutes truth as truth. There is nothing that could escape this judgment. Yet it itself is the premise for all judging, questioning, answering. One therefore really has no right to call it a judgment in a particular sense; it is rather the metaphysical meaning implied in judging. If, as here, it is made an articulate judgment, it loses as such the dignity that belongs to it as the meaning of judgment, it enters the context of knowledge and thereby is subject to transcendent criticism. The absolute standpoint is therefore a position which can never be taken; rather it is the guard which protects the Unconditioned, averting the encroachment of a conditioned point of view on the sphere of the Unconditioned. But the guardian is not the guarded, and if it claims to be such, it is the very one which abandons the watch and injures the holy. With these concepts the position of beliefful relativism is grasped, *i.e.*, of that relativism which overcomes relativism.

The problem of relativism or of the absolute position can be answered in three steps: relativity in the sense of infinite progress is valid for the relationship of form and material of knowledge. Here there is no absolute standpoint except the one of pure form, through which, however, nothing real is recognized. The second step lies in what we have called the element of decision in knowledge and the element of fate in being. Here arise the concrete convictions the relativity of which does not come into consideration as methodical doubt and progress, but as ambiguity of the concrete fate. Judgment here replaces doubt; and creation, progress. The third step, finally, is none other than the revelation of this ambiguity of all knowledge, that is, the guardian position which prevents any knowledge from pretensions to unconditioned validity.

We have characterized the absolute standpoint as a guardian standpoint, as one which is not actually a position, but only a battle constantly changing with the opponent, against any standpoint that wants to set itself up as unconditioned. But the guardian is at the same time the one who points to the sanctuary he guards. His existence itself is an indication. The absolute standpoint, that is, the point from which relativism is overcome, is possible only as an indication and defense at the same time. Thus the basic principle of Protestantism, the principle of justification through faith is applied to the question of truth—namely, that in the context of existence a visible realization of the holy is not possible, that all existence remains ambiguous with respect to the Unconditioned. This ambiguity, however, is not meant in the moral but in the religious sense. It reveals itself in morality also, but not only there. The fact that Protestantism frequently applied and still applies the theory of justification exclusively to morals, supported a

moralistic dissolution of the basic Protestant principle. At the same time it made it possible for Humanism to carry through a fateless, abstract idea of truth and to seize truth for itself. Theological thinking was forced out of the sphere of truth into that of morality. The abstract thought of truth is sadly shaken at the present time. The question therefore arises whether a return to the absolute position of scholasticism shall take place, a position which will not resign itself to being guardian and indication but seeks to be an absolute standpoint itself. If this way is not possible, however—and it would be possible only through a catastrophe and a return of all Western spiritual life to primitive conditions—there remains only the alternative that the guardian point of view of Protestantism toward the question of truth be assumed. This is the burden of our argument in this discussion. It is the honest expression of our situation, suited to reality and the Kairos. The Protestant idea of truth is the concept of truth which is actually living, full of tension, disturbing reality and the spirit. Protestant ethics, its tensions and its greatness has always been fully appreciated but the Protestant concept of truth has never been developed. As a result, Protestant knowledge fell into a crisis completely unsolved until now. If this crisis is not to be concluded negatively and Protestantism is not to end in profane morals, a solution of the crisis must be found. Protestantism has a right to the consciousness of carrying in it a principle that is as yet fully inexhausted and that is of decisive, liberating and constructive significance in the problem of truth.

The doctrine of the guardian character of the absolute position gives the concept of the Kairos its final fulfillment. A moment of time, an event, deserves the name of Kairos, fullness of time in the precise sense, if it can be regarded in its relation to the Unconditioned, if it speaks of the Unconditioned, and if to speak of it is at the same time to speak of the Unconditioned. To look at a time thus, means to look at it in its truth. The truth of a time is its attitude toward the Unconditioned, by which it is supported and directed. Knowledge born in the situation of the Kairos then is not knowledge growing out of accidental arbitrary events of a period but out of the period's basic significance. Therefore in all our considerations we spoke of fate and understood in this word time's being supported by the eternal. True knowledge is not absolute knowledge. The guardian puts an end to this arrogance; on the contrary, true knowledge is knowledge born of the Kairos, that is, of the fate of the time, of the point at which time is disturbed by eternity.

The dynamic thought of truth seems to throw the knowing subject into boundlessness and instability, and it is comprehensible that the longing for limits and firmness rises against it, even if the stability is looked upon only as an ideal. Yet the actual danger for knowledge lies not in the dynamic but in the static idea of truth. The static idea constantly places the spirit before the alternative: to be one with truth or to be separated from the truth. And the attempted mediation by the idea of progress which tries to approach truth infinitely, falls completely on the negative side of the alternative. Here the case is as with the religious attitude of the mystics: unity with God, deification, or separation from God, distance from God: in this oscillation to and fro the life of the mystic passes. Life in the static idea of truth is also engaged in this same oscillation, insofar as it possesses sufficient seriousness and sufficient depth. Relativism is the weakening of

the static idea of truth, which occurs as soon as consciousness seeks to escape from the desperation of that alternative. The dynamic thought of truth is not relativistic. It has nothing statically absolute, in reference to which it can be called relative, while the static thought of truth forces one to relativism, as soon as the arrogance of the absolute position is broken down. The dynamic thought of truth overcomes the alternative "absolute-relative." The Kairos, the fateful moment of knowledge is absolute, insofar as it places one at this moment before the absolute decision for or against the truth, and it is relative, insofar as it knows that this decision is possible only as a concrete decision, as the fate of the time. Thus the Kairos serves to reveal rather than conceal the Logos.

# **The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich**

## **Part Three: Political Categories of the Interpretation of History**

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

### **I: The Problem of Power**

#### **Attempt at a Philosophical Interpretation**

Every analysis of socialistic ideology must ask: What elements of bourgeois ideology has Socialism taken over? Has it done so consciously or unconsciously, impelled by the irresistible force of the general social situation? And— whether conscious or unconscious—is the assumption necessary or not from the socialistic premise; is it justified or not?

Socialism possesses the most thoroughly elaborated theory of society. To every theory of society there belongs a conception of the object of socialization, of man. And since man stands within nature, and phenomena of socialization are present in nature also, a conception of nature belongs to every theory of society as well. The socialistic theory of society lacks neither, but neither has become explicit in it. The theory of man and nature of the anti-idealistic tendencies of the nineteenth century determines the socialistic conception of nature and man. Feuerbach has the strongest influence. He provides the anthropological basis for the doctrine of ideology. And philosophical Positivism provides the horizon of the whole world picture. Historically this is comprehensible. Idealism was the expression of a conservative bourgeois society, interspersed with feudal elements, which was able to offer no serious resistance either spiritually or politically to the reaction, while the anti-idealistic ideas were represented by the revolutionary groups of the bourgeoisie. Socialism was first forced to depend on the ideology of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. To be sure, it also immediately entered into conflict with the latter, but the conflict did not dissolve the common basis. Granted, it attempted to strip off the

bourgeois qualities and retain the revolutionary, but revolution as such has no ideology. What Socialism took over was still bourgeois-revolutionary ideology despite all transformation of its substance.

The historical necessity, which lent to rising Socialism the concept of nature and man belonging to revolutionary bourgeois society, is not a necessity intrinsic in the nature of Socialism as such. And if in the present, the theories of nature and man are in the process of decisive change, the task arises for Socialism of re-examining its presuppositions, and in case of need, transforming them. It cannot reject the new theories for fear that they are late-capitalistic ideology. Even if it harbor this suspicion, it must examine them objectively and can only consider its suspicions proved when examination has shown their theoretical untenability. If negative proof fails—and I believe that it is doomed to failure in spite of the whole unclarified state of our new thinking—then there arises the positive task of uncovering the social structural changes with which the changes of concept are connected, and of using the fruits of this insight for one's own formation of concepts.

The problem of power has aspects which make it appear especially suited to such an examination. It is simultaneously timely and fundamental; it is as much concerned with the conception of society as with that of man and nature. The attitude toward it reveals with great clarity the horizon of a world-view as well as the political status of any one group. Besides, the constant interchange of power and force has caused so much confusion in judging the groups of power and the social structure, that even a clarification of the concepts would be of considerable significance.

The following, because of the limitations of its space and form, cannot give more than an emphatic and manifold indication of the problem, and cannot attempt more than an appeal to the thoughtful conscience of political theorists, to catch up on matters of decisive importance that have been overlooked. Both purposes, however, are accomplished best by taking as a subject of discussion an interpretation of power, differing considerably from the usual one.

### *A. Might and power*

If power is understood to be the assured possibility of exercising force, Socialism would have to disavow it to the same degree that it disavows force. But it is wrong to interpret power thus. To be sure the possibility of breaking down resistance, that is, exercising force, does belong to power. But this possibility does not form a basis of the concept, but grows out of it. The foundation of the concept of power lies in the structure of existence itself, and indeed of human as well as pre-human existence.

Everything living, in an encounter, appears as a union of remaining within itself and advancing beyond itself, for this is the very basis on which rests the possibility of any encounter. The greater the strength—to advance beyond itself without losing itself, the greater is the might with

which a living thing encounters; the greater is its spatial, temporal, and inner tension. How great it is, is decided in the encounter itself, in the reciprocal advance and retreat. One can interpret being as a constantly changing balance of might in encounter; indeed, one can say that this is the original conception of reality and that the abstract question about being could arise only in a late period of history, as, *e.g.*, in Greek philosophy.

This conclusion prompts the rejection of the positivistic concept of nature and man, insofar as it appears as the only form of scientific observation and as it is also accepted uncritically by Socialism. Instead, there exists the possibility of turning back to the dialectical principle, which was effective in the social analyses of Marx. Dialectics also knows no objects whose essence is fixed, but only functional relationships in which the meaning of every element changes according to the moment of development. In dialectics, being is realized in social tensions. Since, in the social tensions, universal, human, and natural tensions also take effect, an analysis of society must not overlook them.

If all being is indeed a balance of tensions of might, then social being is a balance of tensions of power. For power is might on the level of social existence. Might, as a general term embracing nature and man, appears in the force of a wave rushing into the land and ebbing; as well as in the unfolding strength of a tree, which overshadows others until it is itself overshadowed; in the prominent position of an animal in the herd, which another will perhaps soon contest; in the impression of the adult on the small child and the mutual dependence of the adult on the child. Might belongs to everything that advances upon us, that gains authority, that is dominant—perhaps only to retreat the next instant and give way to something more dominant. Our whole world of perception is built up thus, and this encounter in mutual tension of might and impotence is the original being of things. On the social plane, it is the same. Yet here a new factor is added: the balance of tensions of might is not accomplished without consciousness and will. Social might proves itself in the successful advance of one will against the other. He has power who can attain a balance in which he retains the chance of accomplishing his will. How can such a balance be achieved in society? Obviously not through one man threatening his fellow like a highwayman, forcing him to do his will, but through society's creating definite positions of power and turning them over to definite individuals. Power as a social phenomenon always depends on a position of power recognized by society, on an institution in which society collects its intrinsic might and only thus really constitutes itself. The might of a group can really only be born when the group creates for itself an unified, advancing, and eventually retreating will. The institution in which this happens is the sphere of power determined by the group. Only he who directly or indirectly, openly or secretly is accepted in this sphere is in possession of social power.

The power, in which the group wins its might—and this means its existence as a group—is always simultaneously the power of the group and power over the group. And does not exist without the other. If it were not power over the group, then it would attain no unified combination of individual will; therefore, no social existence. If it were not power of the group,

then the group would not have created the position of power which is the prerequisite of all social power.

### *B. The structure of society*

As a matter of principle, the position of power prepared by the group can be taken over by all individuals (as in complete democracy) as well as by one individual (as in complete dictatorship). In reality neither one thing nor the other can occur exclusively. Even in the perfect democracy there would be (beside representatives and executives) individuals and groups of excellent might, who would indirectly be the actual bearers of the power (*cf.* the indirect rule of capital in present democracy). And in the perfect dictatorship there would be a group supporting the dictator, standing at his disposal, which would then make the dictator dependent on the group and win a decisive part in the social sphere of power (*cf.* the praetorians in ancient Rome, the Fascist party in modern Rome). With each, it is a group within the superior group that attains to power through the social position of power—openly, in the feudal classification, covertly in the democratic, openly or covertly in the dictatorial. This sub-group is in turn the creator of positions of power within itself (hierarchy of leaders), and in many cases enters thus into the position of power of the upper group (identity of party leader and chief of the government).

Now which is the supporting group, by whom in general the social position of power is grasped? In principle, it is the one in whose might the total group can view its own might. Now the might of the all-embracing group does not stand firmly before it has collected itself in a position of power, *i.e.*, before a sub-group has grasped power (a condition which of course never really exists, but must only be thought of as an abstract possibility). In one and the same process a group comes to a definite existence and a sub-group within it grasps the position of power. On this rests the ambiguity of every concrete power; it can be understood as the expression of the collective will of a group, or as the production of this will through the ruling group. For the first interpretation we have examples wherever an apparent failure of the ruling class brings another class, which already participated in power, to exclusive reign (as in the French Revolution). For the second, we have examples such as the subjection of one tribe by a foreign one. (Theories of state like that of Franz Oppenheimer, which derive the state from foreign rule, cite such illustrations. They overlook that in the subjugated race a position of power and a group made powerful by means of it, were already in existence.) And yet the two are not contradictory. Even in the first, the new will of society becomes reality only through revolutionary change of power. And in the second, the foreign tribe, or its ruling group, steps into an existent position of power, whose defective occupancy by the native group of power created the possibility of subjugation and even (more or less consciously) made subjugation desirable (as often, *e.g.*, in the subjugation of foreign nations by the Romans).

From the inseparable intertwining of the might of the total group and the sub-group in power, arises the dual attitude of society to the power which holds it together: it is the interrelation of consent and demand. Consent is seldom expressed overtly. Usually consent is expressed by

simply allowing the group in power to rule because of a predominant feeling that this group represents the power of the whole group. Such implicit consent supports every state. The parliamentary opposition, for example, does not deny the government this implicit acknowledgment. It only combats certain methods of realization of power. That is the meaning of the "loyal opposition." Only when the opposition attacks the system as such, as it usually has in Germany, and at the same time attacks the groups which come into power through the system, is the power shaken, for now the implicit consent is refused, and with it the decisive foundation is taken from the power. The total group does not find its intrinsic might in the ruling group.

The loyal opposition represents the demand of society on the group in power. The gist of the demand is that the position of power of the leading group shall express the meaning of life and might of existence of the total group, that therefore the law and politics of a state shall correspond with the meaningful identity of total existence and group existence. This essential demand on the group in power does not imply the demand for equal rights of every group and every individual. As in feudal times, it can be considered altogether just that the bearers of the surpassing might, in whom the total group views itself, shall be equipped with prerogatives. Only when man's capacity of reason is interpreted as his actual might does the demand of equal rights follow.

### *C. Power, law, and interest*

On this basis then the tendency can develop to dissolve power for the sake of a law which is independent of any powerful group, the realization of which is the work of functionaries rather than possessors of power. This ideal is common to all socialistic aims. But the question is this: is there a law independent of power in form as well as in content? The answer to both must be negative. There is no independent law from the point of view of its form, because the power determining law in free decision and executing it belongs to the law and therefore can never be resolved into a mechanism of administration. There is no independent law from the point of view of content, because the concrete existence of a special social group is expressed in each law. And indeed it should be the existence of the total group; in reality, it usually is only the existence of the individual group, in which the total group realizes itself. Only a completely homogeneous total group would need no representative sub-group. But such homogeneity is to be expected nowhere, if our description is true that every life is a unity of remaining within itself and advancing beyond itself. For each of these tendencies requires a certain psychological and sociological structure, and therefore a particular supporting group. It is characteristic that homogeneous groups (as far as the reports are dependable) can be found only in very primitive, entirely undynamic societies, whose life process passes essentially vegetatively. The assumption that after the removal of the class contrast through the proletarian revolution, a complete homogeneity of society could come into existence, would force one to expect a static-vegetative final stage. Such an expectation, of course, would not mean the beginning, as Marx thinks, but rather the end of history. Man would fall into a sub-historical sphere, and with that stop being what for us is concretely "man."

As soon, however, as the assumption of a simply homogeneous static, vegetative society is abandoned, the question arises of the mode in which a group within society takes over the function of advance. Each advance of a group depends on "interest" and has no reality without taking interest into account. Interest here is in no wise to be held equivalent with economic interest, unless one interprets "economic" so broadly as to embrace all possibilities of human fulfillment of existence. Interest is meant as tension toward higher fulfillment of existence in every sense. And it is not to be doubted that a social group which is the bearer of that advance, has this position only as a result of this tension. The consequence of this, however, is that the law and politics of a state are always the expression as well of the interest of the groups in power. This is posited with the universal identity of existence and tension of might, of social existence and tension of power, and can be denied no more than the dynamics of life and the concreteness of culture itself. Only through being the expression of an existence, therefore of a power, is culture concrete, real culture and not an abstraction, an impotent Utopia. Whoever rejects power in the sense of our exposition, must also reject the concreteness of culture, must resolve reality into an abstract pattern of reason. A social power becomes distorted only at the moment when the position of power created by a society is in the possession of a group whose interests have come into exclusive conflict with the interests of other groups and thereby with the interest of the total society. At this moment the revolutionary situation occurs, *i.e.*, the social group faces a decision fundamental to its existence. The question of the existence of a group is raised anew as a question about the group which is to come into power. And the answer to this question necessarily occurs in latent or manifest revolution.

#### *D. Power and spirit*

If the concept of power is claimed for the social position of power, then a concept like "spiritual power" seems to lose its meaning. For spiritual power, to be sure, is effective in society but not on the basis of a position of power; on the contrary, through the power of the spirit itself. And to the power of the spirit belongs the quality that it acts without force; it is neither possible nor necessary for it to accomplish its will forcibly. Spiritual effect is effect through freedom.

And still it is not feasible to assert a spiritual power independent of the social powers. First of all, it is evident that spiritual realities, like mathematical natural science or Hegelian philosophy, are powers because they have had social effects on the largest scale, whereby social effects mean at the same time the production of ideologies and the change of real existence. But these effects could not occur unless real interests and social tendencies made room for them. No spiritual creation can take effect unless it be met halfway by "interests" of which it is the symbolic expression. Max Scheler's doctrine of the impotence of ideas, insofar as they are nothing but ideas, in spite of the dubiousness of its development, in this respect contains a truth that is related to the Marxist doctrine of ideology. Only a spirit which is the expression of a vital tendency has power for life. To be sure, "thoughts that come on dove's feet can rule the world"; to be sure, the thinker and the spiritual person, excluded from all social positions of power, can

have immeasurable social effects. But he can do so only because a psychological or social trend of life finds expression in his thoughts and thereby attains form and power.

From this we conclude that spiritual power is power in the transferred sense. Spirit is power only in unity with life. And just as, according to the above considerations, there is no power without the support of the mental element of consent, there is, on the other hand, no effectual power of the spirit which is not supported by a vital tendency, by a social interest. Therefore it is valid to say: what is never and nowhere grasped by the indirect or direct bearers of the social position of power and put into a socially binding form, has no effectual might. It is powerless in every sense. Power is given to thought not by its mere entertainment but when through it binding forms of human-social existence are created. Spiritual might is dependent on the strength of expression which a spiritual creation has for the perhaps deeply hidden life-tendency of a group in society. Whatever has not such strength of expression can be clever or learned or sublime. It cannot possess power.

Indeed truth is the final, the actual power; not as an abstract norm that forces its way into reality and changes it, but rather as the concrete expression of the final tendencies of reality. Truth has power only as concrete truth, *i.e.*, as the truth of a life-tendency; speaking sociologically, as the truth of a society; even more exactly as the truth of the group within society, which is inwardly powerful.

### *E. Power and force*

In the creation of a position of power, a society realizes its intrinsic might, for only through the position of power does the society attain the unity of a concrete law and the possibility of political action. The unity of every society is conditioned by the overcoming of the tendencies opposing the unity, of the sub-groups as well as of the individual. To achieve this is the task of power. It is accomplished in two ways; first and basically through the character of the power itself, which we have called acknowledgment. As far as the implicit or explicit recognition of power reaches, so far extends its immediate power to overcome resistance. Beyond this it accomplishes its purposes in the form of breaking resistance, as force. Practically these two factors (conviction and compulsion) are inseparable. In the recognition of any legal code, no matter how well founded it is felt to be, the consciousness that in given cases it is carried through forcibly plays a part. Moreover, in all force proceeding from a recognized power, the silent acknowledgment of the power makes itself felt and helps to break the strength of the resistance. Nevertheless both must be distinguished on principle, since they penetrate each other mutually with changing preponderance. There is then a force (by far most frequently effective as the threat of force), which belongs to power and is recognized along with it. That each individual must constantly suppress within himself subgroups of life-tendencies in favor of his unified life-process shows that we are dealing with a very deep-seated phenomenon, through which the Utopian rejection of force is refuted. In every meaningful life-process of an individual and a society, the subjection of opposing tendencies for the sake of unity takes place. Force is

therefore inevitable.

Force becomes distorted when the presupposition of meaningful power, the implicit acceptance of the structure of power, has disappeared, and power tries to maintain itself by means of the apparatus of power standing at its disposal. The worst excesses of force are to be found in situations wherein the inner foundation has been taken away from power. When force becomes isolated from power, whose function it is, it soon dissolves, for force thrives on acquiescence to it, even on the part of those who are subjected by it.

This exposition is equally valid for revolutionary force. It presupposes that the group in power, in contradiction to the meaning of life of the total society, only continues in power through the possession of the apparatus of power; that the might of the total group has long been dwelling in a group other than the ruling one; and that therefore the meaningful force, that which is united with the real power, belongs to the bearers of the revolution. The true power, resting on implicit consent, triumphs forcibly over a power that continues to exist only through the possession of the apparatus of power: that is the meaning of revolution.

Of course this meaning is not calculable. Revolutions are questions whose answers are not settled in advance. It is entirely possible that the ruling group may retain the power, although it no longer expresses the meaning of the total group unequivocally, because the revolutionary group does so even less. (Thus, for example in the peasant's war, the defeat of the peasants was caused not only by the superior apparatus of power of the feudal group, but also by the inner weakness of the revolutionary group.) For this reason the forcible occupation of the social means of power is not necessarily decisive for the victory of a revolution. Only when it succeeds in creating a new structure of power, to which the strength of implicit consent streams, has the decision fallen in its favor. Therefore the idea that the revolution's taking over the apparatus of power and using it inconsiderately guarantees its victory, thoroughly misses the mark. The apparatus of power must constantly renew itself from personal, material, and ideal vitalities of society. If it fails in this it breaks down, even if today the technical means of compulsory enforcement of power make a longer duration possible than in less technical eras.

### *F. Power and humanity*

At present national states are the most inclusive groups which create a position of power for the sake of the realization of their social existence. They are designated as "Powers," *i.e.*, as the most inclusive bearers of social existence. National sovereignty is the mark of a group of power which is not subjected to a more inclusive group. Consequently, the encounter of the sovereign powers occurs without the balance of a universal position of power created by them. The encounter takes place in an unbalanced state, whose structure constantly changes. As the acknowledged position of power is lacking, arbitrary threats and employment of force are in principle the only forms of enforcement of power. The change of this situation is possible only by the creation of an inclusive position of power which is acknowledged and subject to law, *i.e.*,

by the creation of a super-national unity of the state, removing the sovereignty of individual states. Such a position of power can be developed in two ways: Either by means of the national states—that is the attempt of the League of Nations; or by means of similar groups within the individual national states—that is the attempt of the Socialist Internationals

Despite all failures, the achievement of the League of Nations is that it has put into effect the idea of an all-embracing sphere of power superior to individual sovereignty; the struggle for power of the national groups takes place at least partially in the arena of a legal order, which is democratic in form and, in its composition, is determined by a group of leading nations ("the victors in the World War"). The existence of the legal order makes it possible to direct demands to the authoritative group and therefore to allow it, as supporter of this law, to enjoy some, even though very limited, consent. This consent must remain limited, so long as the national groups face one another as entities, that is, so long as the social existence of man is most highly realized nationally. This condition cannot be overcome, though only within narrow limits by the formation of more inclusive powers (the Pan-Europa idea). It can be overcome basically only by the rise of powerful groups, such as capital, the intellectuals, the churches, the proletariat which cut across national boundaries. Since capital at present confines itself nationally through protectionism, since the churches and intellectuals lack the strength to form groups provided by real interests, there remains for the formation of an international group of power only the proletariat. But the proletariat, as a result of its own division and the preponderance of the nationally bound groups in every nation, will not so soon become the bearer of a super-national structure of power. At any rate, it is certain that the growth of mankind as a social reality (not only as an abstract concept) is not possible by the simple elimination of the powers, but only by the rise of positions of power in which the sovereignty of the national groups is broken by an all-inclusive power. The social realization of the group "mankind," is possible only through the creation of an all-inclusive sphere of power and cannot escape the tensions between the total group and some supporting groups.

### *G. The renunciation of power*

If might is "existence as such," and power "social existence as such," then the lack of might is the disintegration of existence, and lack of power the disintegration of social existence. The renunciation of might or power, therefore, would be within the renunciation of existence. A living creature renounces every vital and intellectual advance in space and time, a man who does not take part in the power of the group in which he stands, or a group that does not want to maintain itself in the concealed or open tension of all social groups, has given up its existence. Undoubtedly such renunciation is possible. It is questionable, however, whether it could have a positive meaning or whether it is only the expression of failing vitality depending on what part compulsion has in it and what part is genuine renunciation. The unequivocal positive renunciation of power would have to arise from abundance, not from exhaustion. It would then be the expression, not of impotence but of the highest might. If there were such a possibility, then the problem of power would have received a new dimension. Religions like Christianity

and Buddhism presuppose this dimension, *i.e.*, the positive possibility of renunciation of power. They can do so, because in principle they advance beyond the sphere within which lies the structure of might and power. In that case the renunciation of power itself signifies an advance beyond this sphere, and anticipates something that always has the character of transcendence. However, insofar as it enters into the sphere of the powers, it must itself become power, in order to exist. And so arises that paradoxical and yet very real concept "of power through renunciation of power." The possibility of such a paradox is based on the fact that the meaning implicit in every power, may transcend any tangible, limited meaning.

Furthermore, every meaning must contain an element of such transcendence, truly to be meaning. Therefore: in every power is an element of renunciation of power, and the power lives on this element, for being tends to transcend itself. The renunciation of power contained in all power expresses itself at all times in the sacred character of the powers, which cannot be explained away simply as ideology. Even in Marxism the proletariat, as bearer of the coming fulfillment of human existence, rising beyond that experience, has an objective quality of holiness, a "vocation," on the strength of which it can wage the victorious battle for power. At the same time, however, the holiness of power is the critical norm to which it is always subject. This norm is identical with the respective symbols of transcendence beyond the sphere of the structure of power. Such symbols are justice (not in the legal, but in the prophetic sense); love (which in Christianity is more a concept of expectation than one of experience); society without classes (whose pathos is the suspension of the order of force); the identity of all existence (in which the Indian world-consciousness advances beyond the order of power). These norms, of course, cannot be handled mechanically but must always be proclaimed anew to the powers. They are thereby made concrete and filled with the problems of the condition of society at the time, but they always point beyond them.

The express renunciation of power is possible only to man; the animal is limited by its life-process. It realizes its might within the limits that are set for it. It is a question whether renunciation of power is possible for human groups. On principle the answer must be, this possibility exists only insofar as a group is unified by the free decision to have power only in the paradoxical form of renunciation of power. Such a group is the "church" in the essential meaning of the word, *i.e.*, a community which is determined explicitly and representatively by those transcendental norms, in which the renunciation of power is expressed. A church which really was what it essentially should be, would be the institution in which the structure of power in society and being would be transcended. It would be the visible conquest of the ontology of power.

Finally we must ask, whether a people or a group which originally is not the church, could renounce power by a common decision and thus become the church. This possibility is not to be rejected fundamentally. But such a decision must not come into existence with the help of the state power. A people can become the "church" only if in an unexpected historical moment it is seized as a whole by the transcendental idea and for its sake renounces power. Such an event

would be one of the great turning points of human history; it would perhaps create "mankind."

## *H. Conclusions*

Socialism and National Socialism stand on the same ground in that for both power is defined by the possibility of exercising force. Socialism—at least for the future and as far as possible for the present—draws from this the conclusion that: "Power should not exist and some time will not exist, for force should not exist." National Socialism on the other hand draws the conclusion: "Power should exist and will always exist, for force should exist."

Both conclusions are to be rejected. Still we must admit that the socialist conclusion contains more truth. For it contains, even if in veiled form, the thought of renunciation of power. The glance into the future in which, along with class rule, power, and force cease, is an expression of the advance beyond the mere sphere of power. The expression is questionable because it localizes again in history, in some coming history, the advance beyond history and thereby deprives the advance of its genuine transcendence. Renunciation of power means going out beyond history itself, *i.e.*, beyond the structure of being, which consists of tensions of might and power.

Here National Socialism is more consistent. It sees that historical existence is not to be separated from might and power, but it overlooks the decisive fact that power without the consent accorded it, and without the demand that is made on it, is not power but only robbery and violation. It will not admit that the power of a group depends on the expression of the existence of a total group in it; it conceals from itself that brutal employment of force is a mark of impotence. And finally it forgets that from the sphere of renunciation of power, a constant judgment is leveled against all power.

Socialism must learn from National Socialism to take the problem of power more seriously than heretofore, to free itself from the confusion of historical and super-historical renunciation of power (even if this confusion is useful for purposes of propaganda), to see the human and thus the social possibilities free from Utopianism. To be sure, it can prove that National Socialism's adoration of power is the expression of classes deprived of power, who out of resentment at their impotence cultivate a brutal ideology of force. But it must also realize clearly that the bourgeois anti-power-ideology was the expression of the concealed will to power of the bourgeoisie, in contrast to the open direct structure of power, of the feudal order of society. Socialism has no reason to carry on this concealment. In the conviction that its battle is the battle for the coming, just social order, it should try to conquer the social position of power in its full breadth, but in every act of this struggle remain conscious that the possession of the apparatus of power does not guarantee the possession, that the victory is won only when Socialism has attained the inner might, maturity, and development which in spite of all loud contradiction have gained for it the silent, even if unwilling acknowledgment of the total group. The power of Socialist groups and the ultimate victory of Socialism is dependent on the possession of such inner might. A group

can attain inner might only to the degree that it subjects itself to the idea, which, transcending power, stabilizes and consecrates all power.

# **The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich**

## **Part Three: Political Categories of the Interpretation of History**

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## **II: The Two Roots of Political Thinking**

### **HUMAN EXISTENCE AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

It is not always necessary to inquire about the roots of a spiritual or social phenomenon. When sturdy growth shows us that the roots are healthy, an inquiry is superfluous. But if the plant appears bent or twisted, if life begins to wither away, the question of the roots' condition becomes inevitable. This is the situation of Socialism, particularly of its strongest branch, German Socialism. The political events of the past months found it in a greatly weakened state. (These words were written about half a year before the final catastrophe of German Socialism in the spring of 1933.) This condition is founded not only on the events of recent years. The causes are more far-reaching; they go back to the second half of the nineteenth century, partly even to the historical situation at the time of its origin. The most pressing task is to seek the causes of this weakening. This can be accomplished only by examining the roots.

As soon, however, as we ask the question regarding the roots of Socialistic thought, the necessity of proceeding further arises. Socialism is a counter-movement, in a double sense: it is directly a counter-movement against bourgeois society, and indirectly—like bourgeois society itself—a counter-movement against the feudal-patriarchal forms of society. Therefore, in order to understand Socialism from its beginning, it is also necessary to uncover the roots of the political thought that opposes it

The roots of political thought must be sought in human existence itself. Without having a

picture of man, of his powers and tensions, it is impossible to make any statement about the bases of political existence and thought. Without a theory of man there can be no theory of political tendencies that is more than the presentation of their external appearance. A theory of man, however, cannot be worked out here. It is presupposed, and the best it can do is to create for itself a favorable prejudice by its capacity to illuminate political thought.

Man differs from nature in that he is a creature with an internal duality. No matter where nature ends and man begins, no matter whether there be slow transitions or a sudden leap between the two, somewhere the difference becomes visible. In nature, there is a wholly unified life-process which unfolds itself without question or demand, determined by what it finds in itself and its environment. In man there is a life-process which questions itself and its environment, which therefore is not at one with itself but is divided, at the same time being within itself and confronting itself from without, thinking about itself, knowing about itself. Man has a consciousness of himself; or, expressed in relation to nature: man is the being who is dualized so that he has himself at the same time as subject and object. Nature lacks this dualization. Nevertheless man is not—this is implied in these statements—a creature compounded of two independent parts, for example of nature and mind, or of body and soul; he is one being, but doubled within himself, in his unity.

Even these very general definitions are of consequence in every examination of political thought. They make it impossible to derive political thought from pure thinking, from religious or moral demands or philosophical judgments. Political thought starts out from man in his unity. It is rooted simultaneously in the pure being and in the self-conscious being of man, to be more exact, in the indissoluble unity of the two. Therefore it is impossible to understand a system of political thought without uncovering the human reality in which it is rooted; that is, the interrelation of impulses and interests, of compulsions and strivings, that constitute human and social existence. It is just as impossible, however, to separate this reality from thought and, depriving thought of its independence and power, make it a merely accidental product of social and economic realities. Man's individual and social being is formed by consciousness in each of its elements down to the most primitive instincts. The attempt to dissolve this connection passes over the first and most important essential trait of man and therefore results in the distortion of the total picture of man. To point out that there is a consciousness not fitted to reality, a so-called "false consciousness," proves nothing against the unity of reality and consciousness, for the concept of "false consciousness" itself is only possible if there be a true consciousness. True consciousness, however, is consciousness that arises out of being and at the same time determines being. It is neither one without the other, for man is unity in his dual form and from the soil of this unity grow the roots which nourish all political thought.

Man finds himself in existence; he finds himself as he finds his environment as established for him. To find oneself in existence means that one does not originate from oneself, that one has an origin outside of oneself, or to use the expressive word of Martin Heidegger "*Geworfensein*": "being thrown" into the world. From this situation follows the human

question, "Whence?" It does not appear as a philosophical question until very late. It was always asked, however, and its first answer is given in mythology and sets a standard for the whole future.

The origin is creative. Creation produces something new, which did not exist and which, after being produced, represents something independent and singular. Our life has this tension between dependence on the origin that has produced us and the independence of it through individuality and freedom. The origin does not leave us free from itself, since it is not past only but present in every moment. It gives us existence again and again; it reproduces us and holds us fast through its omnipresence: We are created by the origin as something new and singular, but we are returned to it at the same time. In being born, the having to die is implied. Our life passes in birth, development, and death. Nothing living, as living, can break through that which is implied in its original being. Development is the growth and the decay of that which comes from the origin and returns to it. Mythology has expressed this experience in infinitely different ways according to the character of things and events, which are considered by a certain group of men as their origin. In all mythology, however, we find the law of the circular motion between birth and death. Every myth is a myth of origin, is an answer to the question: Whence. And every myth expresses the dependence on the origin and on its everlasting power. *The consciousness of being dependent on the origin is the foundation of every conservative and romantic thought in politics.*

But man not only finds himself in existence; he not only knows himself to be created and recalled in the circular movement of birth and death like everything living. He experiences a demand which frees him from being simply bound to that which he finds existing and forces him to add to the question, "Whence?" the question, "Wherefore?" With this question the circle is broken in principle and man is raised above the sphere of the merely living thing, for the demand asks something that is not yet here, that should be, that should come to fulfillment. A creature that experiences a demand is no longer simply bound to his original state. Man has to achieve something more than merely to unfold what he already is. Through the demand he is directed to that which he should be. And what should be, is not included in the unfolding of what exists; otherwise it would really exist, not be demanded. This means, however, that the demand which is made on man is unconditioned. The "wherefore" is not included in the limits of the "whence." It is something absolutely new which lies beyond the new and old of mere unfolding. Through man something absolutely new is to be realized; that is the meaning of the demand which he experiences, which he can experience because of his dual quality. He not only is himself, but he also has knowledge about himself, and consequently the possibility of passing beyond what he finds in himself and round about himself. This is human freedom, not that man has a so-called free will, but that as a man he is not bound to that which he finds in existence, that he is subject to a demand that something absolutely new shall come into being through him. Therefore the circle of birth and death is broken in him; therefore his presence and his actions are not completed in mere unfolding of his original state. Where this consciousness wins out, the bond or origin is fundamentally dissolved, the myth of origin fundamentally broken. *The*

*breaking of the myth of origin by the unconditioned demand is the root of liberal, democratic, and socialistic thought in politics.*

Yet it is not enough to point out the simple contrast of the two factors of human being. The demand which man receives is unconditioned, but it is not strange to him. If it were strange to his nature, it would not concern him; he could not perceive it as a demand on him. It strikes him only because it places before him, in the form of a demand, his own essence. Only thereon rests the absoluteness, the inevitability, with which the demand approaches man and must be affirmed by him. But if the demand is man's own essence, it is based on his origin; the "Whence" and "Wherefore" do not belong to two different worlds. And yet what is demanded is something new in contrast to the origin. This means that origin is ambiguous. In it is a cleavage of true and real origin. The really original is not the truly original. It is not the fulfillment of that which is intended with man from his origin. The fulfillment of his origin is, on the contrary, that which confronts man as a demand, an obligation. The "Wherefore" of man is that in which his "Whence" fulfills itself. The real origin is criticised by the true origin; not straightway and in every respect, for the real origin, in order that it can be reality, must have a share in the true origin. It is its expression, but it is also its concealment and distortion. The myth of origin knows nothing of this ambiguity of origin. Therefore it holds fast to the origin and feels that it is a sin to pass beyond it. Only when consciousness is freed of its bond with origin by the experience of the unconditioned demand is the ambiguity of origin revealed.

The demand seeks the fulfillment of true origin. Man, however, receives an unconditioned demand only from other men. The unconditioned demand becomes manifest in the meeting of "I and You." The general content of the demand therefore, is that dignity equal to that of the "I" be accorded the "You," the dignity of the true origin of human essence. The recognition of the "you" as having a dignity equal to that of the "I" is justice. The demand which breaks away from the ambiguous origin is the demand of justice. From the unbroken origin follow powers which struggle with one another, seek sovereignty and destroy one another. From the unbroken origin comes the might of being, the growth and death of powers which "mete out to each other punishment and atonement for their sins in accord with the order of the times," the first known words of Greek philosophy. The unconditioned demand raises one above, this tragical circle of being. It opposes justice to the power and impotence of existence. And yet it is no mere opposition, for the obligation is a fulfillment of being. Justice is the true power of being. In it the intention of the origin is fulfilled. In regard to the relation of the two elements of human existence and the two roots of political thought, we may conclude that the demand is superior to mere origin, justice superior to the mere power of being. The question "Wherefore" is of higher rank than the question "Whence." The myth of origin may enter into political thought, only when the power of origin has been broken, its ambiguity revealed.

### *A. Observation and decision*

The relationship between the two roots of political thought is not one of simple juxtaposition.

The demand is ranked superior to the origin. Therefore a consideration of political trends cannot start with the premise that it deals with typically human attitudes of equal justification. The concept of the typical is not applicable where decisions are required. But this is so when an unconditioned demand is made. One cannot do it justice by a consideration which places it side by side and makes it typical. By this very consideration, we have tried to escape the demand, have admitted that the opponent is right, if we place the former on the same plane with the latter in an allegedly neutral description. At bottom this is true of every attempt to understand mental things. One cannot watch the mind as a mere spectator; it makes demands; it demands decisions. No one can understand Socialism who has not experienced its demand for justice as a demand made on himself. Whoever has not striven for the spirit of Socialism, can speak of Socialism only from without and therefore not at all. It is different with political trends in which the myth of origin is predominant. They, too, must be understood; in them, too, mind and meaning are considered and force a decision, but this decision implies the demand to renounce decision and purpose and to return to mere being. In deciding for the unbroken origin one tries to ward off the demand. To be sure, one uses mind, but in opposition to mind; one questions, but in opposition to questioning; one demands, but in opposition to demanding. One tries with the might of mind to fetch the mind back into the servitude of pure being. That is the inner contradiction in all the expressions of political Romanticism. Therefore it is fundamentally impossible to decide intellectually in its favor. As long as the bond of the origin is unbroken, no decision can be reached, because no choice exists. But if it is broken, the decision in favor of the origin can mean only the destruction of all free decision. No attempt to lay an intellectual foundation for political Romanticism disposes of this contradiction.

The roots of political thinking are not in thoughts, but in the human being, that is, conscious being; being which is dual in itself. Therefore political thought is necessarily the expression of a special political existence, of a special historical and social situation. No thought can be understood without reference to the social actuality from which it arises. The principles of political thought cannot be effective with the same force in different groups and periods. The predominance of one or another principle is dependent on a special situation, on special groups and forms of power; further it is dependent on special sociological and psychological attitudes, growing out of the actual situation of a social group. The economic, social, and political institutions of a period have resulted in a different psychological and sociological behavior, and this behavior again results in strengthening those institutions. In this way different attitudes are produced, which provide a different realization of the basic elements of human thought, especially of political thought. This interconnection of social existence and political consciousness leads to a question which must be answered before political, especially socialistic, problems can be dealt with. We shall see that Socialism is to be interpreted as the direct expression of the proletarian situation. Hence it could be asked: How is it possible to criticise and to build up Socialism in a social position that is removed from proletarian existence? The answer is that consciousness, although dependent on social existence, is not dependent on it in a biographical, but in an objective way. Some thoughts, no matter whether spoken by aristocrats or bourgeois, had the objective meaning of expressing the bourgeois

existence. And some thoughts, no matter whether pronounced by bourgeoisie or proletarians, have the objective meaning of expressing the proletarian existence. The fact that aristocrats first prepared the bourgeois society, and that bourgeois gave the proletariat its social self-consciousness, shows how unimportant the biographical relationship is. Even more, the distance between being and consciousness can become the very premise for the raising of being to consciousness. To knowledge belongs not only relationship with being but also separation from being. Therefore the one whose confidence in his original group and class is shaken is best suited to give a strange class self-consciousness; The best examples of this are Marx and Lenin. They suffice for us to raise the interdependence of social situation and political thinking from the biographic to the objective sphere.

### *B. Principle and reality*

To summarize the characterization of political groups the word "principle" is used. The following considerations were decisive in the choice of this word: It is the task of thinking to select from a variety of phenomena the one which makes them belong together, and which makes possible therefore an understanding of the individual through an understanding of the whole. This task is usually solved with the help of a concept grasping the essence or nature of things. The relationship of essence and existence has governed Occidental epistemology since Plato. But now it has been shown that with respect to historical realities the logic of essence is inadequate. The essence of an historical phenomenon is an empty abstraction, from which the living strength of history has been expelled. Nevertheless we cannot dispense with a summarizing characterization, when we deal with a coherent movement. The reference to historical continuity does not suffice, since a selection must be made from the infinite abundance of continuously linked events. Therefore we must seek another method of historical characterization: in conformity with the character of history, a dynamic concept must replace the concept of essence, derived from knowledge of nature. That concept is dynamic which contains the possibility of making new, unexpected realizations of an historical origin comprehensible. Such concepts I should call principles. A principle does not contain the abstract universal quality of a large number of individual phenomena, but contains the actual possibility, the dynamics, the power of an historical reality. The principle can never be abstracted from the multitude of its individual realizations, for it always faces, reality, critically and judicially, besides substantiating and supporting it. It is difficult, although not impossible, to assume a contradiction between essence and existence; but it is not difficult at all to assume a contradiction between principle and realization. The approach to the principle is therefore possible only through an understanding which always contains a decision. No one understands, *e.g.*, the principle of Protestantism apart from the totality of what has ever happened in and to Protestantism. It is to be understood only on the basis of a decision by means of which the whole history of Protestantism is not only comprehended but also criticised. This consideration accords with the other, that mind can be understood only in mental decisions. Thus Socialism is to be understood only by means of a socialistic principle which is gained in a socialistic decision and through which socialistic reality is at once understood and judged.

Principle must not be confused with idea, universal concept or the like. Principle is the real power which produces an historical phenomenon and makes it possible for it to be realized in a new form and yet in continuity with the past. The principle of political romanticism is the inner might of the groups supporting political romanticism, expressed in concepts. The principle of Socialism is not a socialistic idea, but is the proletarian situation, interpreted in dynamic concepts on the basis of a socialistic decision.

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part Four: Theological Categories of the Interpretation of History

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

### I: Church and Culture

Behind the question of the relationship of Church and culture, which our theme raises, lie two other questions capable of formulation in different ways. If one begins with the subject, the human mind, there arises the question of the relationship of religion and culture; if one begins with the object, toward which the human mind is directed, then the question of the relationship of God and the world occurs. Religion and culture, God and the world—these contrasting pairs stand back of the contrast of Church and culture. As soon as one realizes these backgrounds, however, a certain unsuitability appears in the formulation of our theme: God and world, religion and culture, these are clearly correlated. Not so, Church and culture. If Church is that sociological group in which religion is meant, then correspondingly, we should seek a sociological group that is the bearer of culture. For this, the state first offers itself. But for a long period society has constituted itself the bearer of cultural life in contrast to the state. Society has left the state, insofar as the state makes and administers laws, a certain number of cultural tasks, but except in fascist countries the state cannot consider itself the main factor in cultural life. The group to be correlated with Church is therefore not the state, at least only to a limited extent. For our consideration it is "society," not in the formal sense of sociological reality as a whole, but in the sense of a group beside the Church, which feels responsible for culture.

We must, however, go a step further. The root of all the mentioned contrasting pairs is the contrast of holy and profane. If we approach our theme from this final polarity, the foundation of every philosophy of religion and culture, we can define the Church as that sociological reality in which the holy is supposed to be presented, and society as the sociological reality in

which the profane appears. And we should have to inquire into the relationship between holy and profane society.

But while the question is put in this way, a criticism of the question itself arises before any further discussion. One recognizes its logical consistency but denies its factual truth. One maintains that simply to place side by side holy and profane, Church and society, means to remove one of the contrasted factors, *viz.*, the holy and to bring the holy to the level of the profane. One denies that Church may be considered a universal concept belonging to the explanation of human existence. One already sees the loss of holiness in its being placed on the same level as the profane. This criticism is launched by the dialectical theology (in dependence on Kierkegaard), according to which the holy can assume only a negative relationship, never a polar relationship with the profane. The importance of this criticism is indubitable. No theology or philosophy of religion can evade it. There is often a more than dialectical, a prophetic force and penetration in this battle for the absoluteness of the divine. But theology and philosophy of religion are not prophecy. They attempt a rational explanation of the prophetic message. Theology does indeed deal with the paradox, but it must not therefore treat it only in paradoxes. Otherwise it might come about that through the very dogmatization of this form it lose the real paradox.

Our procedure will therefore be as follows: first we shall endeavor to clarify the relationship between profane and holy, then attempt an historical view of the broad lines along which this relationship has been realized, and finally advance our own concrete solution, demanded on the basis of both considerations.

## I. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PROFANE AND HOLY

Every life that goes beyond the immediacy of the purely biological, psychical, and sociological is meaningful life. Each of our logical and esthetic, legal and social actions contains a reference to meaning. In every meaning, however, lies the silent presupposition of the meaningfulness of the whole, the unity of all possible meanings, *i.e.*, faith in the meaning of life itself. If we want to define this more exactly, we must say: In our every act of meaning, theoretical as well as practical, a definite concrete meaning is before us, and at the same time, as the object of a silent belief, there is the absolute meaning or the meaningfulness of the whole. That this is so, becomes especially clear at moments when all meaning threatens to be lost, and the world sinks down into an abyss of nothingness, a meaningless void. Let us observe both aspects more closely. The single meaning which is experienced and accomplished always bears a relationship to others; otherwise it would be a meaningless aphorism. Meaning is always a system of meanings. The system of all possible systems of meaning we call objectively *world*, subjectively *culture*. The unconditional meaning, however, toward which every "act" of meaning is directed in implicit faith, and which supports the whole, which protects it from the plunge into a nothingness void of meaning, itself has two aspects: it bears the meaning of each single meaning as well as the meaning of the whole. That is, it is the basis of meaning. Yet it is

never to be grasped as such in any one act of meaning. It is transcendent in regard to every individual meaning. We can therefore speak of the unconditioned simultaneously as basis of meaning and abyss of meaning (*Sinngrund und -abgrund*). We call this object of the silent belief in the ultimate meaningfulness, this basis and abyss of all meaning which surpasses all that is conceivable, *God*. And we call the direction of the spirit which turns toward Him, *religion*.

In the more exact definition of this relationship, it is important to avoid two errors: first, that of placing the unconditioned meaning beside the conditioned meanings or even beside the totality of meanings; that one place God beside the world, religion beside culture. What stands "beside," is by reason of this very position a single, finite meaning, for which one would then have to seek a basis of meaning, a God over God, a religion over religion. No superlative can protect such a God, no matter how high above the word He stands, from becoming a creature within the world; for in every "above" lies a "beside" and in every "beside" a "conditioned." And that is true of religion. To place it in a series of values, in which it is supposed to stand above other values, is to rob it of its meaning, to make it again a particular act of meaning which must be protected from being emptied of ultimate meaning. But it is just as impossible to identify those concepts as to place them beside or above one another. Unconditioned meaning has the quality of inexhaustibility. If it could be exhausted in any totality, in any world of words, in any culture of cultures, then this whole would have again become a single, finite meaning, for which a new basis of meaning would have to be sought. The unsatisfactory thing in all pantheistic and monistic attempts to identify God with the world, religion with culture, is that God and religion forfeit the abyss and thereby make the basis of meaning shallow, that they lose inexhaustibility and thereby rob creation of its terror and depth. A third objection must still be met: the concept of meaning could be interpreted intellectually and therefore the whole exposition would be reproached with intellectualism. One may say in reply that the concept "meaning" is supposed to express all aspects of the human mind and therefore is just as valid in application to the practical as to the theoretical. The basis of meaning is just as much the basis of personality and community as of being and significance; and it is simultaneously the abyss of all. It is the basis and abyss of personality and community not only insofar as they exist (the theoretical aspect), but also insofar as they experience something that they ought to be (the practical aspect). Only through this moral implication, the "*tremendum et fascinosum*," as Rudolf Otto calls the unconditioned, does it become more than the object of an esthetic emotion. The unconditioned appears as that which does not admit any conditioned fulfillment of its commandments, as that which is able to destroy every personality and community which tries to escape the unconditioned demand. We miss the quality of the unconditioned meaning, of being basis and abyss, if we interpret it either from an intellectual point of view or from a moral point of view alone. Only in the duality of both does the unconditioned meaning manifest itself.

Nothing has been stated here as yet about the contrast holy-profane. In every act of meaning the implicit faith in the absolute meaning is disclosed, and at the same time it follows from the inexhaustibility of the absolute meaning that every act directed toward it needs a concrete; finite

meaning in which the infinite meaning is manifest. From this point of view there is no distinction between profane and holy, but the possibility that a distinction will become necessary. There is the possibility of so directing one's mind to single meanings, that the act of faith, although implicitly concurring, is excluded from one's consciousness. That is the profane, unbelieving, worldly attitude; just so is it possible, while excluding the single forms of meaning and their relationships, to direct oneself to the absolute meaning. That is the holy, believing, religious attitude. The first is directed toward the single meaning and its fulfillment in the system of meanings of world. In the second, the single meaning is only a medium, a symbol, a vessel of the absolute meaning. All theoretical and practical fulfillment of meaning is directed to the absolute alone. We therefore establish an essential unity of the profane and holy sphere combined with the possibility of difference in intention. One cannot be essentially profane, but one can be consciously profane. One cannot be essentially holy, but one can be so consciously. However, as it is contrary to our nature to desire one attitude or the other exclusively, both finally lead to desperation. The desperation of the profane attitude is emptiness of meaning, and the desperation of the holy attitude is emptiness of form. But in both kinds of desperation the essential relationship becomes manifest: in the desperation of the society that it is destined to be a church and in the desperation of the Church that it is destined to embrace the whole society; in the desperation of society that it is not a true community, not Kingdom of God, in the desperation of the Church that it cannot become a universal community, a Kingdom of God on the earth.

The holy, and the holy community, is therefore not that through which the profane and the profane community can be redeemed. The Church cannot redeem society. And yet the profane cannot remain in the desperation of the unredeemed state. But it cannot redeem itself either, through the creation of forms and realization of systems of culture. Even less can it redeem the Church. Both must be redeemed, the profane and the holy, society and the Church. The contrast itself is the thing from which both sides are to be saved; for it is the distortion of both. But the contrast is real, for existence does not accord with essence. That the Church exists and that society exists, and that both must come closer to desperation, the more seriously they take themselves; that is the great revelation of the cleavage of the world.

That this is so, is a plain fact and underivable. If it could be derived from the nature of the absolute meaning and from its relationship to the single meanings, then the unconditioned would not also be the abyss of thought. In thought at least we would be one with God. But that we cannot think sin and yet must think it, that we cannot understand it either as a contingency or as a necessity, is due to the depth of the divine abyss, apparent in thought. With all this, however, the absolute meaning has also acquired a new depth. It is no longer to be designated merely as the creative—that which gives meaning—but also as that which redeems, fulfills meaning. That we have not yet succumbed to despair, that church and society still live, that they still can live, has its foundation in the fact that they have experienced and can experience the completion of meaning as a divine paradox in meaninglessness. This raises a further aspect of our problem, an aspect for which our introductory words have already prepared us: there is an

interpretation of the holy, in which its position beside the profane and its polar relation to it is abolished. The holy in religion and church receives a transcendent meaning, but it is for this very reason a meaning that is simultaneously valid for the profane in culture and society. The holy ceases to be in contrast with the profane. It is the holiness which is not real in either of the two spheres and therefore is capable of redeeming both spheres. The holy is now called deed of God, revelation, in contrast to religion as well as to culture; to the Church, as well as to society. And to be holy means to be situated in this tension, in religion over religion and in culture over culture and through this superposition to lead both sides toward redemption, to fill the profane forms with the content of the holy and to express the contents of the holy in the profane forms.

We know therefore that from the point of view of God, the Church has no advantage over society. That it exists as church, as holy sphere, is the criticism against the Church. But profane culture, society, also has no advantage over the Church. That it is contrasted with the Church, has freed itself from the absolute meaning, in profane autonomy, is the criticism of society. And so it comes about, that the Church is the perpetual guilty conscience of society and society the perpetual guilty conscience of the Church.

And yet it follows from all this that in the polarity of religion and culture both sides are necessary. The mere existence of the Church would make all our mental acts symbols. In theory all knowledge would be resolved into myth; in practice all action would be resolved into cult. Every holy sphere has an inner tendency in this direction. Every church wants to resolve reality into forms of expression, into transparencies of the absolute meaning; that is the inner fate of the Church, which it can never escape. That is its strength, never to be broken, and yet also its weakness. In order to justify these pretensions, it would have to be the Kingdom of God. To be sure, sometimes it calls itself this, but not rightfully, for society is beside it and it cannot exist without itself assuming forms of society. And it has the State beside it and cannot exist without assuming forms of the State. Now, if it claims absolute validity for the assumed forms in which it must live as earthly society, if it calls itself Kingdom of God, then it succumbs to arrogance and violates culture and society in demonic heteronomy.

In contrast let us consider profane society. Its task is to realize the individual forms of meaning, to arrange them within a theoretical and practical system. For the holy is at the same time the right and just; and God is the basis and abyss of meaning, only insofar as He is the one who demands. The significance of the profane, of autonomous culture, of free society, however, is that it pursues logical, moral, esthetic, and social laws, that it grasps the forms of existence and realizes them in nature and society. Thus in accordance with the demand of the absolute meaning, science and art grow out of the myth; law and ethics out of the cult. And because the growth of this profane culture is a demand of the unconditioned, it has divine strength and divine right. The autonomy of the profane rises up against the heteronomy of the holy. But its weakness also lies in this contrast; for through the contrast with the holy it loses its connection with the abyss of meaning, which gave the secular world its own validity. And while the Church violates autonomy demonically, society rushes toward profane emptiness only to fall victim

itself to other demonic powers. Thus church and society are subject to the same criticism and are restricted to the same redemption, which comes not from the Church and not from society, but from the act of God, which can be denied by the one as well as the other, and to which the one as well as the other can testify.

## 2. CULTURAL HISTORY AND THE PRESENT SITUATION

Out of the fundamental discussions grows an historical consideration of the relation of church and society, as soon as the general categories are applied to the concrete manifoldness of history. The concepts which have been elaborated are constitutive. They refer to the essential relationship between profane and holy. They are therefore valid for every phenomenon, but never and nowhere are they fully realized. From this fact the enormous variety of possible relationships is derived. And yet every one points to the basic problem that has been worked out, and certain main trends can be determined in which the solution is found in historic reality.

When we glance into the history of mankind, a certain attitude which we shall designate as sacramental appears in the great majority of human societies. It is determined by a relationship of the forms of social and intellectual life to myth and cult: a religious meaning to which they owe their holiness and strength. Church and society are essentially one. Such an attitude by no means signifies a renunciation of rational elements, in knowing and acting. On the contrary, these can be highly developed. But the rationality is not fundamentally developed. It is not free, and therefore has quite definite limits. Whoever oversteps these hallowed limits, commits sacrilege. Here, too, there are tensions, but they do not lead to a break. In this way the heights of Hindu speculation or of Chinese cultivation of customs can be reached, but one does not arrive at a free unfolding of the rational principle. At some very decisive points anti-rational elements remain. Myth and cult consecrate the lie and injustice. This, however, means that in the sacramental attitude the essential unity of profane and holy, of church and society, is not reached.

The profane, the true and the just, however, are also an essential demand of the absolute. And it can come about that in the name of God a battle is launched against holy lies and especially holy injustices. One can call such a battle theocratic, not in the sense of priestly rule, but in the sense of the reign of God, who is the bearer of the absolute demand. Theocracy wishes to subjugate society to this demand in the name of God. It wants to erect no new hierarchy, certainly not a sacramental one; it therefore reduces the myth to divine law, the cult to obedience (prophetism, Puritanism). But theocracy is not yet autonomy. Certain elements of the sacramental attitude remain and create a new myth and a new cult which often exercise irresistible sacramental force, although they have no independent significance, but rather are supposed to serve for the proclamation of the divine law. The unity of church and society is not destroyed but stabilized with especial emphasis and even oppressively.

A complete development of autonomy is arrived at only when these elements of heteronomous

authority have also disappeared, and reason stands entirely on its own feet, *i.e.*, those of the individual bearer. This happened once fundamentally and radically, *viz.*, in Greek history. For this very reason it is a standard characteristic of the whole development of autonomy. First, in the name of the metaphysical and moral concept of God, it turns against the holy immoralities and flaws of the folk-religion. It puts the latter on the defensive and shuts it off from the general cultural development. This takes place most efficaciously and thoroughly, where autonomy officially bows to the folk-religion. The philosophical religion, however, tries to enforce the purified form of the holy, and therewith approaches very closely the theocratic conception, but with this difference, that it starts out from the individual and his free recognition; while the other is supported by a faith of the community. Herein lie the points of contact and at the same time the differences between, let us say, *Stoicism* and late Judaism. The antisacramental protest starts out in the first instance from the autonomous, rational form, which receives divine consecration; in the second instance from the God, who as the Holy, stands for truth and justice. Thus it occurs that through the autonomous attitude, society becomes more and more profane and religious functions become state functions, as especially in late Rome. While previously the holy provided society and its life with strength and substance, the holy now becomes a secondary element of social life. That really means, however, that it is eliminated as the holy or unconditioned. Independent religious spheres with no public cult and myth take a place beside the state religion which has been secularized. Only in the lower classes is the original folk-religion retained. A wide gap separates church and society.

But autonomous society necessarily becomes void of content. It is directed toward the cultural forms and their rational unity and thus loses the abyss threatening meaning and culture. In order to find the divine depth again, the religious spirit finally throws aside all the forms that have become empty for it, the profane as well as holy, and ends in a world-surmounting mysticism: church and society are equally denied.

But this "no" without a "yes" is impossible. It is impossible to interpret life only from the point of view of the divine abyss without regarding God as the creative basis of life. For this reason the historical consequence was not a mere mysticism, but rather a new union of holy and profane, of church and society, as it is represented in the Middle Ages. It is an unique fulfillment, complete in itself despite all battles and tensions, an essential fulfillment of the relation of profane and holy. But it could not maintain itself, because on the one hand its heteronomous and sacramental elements became more and more predominant, on the other hand, in opposition to this development, the rational elements it had assumed became independent and entered into an antihierarchic struggle. This opposition did not attain victory by itself, but with the help of Protestantism, *i.e.*, of the great theocratic battle against the petrification of the medieval union of church and society. Only as a result of the gap which had become unbridgable through this battle, did the new autonomy of the Occidental nations grow. It led to the formation of profane bourgeois society and to a depreciation of the churches to an extent far surpassing even late antiquity.

So much for the historical analysis. It shows changing combinations of profane and holy spheres of Church and society. Just because it places the profane and the holy side by side, however, the historical consideration is actually profane. We must now consider the opposition which arises from the holy, if the holy and the profane are coordinated. Revelation is present wherever the divine appears, not as religion but as challenging religion and denying the contrast of culture and religion. This happens when an entirely new reality becomes manifest in anticipation and expectation. Religion and culture, church and society live on such manifestations. They live on that which denies their contrast, the divine, but they realize the divine in their contrast. This contrast is insurmountable and was not overcome even where such potent unifications appeared, as in the early and late Middle Ages. The Kingdom of God not only stands beyond the contrast of autonomy and heteronomy, but also beyond the temporal, and therefore only partial and transitory, conquest of this contrast in an attitude which we call theonomy. For even theonomy is not the Kingdom of God, but only an indication of it, even if, as such, it is the meaning and the goal of history.

The decisive manifestation of the divine, however, can occur only where this contrast of revelation to culture and religion becomes manifest. The decisive manifestation, therefore, cannot be a new religion or a new unity of culture and religion, but only a protest against the claim of every finite form to be absolute, *i.e.*, the Word of the Cross. The Word of the Cross, too, became religion in the moment it was uttered, and it became culture the moment it was perceived. But its greatness and the proof of its absoluteness is that it denies again and again the religion and the culture that proclaim it. The congregation which knows of this self-negation stands beyond church and society, but this congregation is invisible. It is not identical with the Christian Church and not identical with bourgeois society. It is also not identical with the theonomous unity of profane and holy, as it was realized in the past and will be realized in the future. Therefore it is not limited by Christian Church history nor Christian cultural history. It can be sought and yet not proved wherever the absoluteness of the divine breaks through against religion and culture. The more strongly and distinctly that happens, the stronger also is the power of revelation in creating religion and culture. But this, its own creation, is at the same time its entrance into finitude, into conflict, into that which it must itself contradict ever anew. That is the depth and the background of all history.

This is the result of our historical investigation. Church and society are one in their essential nature; for the substance of culture is religion and the form of religion is culture. In historical reality, however, church and society exist beside and against one another, though this essential relationship again and again encourages new attempts to realize pure unity, to overcome the contrast of autonomous society and heteronomous church through a theonomous community. But beyond all these tensions and battles and, shattering them, stands the act of God, which turns alike against church and society and creates the invisible congregation. His action is the creative element in cultural and religious history. Yet as soon as it enters into a finite form, church and society and their destructive conflict grow again, so that no church and no society can rest in its pride.

What does this result signify for us at present? It means that we are free, in principle free from the Church, but not through the antithesis of society, but rather through the revelation of God. And it further means that we are free, in principle free from society, and society is the more oppressive mistress in our times. We are free from it, but not through the antithesis of the Church, but rather through the revelation of God. And because we are free from both, we are therefore also free for both, for service to both: for the Church, because we know that we do not enter into conflict with society through service to her, but only announce symbolically to society the basis of meaning upon which it rests and the demand to become a Kingdom of God, to which it is subject; for society, because we know that we do not enter into conflict with the Church through service to society, but only announce to the Church obedience to the forms of meaning, to truth and justice, to which it also is bound. For both, in that we try to reconcile their conflict and that we struggle for the theonomous unity, in which they cannot, to be sure, be the Kingdom of God, but a more perfect symbol of the Kingdom of God.

Our standing in this freedom from the Church is what distinguishes us from Catholicism, which does not accept the judgment for itself which it passes again and again on culture and society. On the other hand, that we see the essential unity of church and society has the effect that the earlier, less heteronomous Catholicism can become a symbol for our future work, for the struggle for a new theonomy growing out of our present problems.

In Protestantism, too, a church which claims absoluteness and is heteronomous toward society, is possible. Out of the battle against Catholicism, *i.e.*, against the religion which sets itself up as absolute, a new absolute religion can grow, whether it be absolute Bible-religion, or absolute Christ or Jesus-religion. But this very qualification "absolute" means that Protestantism, *i.e.*, the protest against confusion of divine and human, is forgotten. A Protestant Church which raises this claim against society is in truth a bad imitation of the Catholic Church.

A Protestant Church with a claim of absoluteness in any direction, even with reference to doctrine, is in itself a contradiction. That seems to remove the possibility of a church altogether, and to dissolve the holy community into the changing profane societies. That is true—but only as it is true that the profane societies always and of necessity find their way back into the holy community. There can be a Protestant Church as a community of those who give heed to the revelation and want to proclaim and realize it, no matter whether it be from the religious side or the cultural. Therefore the Protestant Church reaches further than the religious sphere in times of discord between religion and culture. It reaches out beyond itself and embraces in itself all those who testify to revelation in society. However, just by reaching out beyond itself, just because its opposition to profane society is simultaneously an opposition to itself as a holy society, it closes the breach between autonomy and heteronomy and creates the germ of the new unity, the new theonomy. This and no other is the attitude of a church that is con-scious of the divinity of the divine. It is an attitude that is basically self-denying, but, for this very reason is creative in the broadest sense and new creation in the spirit of theonomy.

This attitude to all phases of culture and social life means at the same time refuting the one-sided conception of preaching the Word of God. Word is present, not only when one speaks and understands, but word is also present when something is made apparent and treated in effective symbols. *Verbum* is more than *oratio*. Protestantism has forgotten that to a great degree. *Verbum*, word of revelation can be in everything in which the spirit expresses itself, even in the silent symbols of art, even in the works of the community and law. And therefore a church must be able to speak in all these forms. They must all become symbols for the word of revelation. And that means nothing other than that the whole life of society in every direction is destined to be strongly symbolical of God. Church and society are destined to become one.

Such a church, such a society we do not have. We have indeed a church in which the echo of the word of revelation transmits itself in writing and tradition; we have indeed a society in which in all fields the pure form of thinking and acting, knowledge and justice are served. But the symbols of the Church have become strength-less. The "word" no longer sounds through its speech. Society no longer understands it. And *vice versa* the work of society has become empty, and into its vacuum powers of the anti-divine, of the untrue and unjust, have forced their way, the very powers which it wanted to escape. Its symbols are demonic rather than divine. That the Church cannot give society and its life meaning and depth, cannot speak in powerful symbols of that which stands beyond church and culture, and that society does not bring to the Church full and living forms wherein divine truth and divine justice can express themselves, is the wicked aspect of the situation in which we find ourselves. But that we know of this wickedness; and that we no longer believe we can redeem culture through the Church or the Church through culture—this is the first and most important sign of salvation.

Thus we arrive at the question as to what is to be done. No new religion is born of religion, and no new culture of culture and no new unity of both is born of both. However, all this is created through revelation. Therefore the will for the new church or new society is irreligious and unspiritual. The new church and the new culture and the unity of both grow out of the new revelation, or rather (since always and everywhere there is only the one revelation) out of the new awakening of the word of revelation. A new awakening, however, cannot be made, but only received. First of all and decisively then the answer is: we can do nothing. More harmless but just as impossible is it to wish to make new symbols in culture and religion. Symbols also grow and are not made. And it has been evidenced that they grow most creatively at the point where revelation breaks through. It is by the prophetic personality and not through the priests of religion nor the leaders of culture that the decisive symbols are created. But to try to make a new church or a new culture with the help of new symbols is to attempt to evade the word of revelation.

Therefore we cannot do the decisive thing. What we can do is to pave the road. Thus it always was and thus it must remain in all epochs that long for revelation. The Church can prepare the way, by placing itself and its forms under the judgment of the old word of revelation and freeing itself of all forms that have lost their symbolic strength, and opening itself up to the

work of the law, which culture has achieved in obedience. And culture can prepare the way by realizing the emptiness of the mere form, of service to the law, in all its own functions, in natural and technical science, in art and philosophy, in law and economics, in the social and the personal, in society and state; and thus becoming capable of listening to the word of revelation and filling itself with the living content of grace, which breaks through the law. There are many in society and many in the Church who can prepare the way. When there are enough, and when their waiting and their action have become profound enough, then a new "Kairos," a new fullness of time will have arrived. We all are involved in this growth, some nearer the Church, others nearer society, but none wholly without one or the other. Therefore we are all responsible for both: for the Church, that it may become free from itself and open to the word of revelation; for society, that it fill itself with a living substance and be able to create symbols in the service of the word of revelation—neither, however, for itself but for that which is more than culture and religion and to which both bear witness.

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part Four: Theological Categories of the Interpretation of History

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

## II: The Interpretation of History and the Idea of Christ

"Christ and history" is the combination of two concepts, neither of which can be treated completely without reference to their connection. At some point Christology meets the concept of history, and at some point the analysis of the nature of history inevitably leads to the question of Christology. This is so even when it is not particularly noticed; indeed, most often it is not even noticed.

The older Christology was concerned exclusively with the problem of "nature." The unity of divine and human nature was considered as realized in Christ; of course, in the historical Christ; for only the historical is the bearer of true human nature, since human nature is subject to time and change. But the historicity of Christ was not itself the problem of Christology. It was the prerequisite, the inner problematical character of which was not consciously expressed. Yet even here a universal view, embracing all temporal events whose center is the appearance of divine nature in the human personality of the historical Jesus was presupposed. Christology necessarily leads to interpretation of history.

And similarly the opposite is true. Interpretation of history necessarily leads to the question of Christology. It is self-deception, when profane interpretation of history of the progressive or revolutionary, conservative or organic type considers itself capable of treating history without regarding the Christological question. Every historical reality, from which the meaning and rhythm of history are derived, lies within the scope of the Christological question. To develop

Christology means to describe the concrete point at which something absolute appears in history and provides it with meaning and purpose; and this indeed is the central problem in the philosophy of history. This problem can be obscured by leaving that concrete point in history unnamed or rendering it invisible by general abstract formulations. But the problem cannot be escaped, for history becomes history only through its relation to such a concrete point by which it gains meaning. In dealing with philosophy of history, it is impossible to avoid the Christological problem. History and Christology belong together just as do question and answer. We shall therefore proceed, by first unfolding the question of an interpretation of history and later pointing out the Christological answer.

## I. BEING AND HAPPENING

Where reality is viewed as Nature, it is governed by the symbol of a circle that returns in itself. This contains a double idea: first of the inner dynamics, the tension of existence, which strives for development; then, of the boundary of development, which by necessity is included in every factor of natural development: the urge to return into itself and to join the end to the beginning. Certainly by this symbol the being is not to be considered as simply resting. The circular motion can signify the deepest tension and unrest. But beyond all unrest and tension exists the state of rest, of ultimate equalization. The tension is limited, the whole at last balanced. On this basis, true historical thinking is impossible. Thus throughout almost all Greek philosophy every deviation from the circular line is an expression of powerless being. Mundane things show their inferior character as contrasted with the heavenly in the very fact that they are not circular but move in centrifugal and intersecting lines. The deviation from the circular line involves a loss not an increase of power. Consequently in Greek thought there is no view of the world as history, even though there is no lack of historiography as a report of the confusion of human movements and as an example of politics. Even where the infinity of time threatens the picture of the circle, as illustrated in the idea of world-eras, the symbol of the circle, is victorious in the idea of the "eternal recurrence of the same." One might say that in this sort of thinking space holds time enclosed within itself. To be sure, time is also there and removes from space the image of a rigid, dead simultaneity of all things. But space does not permit time to go beyond itself, just as physics, ontologically based on this conception of the world, was able to consider time a dimension of space.

The circular line is disrupted in the historical view of being. Time tears reality out of its limitation in space to create a line that does not return into itself but nevertheless does not weaken but strengthens the power of being. The happening, insofar as it is determined by time, proceeds toward a goal; it has a direction in which something is to be realized that comes into the whole of being, not as a thing recurrent but as something new. Tension, which also belongs to nature, becomes in history a tension breaking through the circle of pure existence. The unrest caused by this tension is not held in balance by any embracing serenity. To see reality historically, means to see it essentially out of balance. But this physical picture must be immediately supplemented. The lack of balance in reality in the historical view is not an

objective occurrence but directed tension, hastening toward something unrealized, which shall be realized. Tension can be described as "being in advance of oneself." We are in advance of ourselves in anticipating the next moment, or far moments or the future as a whole. In doing so, we simultaneously go behind ourselves in recording past moments, near or far, or the past as a whole. There is a tension in ourselves driving us always from remembrance to expectation, from past to future, in a direction not to be inverted. Time has only one direction; it cannot be turned around; we cannot have the contents of the future as the contents of the past, nor conversely. We cannot replace reality in advance of ourselves by reality behind ourselves or vice versa. The line of time has always one and the same direction. It has the character of going toward something—more exactly, something new. This very fact excludes the possibility of repetition. Each moment of the directed progress of time can occur only once. Insofar as being is looked upon as historical, it is viewed as happening once. That which is repeated, e.g., the biological or psychological or individual types, comprises the unhistorical element of being. The type essentially belongs to space. It is suitable for types to be placed beside one another in space. The sequence of their appearance affects them only outwardly. In having only one direction, in producing things only once without repetition, time tears itself away from space, history from nature. In this separation, however, the internal meaning of time is fulfilled.

The definite direction of time is an expression of its meaningful character. Things which only are existent and have no meaning can be replaced. The order of time, to which they are subjected, does not affect their essence. They do not change their qualities whether they appear at this point of time or at another. This statement does not exclude their necessary appearance at a special point of time, that in the system of causal relations they must appear at this and no other point of space and time. Their appearance at one point of time—and no other—however, becomes meaningful only because the system of causal relations has received a definite unchangeable direction in time and through time, or because the quality of sequence is the expression of the meaning of sequence.

That definite direction and meaningfulness are connected to each other, can be observed in the process of the meaningful, moral life of individuals. From the point of view of psychological inquiry every moral experience can be understood as a necessary element within the whole of psychical processes possible only at a special moment of time. But that this experience happens at just this moment and not at another has no meaning at all; any other experience could happen and would not be more meaningful. From the point of view, however, of moral judgment, meaningless and replaceable events of our personal life have to be criticised. Moral attitude implies the consciousness of a definite line of life proceeding toward a definite goal of life. Every experience that has gained moral importance belongs in this line; and whatever does not belong there is meaningless from the point of view of our history as individuals. A life in which such accidental and meaningless experiences are predominant has neither moral nor historical quality. It remains under the control of space and does not fulfill the meaning of time potentially implied in its moral disposition.

With this analogy a further question emerges. It seems to be obvious that directed time and meaning belong together. Meaning, however, is not a fact objectively ascertainable. The irrevocable direction of time points to a meaning, but it does not guarantee fulfillment of meaning. That implies: the irrevocable direction of time is a tendency, not a fact. The idea of an infinite return of the line of time to itself, the idea of eternal repetition, or circles within circles cannot be excluded by a mere analysis of time. History cannot be ascertained objectively, for meaning and the direction of time cannot be ascertained objectively. The tendency to fulfill itself in history, which is contained in time, is manifest. Single tendencies of direction and fulfillments of meaning are manifest. The decision, however, about time and space as a whole, about history and non-history generally, cannot be made by analytical efforts. The decision is synthetic and comes from a level in the human soul, where even ethical self-observation is transcended.

We are demanding a decision against the sense-defying retraction of time into space, a decision for meaning against the ultimate meaninglessness of reality. How is such a decision possible? Obviously not through an abstract decision which asserts the meaning of history generally: such a general decision would remain a possibility which could offer no resistance to the constantly pressing, concrete contradictions of meaning. Against them only a concrete, meaning-giving principle can carry the decision. The question about history or about time, which has a definite direction and a meaningful end, therefore coincides with the question about a concrete reality in which the contradictions of meaning are regarded as overcome, in which the possibility of final senselessness is removed. Therewith, however, the decision about history has become part of the decision of the Christological question.

## **2. THE CENTER OF HISTORY**

In the previous observation, history was discussed without excluding the possibility of interpreting history as an objective phenomenon concerning which a subjective decision must be made. But any such separation of the objective existence of history and a subjective judgment about it, is thoroughly to be repudiated. History is established or destroyed with the decision for or against its reality as a meaningful process. But—this must be said at the same time, and with equal emphasis—this establishment or destruction is not arbitrary. It is itself something historical. The decision for or against meaningful history is itself historical fate bound to special situations in history.

This involves a series of consequences for the structure of historical reality. If history were an objective process in time and space, then it would have to possess an objective beginning and end, even though both beginning and end were shifted into infinity. Then the problems and antinomies of time and eternity would become decisive. But they are important only insofar as they concern the relation of history and nature. For the constitution of history as history they are without direct importance. History cannot be understood from the physical beginning and end of certain developments in time and space. History can be understood only from the meaning of

history. Therefore not beginning and end, but the point in which history reveals its meaning is decisive. If we call this point "the center of history" we can say, that not beginning and end determine the center, as is the case in spatial measurements, but that the center of history determines its beginning and end from the meaning of an historical process. The center of history is the place where the meaning-giving principle of history is seen. History is constituted by the fact that its center is constituted, or—since this is not an arbitrary act—by the fact that a center proves to be a center through creating history.

From such a center, beginning and end are determined. Beginning is the event in which the genesis of that development is seen, for which the center has constituted itself a center. End is the goal of that development which is constituted by the center as a meaningful historical process. It is just as wrong to interpret such a beginning as a moment of time, in which something is objectively begun, as to interpret the goal as a doom which occurs at a definite point of time. Even if the beginning of human development may be an empirical event in time and space, it becomes beginning of history only through the relationship which it assumes to the center of history. The same is true of the end, with only this difference: that the end, as a matter of mere expectation, has no empirical character whatsoever.

With the denial of history as an objective occurrence, the possibility of a universal history is simultaneously denied. Since history reaches as far as the potency of the center in which it is constituted, its range is dependent on the potency of its center. There can therefore be several historical developments, to which several "centers" correspond. But such a possibility is purely abstract. It is conceived outside of historical consciousness and is therefore untrue insofar as historical consciousness is constituted.

In reckoning with such a possibility one leaves one's concrete historical situation for the sake of a general survey of history. The only point on which such a survey is possible lies outside of history. Every statement in which several centers of history and consequently several beginnings and ends of different historical developments are assumed, is an expression of non-historical thinking. The category of "beside one another" is a spatial not a temporal category. Therefore if there be thinking in historical categories, if a center of history is definitely assumed, a universal claim is set up. Every center is understood as the only center; in every center the meaning of history itself is supposed to become manifest, not only the meaning of a special series of events. The claim of every other point in history to be a center, to be capable of giving meaning to history, is consistently denied. The center is absolute or it is no center at all. Now, this is the claim which in Christianity is expressed in the idea of Christ; and the problem implied in this claim in Christian theology is treated as the Christological problem. For Christian thoughts Christ is the center of history in which beginning and end, meaning and purpose of history are constituted.

### **3. THE BEARER OF HISTORY**

Besides the question of the character and the constitution of history, there is the further question of the bearer of history. The bearer of history we call that reality in which history occurs. We had started with the consideration of reality as nature. That could give rise to the opinion that nature was excluded from history, that the claim of the center of history was directed only to man. But this is not our contention.

We would be wrong to presuppose a concept of "man" in which his historical character is not implied, or to presuppose a separation of man and nature that makes historical categories applicable to man exclusively. The interpretation of history cannot refer to a definite concept of man and nature, since neither concept is explicable without reference to history. It is a relation of mutual dependence which demands a different method. Therefore the question as to what realities have, history can be answered only from the character of history itself. It is the quality of history that something new is produced and something meaningful is realized in it. This points to the conclusion that only such things can become bearers of history, in and through which something new can appear, meaning can be realized, future can be anticipated. The quality presupposed in these faculties is usually called freedom. The concept of freedom of course has many other implications, ontological, anthropological, and moral; for our purpose it suffices to describe freedom as the faculty of producing the new and of realizing meaning.

The new which breaks through the circle of pure being is new only if it is the result of a productive act, in which reality has risen beyond itself, transcending itself. A being which is not able to transcend itself remains in the circle of necessity; it fulfills its own nature, but it cannot break through the bonds of natural necessity. Necessity, from this point of view, is the impossibility of going above itself, of producing the new. Freedom, on the contrary, is this faculty. Two things are implied in this definition of freedom: first that the new is not entirely new; it remains related to the old, by which it has been produced. The new is related to the old as the product to the producer. This is the basis for historical tradition. On the other hand, this relation between producer and product has not the character of natural development. There is a leap between producer and product in history, an energy which we call freedom and which enables us to establish the new.

The other quality implied in history and realized by freedom is meaning. The freedom of a being from the necessity of its nature is its power of elevating itself to meaning. In realizing its own meaning it is within itself and beyond itself at the same time. Therefore we can say: The new that is produced by freedom is meaningful reality. The new, of which we are speaking, is not a natural thing or event; it is meaning. And consequently the bearer of history is that being in which and through which meaning is realized by freedom. This definition does not point to a special group of beings in which history occurs. It leaves open the question whether man only or angels or animals too are bearers of history. That man can have history is suggested by his power to realize in his mind what meaning means. But this does not imply that he actually has history. It is possible that his capacity of having history is never actualized; and perhaps we can rightfully assume that the majority of men lived without history. But again, it is very doubtful

whether we should affirm any participation of beings below and above man in the process of history. Perhaps it is not too bold to say that indirectly nature and the world participate in the creation of the new insofar as they are the basis of every historical production. The new and the meaningful are dependent on some constellations of natural powers, those, for example, which make possible the existence of life and mankind. The mythological interpretation of history goes even further in the expectation that nature and world are to be changed by a new creation, in which being and meaning will be completely identified. From this the cosmological problem gains importance for the interpretation of history. Christology and Cosmology meet as they met in Greek Christology. The difference lies in our approach. The Greek theologians started with an interpretation of nature, we must start with an interpretation of history.

## 4. THE MEANING OF HISTORY

If meaning is the new which is created in history, the realization of meaning could be understood as the essential content of history; but this statement is too simple and not in accord with the problems and dangers implied in the fact of human freedom. Since meaning is realized by freedom and can be realized only by freedom, there is implied the possibility that the free being decides against meaning. And this possibility is a reality; in history we find not only realization of meaning but also contradiction of meaning, destruction of meaningful realities, perversion of meaning, meaninglessness in every field of human production. This fact is not a mere accidental one. It is a necessary implication of freedom that it can become actual only in the decision between good and evil. If freedom were the realization of meaning in a necessary process, it would not be actual freedom, and it would not create history. It would create perhaps a dialectic process in which, as in Hegel, logical necessity overrules human freedom entirely. In all actual freedom there is an element of arbitrariness; therefore Schelling could say, "Arbitrariness is the goddess of history." But at the same time this goddess is the demon of history. She threatens history with ultimate meaninglessness. And the threat cannot be gain-said by an interpretation of history in which every arbitrariness and perversion of meaning is understood as the necessary tool for the realization of meaning. This Hegelian type of interpreting history does not face the seriousness and concreteness of man's situation in history; it does not face the real threat which is to be conquered in a concrete struggle in history and not by an abstract system conceived on a point above history. The decision, whether history has a meaningful direction, is to be made in history itself. History has meaning only insofar as the threat of meaninglessness is overcome in concrete decision. Since, however, no one knows the outcome of these decisions they imply an element of belief, of hope and daring which cannot be replaced by rational conclusions. There is no concrete interpretation of history without faith. This consideration forces the conclusion upon us that the content of a concrete and believing interpretation of history is the victory of meaning over meaninglessness, or—in Christian terminology—salvation. If history is affirmed—that is the result of our whole analysis—it is affirmed as history of salvation. But whether it is affirmed or not, that is a matter of decision and faith. This again means that the problem of history combines with the Christological problem. The center of history gives meaning to history only if it overcomes simultaneously the

threat of meaninglessness, or if it is the point where salvation manifests itself as the content of history. Christology being the definition and description of this point in rational terms, is at the same time the basis on which the interpretation of history rests.

The center of history is acknowledged as a center in an attitude in which there is decision as well as fate, grasping it as well as being grasped by it. Thus it follows, that the center for human consciousness always lies in the past. It cannot be sought in the future, for the meaning of the future is determined by it. That there is a meaningful future, that we are able to expect something ultimate, is possible only because there is a principle that gives us the conviction of history in creating history for us. But the center cannot lie in the present either. The present has historical meaning only if it is the point in which are joined the historical fate which is born in the past, and the historical decision which provides the future. In order, however, to have this quality, the present must be able to refer to a center of history, wherein fate and decision have acquired their meaning. No present can be the historical center for itself, as, for example, in the individual lives of many who are religious the meaning of life becomes manifest to them in that moment of the past which they call the experience of conversion or, in the case of prophets, the experience of vocation. That the center of history lies in the past does not mean that it belongs entirely to a past period of history and has come to an end with the end of that period, so that its effects are only indirect ones mediated by the stream of historical events. Such a past could not give meaning to the present and the future. Past with respect to the center of history means that the center is given as a fact for every consciousness of history that is dependent on it; it does not require to be produced anew by subjective activity, but transcends subjectivity and arbitrariness. On the other hand, although given as a past fact, it has meaningful presence in the historical consciousness of people who are gripped by it and receive it. It has a character which some theologians with respect to Christ call superhistorical reality; it is the presence of the past in the present.

Wherever a distinct consciousness of history has appeared in humanity, it displays the marks pointed out here: relationship to a past, a concrete principle, which, as the center of history, constitutes history, gives it a beginning and end, and in relation to which the belief in meaningful history overcomes the might of meaninglessness. Thus the center of history for the Jews is the exodus from Egypt and its main event, the treaty with God on Mt. Sinai; for the Persians, the appearance of Zarathustra; and for the Moslems, Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina; for the Rationalist who is awaiting the third age, the beginning of the autonomous attitude in the period of Enlightenment; for the Marxist, the appearance of the proletariat as the social class in which all classes are abolished in principle; for the Imperialist, an event in the past of his nation, whose elevation to power comprises the meaning of history for him. Beginning and end, as well as the rhythm of the total development, including every periodization, are determined by this principle. It is constitutive for the historical consciousness of each of the groups named, giving at the same time to history the character of a history of salvation.

## 5. UNIVERSAL AND CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

In the preceding, the principle constituting history or the center of history, was designated as the subject of the Christological problem. Therewith a specifically Christian concept is generalized for a special purpose. This procedure must meet with the same criticism that has been levelled several times at the attempt of such abstract generalizations, namely that the concrete historical situation is therewith abandoned. We must now satisfy this objection and therewith make the Christological question the direct subject of discussion.

To give an abstract and universal meaning to the Christological idea is justified only if therewith the universal claim implied in the constitution of a center of history is expressed. For this claim, taken seriously, denies the right of every other claim; although acknowledging the existence of some others. The claim of a center of history is that it is the only center—"several centers" would be a contradiction in terms. Only at this point of history does the meaning of history become manifest. Only at this point of history is the victory over meaninglessness fundamentally realized. Consequently every other claim of the same character is to be refuted; it is a demon's claim, based on some divine power but distorted and ultimately unable to conquer meaninglessness. The fact that several claims are assumed as existing, although refuted as demonic by the claim of the one center, makes it possible to use terms like center of history or Christology as universals for the sake of the interpretation of history. This generalizing use at the same time prevents Christology from appearing as a strange insertion within the trend of ideas concerning the philosophy of history. On the contrary, by this generalization Christology becomes the possible answer to the basic question implied in history, an answer, of course, which can never be proved by arguments, but is a matter of decision and fate.

Christianity, in calling Christ the center of history, considers a personal life which is completely determined by its relation to God, the principle of meaning in history. That implies first, that salvation occurs in that sphere which we call religion and which can be defined as the human answer to the manifestation of a transcendent unconditioned meaning. Only where such a manifestation occurs for a group of believers, can history be constituted in consciousness and reality. For only in the appearance of an unconditioned meaning is the ambiguity of time overcome, only by it can the threat of meaninglessness be conquered. Therefore being grasped by the center of history means being grasped without limitations and conditions, by an absolute power. The fate in which we are grasped by a center of history in such a way is named "predestination" in religious terminology; the decision in which we grasp that which grasps us, is named "faith." Only for faith, Christ is the center of history, and only through this center is faith possible.

The development of these statements is a main subject of theology. They imply the negation of any interpretation of history which names a profane reality the "center of history." Humanism,

Utopianism and Imperialism are denied by this means to be satisfying interpretations of history. They seek to understand the development of human capabilities as the purpose of history and the first appearance of them, for example, of autonomy or of science or of democracy, as the center of history. Thus they remain within the ambiguity of time. They have no power to overcome arbitrariness, that goddess and demon of history, because history itself cannot overcome itself and its supporting powers. Only through the appearance of a super-historical unconditioned meaning can history gain an ultimate foundation. Therefore Christian theology is right in resisting the humanistic attempts to draw Christ into the realm of universal or highest humanity; that is, to make him a representative of human possibilities. If these attempts would succeed, Christ no longer could be considered the center of history, he would become a wave (the largest perhaps) in the stream of time, subjected to its arbitrariness and ambiguity. The defense against this road of liberal theology was justified, no matter how unjustifiable and insufficient the weapons of the defense have been, and in part still are. Symbols like the "divinity of Christ" can be understood only if they are interpreted from the point of view of the question of the center of history.

We are no more able to continue the old discussions concerning the unity of two natures or two wills in Christ, except in transforming them into the problem of our present situation, that is the problem of an interpretation of history. (The German situation of today shows with surprising clarity the truth of this statement. The old Christological struggle has been transformed into a struggle about a Christian or a half pagan interpretation of history: whether the Kingdom of God or a national kingdom is the center of history and principle of meaning for every historical activity, and what the relationship should be between divine and human activity with respect to the Kingdom of God. These questions replace the old question as to the relationship of these two natures in Christ.)

Along with the humanistic interpretation of the center of history, Christian theology rejects the legal one, *i.e.*, the attempt to interpret the proclamation of commandments as the principle of meaning in history. Where that happens—there the fulfillment of time is made dependent on human moral activity. This, however, plunges history into the deepest ambiguity; for human action is inseparably connected with arbitrariness. Therefore early Christianity tore itself free from the Jewish law and made the triumph over the law a decisive sign of the center of history. (This problem also is actual today, namely in the interpretation of history as a progress produced by human activity compelled by the demand of moral laws like justice, peace, civilization in general. The catastrophe of the progressive ideology in many countries has disturbed the self-consciousness of its bearers but it has not created a new unlegalistic although activist interpretation of history. That is true first of all of America, where the demand for peace is the actual principle of meaning for historical activities. It is very hard to make comprehensible the tragic and ambiguous character of history to the defenders of this legalistic and progressive attitude)

This implies that not a point wherein the demand, but a point wherein the fulfillment becomes visible must be the center of history. Only a meaningful reality can give meaning to history. History is constituted by the appearance of an unconditioned meaning not as a demand but as existent, not as an idea but as the temporal and paradoxical anticipation of the ultimate perfection. Christ is a sacramental reality, a reality in which the holy is grace and present, not

only demand and future. Therefore He is not only prophet and proclaimer of an unconditioned meaning. His prophecy and proclamation is the expression of His existence. That gives Him the power and authority, which can never be derived either from His theoretical knowledge or from His prophetic inspiration, but can be proved only through a faculty of making people participate in His powerful existence. In denying that the center of history is a reality, and not only a demand, we are drawn into the old interpretation and that means into a legalistic attitude and its unavoidable crisis.

Calling the center of history the realization of an unconditioned meaning within history does not mean that this principle is entirely without demands. A center of history which justifies and sanctions the actual powers instead of giving the ultimate criterion for challenging and changing them, would be the basis for an unhistorical sacramentalism. It would deny the essential character of historical time, its striving toward a purpose. Future would be overcome by past, that which ought to be by that which is, social activities by ritual activities. That is the danger of Catholicism and Lutheranism, preventing them from an interpretation of history which takes up the element of truth implied in all Utopianism, and, consequently, driving all Utopian movements into an unavoidable radicalism in contradicting religion. And finally it makes room for a pagan sacramentalism, as we find it in nationalism, and in the new—at the same time very archaic—sacraments of blood, soil, state, and leadership. In all these forms of a sacramental interpretation of history, time is overcome by space, monotheism by polytheism, the divine by the demonic. For polytheism corresponds with the category "beside" of spaces, just as monotheism with the category "toward" of time and its one direction. So prophecy simultaneously struggled for time against space and for monotheism against polytheism; and so the Jewish people became the people of time, necessarily provoking the attacks of all people who are bound to space and consciously or unconsciously defy the meaning of history. Christian interpretation of history is possible. only on the basis of prophecy, implying consequently a sacramental element—Christ, the center of history, *has* come—and a prophetic element—Christ, the end of history, *is coming*. So the Christian interpretation of history stands between "already" and "not yet"; the explanation of this "intermediate situation" is the main problem of Christian theology today.

The Christological problem of today is also quite different from the problem discussed by liberal theology of the nineteenth century. It does not lie in the question of an historical event, about the empirical reality of which faith and historical science are at war. It does deal with existence that stands in history and determines history, constitutes it, gives it a beginning, end, and meaning. It does deal with a center of history as a reality. But the reality in question here cannot be proved nor refuted empirically. It is the reality of a center of history which grasps us, of its place, its meaning, and its form. These questions, however, cannot be answered by pointing to a subject of historical inquiry, whether it may be ascertained by knowledge or by faith. The question can be answered only by the acceptance of a reality which has the power of constituting our history. The Christological question is the question of Christ as the center of our history.

This question, moreover, is entirely independent of the problems of historical inquiry into the facts behind the rise of the Biblical picture of Christ. The exposition of those facts can only lend probability—and with respect to the historical Jesus, a very faint probability. No religious certainty, no religious belief can be supported by such researches. The theological task is rather to make visible the reality of our center of history by pointing to its power of giving meaning to our existence and of overcoming the threat of meaninglessness.

Therewith the Christological problem becomes the most direct problem of our present existence, because it is determined by history. To practise Christology does not mean to turn backward to an unknown historical past or to exert oneself about the applicability of questionable mythical categories to an unknown historical personality. It means to look at the center of history that is our center, the principle that gives meaning to our historical activities, that makes history a history of salvation for us, that gives us an expectation of an eternal future in which meaninglessness is conquered. To look at this center, to interpret it, to relate it through negations and affirmations to the whole of history, to make its claim comprehensible and to argue for the superiority of its claim in theory and practice—that is Christology today. It decides about the Christian claim that Christianity attests to the center of history in testifying for Christ. So, in our situation, Christology and the interpretation of history revolve about an identical basic question.

# The Interpretation of History by Paul Tillich

## Part Four: Theological Categories of the Interpretation of History

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include Systematic Theology; The Courage to Be; Dynamics of Faith; Love, Power and Justice; Morality and Beyond; and Theology of Culture. This material was prepared for Religion Online by Ted & Winnie Brock.

### III. Eschatology and History

#### I. A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

There are two methods of scientific approach to the problems of religion: the first leads us to the authoritatively circumscribed, written church doctrines, in order to find in them norms that lend themselves to logical treatment. The second turns to the psychological, sociological, and historical processes in which religion is present and the subjects of religious devotion are intended. The first approach is common to all forms of supernaturalism. The second combines Schleiermacher's methodological approach with our modern psychology and sociology and, the history of religion. The first method breaks down because an unavoidable conflict arises between dogmatic material and scientific treatment, in the course of which either science is mutilated by authority or authority is undermined. The second method, however, is to be criticised because it remains enclosed in the subjectivity of religious consciousness and never attains an immediate grasp of the contents intended in the religious act, for it is impossible to derive the substance of the act from the act, instead of the act from the substance.

This observation contains an indication of a third path open to the attempt of understanding religion, and one which we shall now travel. It is the immediate approach through phenomenological intuition; it is the attempt to isolate and clarify in rational terms the content present in the religious act, through an immediate approach to it. We turn for this purpose neither to the authorities nor to religious consciousness, but immediately to the whole of reality, and endeavor to uncover that level of reality which is intended by the religious act. That, of

course, is not possible without an awareness of the religious act, *i.e.*, without having had a conscious experience and certainty of it.

At this point the road separates sharply from rationalism which believed it could reach the substance of religion through conclusions from reality, without experience of the religious act itself. That is impossible and finally means the negation of the substance of religion. A religion which is reduced to a system of logical conclusions has lost its independent character and is doomed to be dissolved into a mere subject of scientific discussions. But this stratum of realities which is meant in religious devotion does not belong to the sphere in which scientific researches can discover truth. The subjects of religion have not the structure of things conditioned by other things and calculable by their relationship to those other things. Since religion deals with the "Unconditioned," the methods of explaining conditioned things and events are entirely inadequate. The only adequate method is one which is able to perceive the meaning of the Unconditioned as this meaning appears in the whole of reality, when reality becomes transparent for the religious act. Phenomenological intuition is directed toward the whole of reality, but toward a reality that reveals its ultimate depth to a human soul. Phenomenological intuition is not religion itself; it is a theoretical task, but it can grasp the meaning of religion only if accompanied and supported by the religious act. The religious act, so to speak, opens the depths of reality and gives phenomenological intuition access to the character of the depth of reality and enables us to express it in definite terms.

The objection might be raised on the part of dialectical theology that in the phenomenological intuition of reality, the contents of Christian revelation are not to be found, that these are marked by a character of absolute transcendence, passing human capability of grasping them. So far as this criticism is to lead one back to the supernaturalistic method—and so it does to a great extent—no further explanation is necessary, inasmuch as we have already dealt with this method. Insofar as the criticism only calls attention to the transcendental quality of that stratum of being intended in the religious act, it must be included in every theological consideration and is a basic prerequisite of the one we are attempting here. If the intuition of reality were to be prohibited, however, because the contents of religion are not to be grasped in reality or even through reality, might not one ask: Does faith then look away from real things and not into their depths? Does their essential nature not lie within the field of vision as implied in the religious act? Does their being creatures, their being subject to death, guilt, and salvation, their eternal destination, all lie outside their essence? Can that only be said about them, not perceived in them as their depth and meaning? It is clear that all those judgments concerning things and man, if not approachable by any intuition and in any stratum of reality, could be justified only by authority according to the supernaturalistic method. And that would mean that reality has no ultimate significance at all, that there is a gulf between belief and reality producing a belief that is estranged from reality on the one hand, and on the other hand a reality which is considered without belief. In contrast to this attitude, we have described again and again the attitude of believing realism.

In order to explain religion in accord with this attitude, we have chosen the method of phenomenological intuition, a method in which reality is the subject of our approach, but reality insofar as it has become transparent through the religious act, through belief.

Two things follow from this: first of all, we are actually to make a statement about *reality*; but at the same time, in this statement reality is *transcended* and indeed absolutely transcended. Both together mean: it shall be demonstrated wherein things transcend themselves for phenomenological intuition. By this way of penetrating into the depth of things and finding the different points in which they transcend themselves, the differentiation and multiplicity of religious symbols can be understood; it is the consequence of the multiplicity of possible approaches from reality to the Unconditioned which transcends reality and multiplicity, but which can be grasped by the human mind only in a variety of symbols. The different basic qualities of reality provide the different basic symbols for religion. One of these basic qualities shall occupy us: reality insofar as it is historical and a symbol based on this quality: The "ultimate," in Greek "τ α \_ε σ χ α τ α " the doctrine of which is called eschatology. If the quality of reality that it has history is transcended in the religious act, the symbol of the ultimate appears. For the ultimate is the transcendent meaning implied in history; this is our assertion, the proof and explanation of which is the purpose of all the following paragraphs.

## 2. THEOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

Before dealing with the transcendent meaning of history, we have to deal with that quality of things from which it is to be distinguished, the pure being. We have to direct phenomenological intuition to the transcendent meaning of being to the extent that it is pure being and not yet history. There is no approach to religion at all without what we call theological ontology, the understanding of the Unconditioned or Transcendent as that which gives being to the being, as the transcendent power of being.

In looking at things insofar as they are, that is in looking at the quality of being in all beings, we may discover two basic characteristics of things: the ultimate seriousness and the ultimate insecurity of things. Through the mere fact that something is, that it takes part in being, it shares in these two qualities. They do not follow from a special structure of things, they are dependent on the mere being of things. Seriousness is meant to be the expression for the feeling that every being gives us through its pure being, that it is ultimately impenetrable, that it cannot be either removed or invented, in short, that it has an ultimate, unconditioned power of existence. Insecurity is meant to express that things show an ultimate lack of weight, an indication of possible non-being, a deficiency of ultimate necessity. Both seriousness and insecurity offer themselves to a phenomenological intuition of things, supported by religious belief. No being fulfills its being but each participates in absolute being. That every being participates in absolute being shows the seriousness of things. That it is separated from the absolute shows the insecurity of things. No being has unconditioned power of being, but each points through positive and negative qualities to the absolute power of being which it shares. This absolute

power is the transcendent meaning of things as they have being. To see things in this transcendent quality is the presupposition of religious ontology; or, in dogmatic terminology of the doctrine of creation, which, indeed, has lost more and more the consciousness of its genuine meaning and has become the empty assertion that "God has created the world." But a doctrine of creation which really fulfills its task has to deal with the qualities of being a creature, with melancholy and courage, of productive power and finiteness of things. It has to deal with the degrees of power of being, with the estrangement and community of things, with the original contrast of might in things, with the tension between spirit and vitality, and with the transcendent basis of this tension: the unity of depth and clarity within the Unconditioned itself. All these problems had their place in mythology as well as in the old theology. They were forgotten in Protestantism because of its one-sided interest in the problem of salvation; but they are the foundation not only for interpretation of the idea of salvation, but also for individual and social ethics, consequently for the most pressing problems of today.

### **3. THEOLOGICAL ESCHATOLOGY**

Every being, as it has history, is related to the ultimate, and the ultimate is manifest in it, just as the "origin" is manifest in it, as it participates in being. They are manifest for the religious act, that is, for the act directed toward things, insofar as they transcend themselves. History is not the natural motion of things, their natural genesis and decay. Historical motion has not the character of a circle returning to itself. The circular motion belongs to being, insofar as it is complete as being, without lack, without need for something new or something better or something perfect. That is the quality of the motion of stars which were therefore always considered the most perfect things. Historical motion differs from this type of motion. It breaks through the closed circle of pure being; it produces the new, the unexpected which cannot be derived from natural motion. Therefore history also is more than the development of something enveloped. Every living being develops what is enveloped in its very nature. This development, however, is not the production of an entirely new creation. It is the actualization of a definite potentiality; but it does not break through the circle of actuality and potentiality as history does. History transcends the natural limitations in creating the new which does not follow from the old by evolution. The new, which occurs wherever history occurs, is meaning. In creating meaning, being rises above itself. For meaning—as we use this word here—is realized by freedom and only by freedom; in creating meaning, being gains freedom from itself, from the necessity of its nature. History exists where meaning is realized by freedom. The new which is produced in history is really new because it is produced by freedom. Freedom is the leap in which history transgresses the realm of pure being and creates meaning.

But history, like being, has the dual character of seriousness and insecurity. History has in it the inexhaustibility of meaning as well as the threat of plunging into the abyss of meaninglessness and nothingness. Our own life clearly shows us this dual quality, our might and impotence in realizing the meaning of life. History transcends itself, as being transcends itself, for a believing intuition. It points to a transcendent meaning of history in which the threat of meaninglessness

is warded off. This transcendence is not the transcendence of the origin, as is true of pure being; it is the transcendence of the ultimate, as is true of being, in its creation of meaning and history. Therefore this transcendence is implied in history—for belief, of course—with the same certainty, as the other transcendence is implied in being. The ultimate is the transcendent meaning of history.

Therefrom it follows that history is clearly to be separated from development. There are many developments in history, but insofar as they are mere developments they are not yet history. The concept of history does not imply that something develops, and the concept of development does not imply that something historical occurs. Both can be united, but they need not be. The transition from antiquity to Christianity, for instance, was history in an outstanding sense but development only to a very slight extent. The meaning of history is transcendent, is the ultimate, not the accidental and doubtful result of a development. Neither does the meaning of history of a single life lie in its age, nor that of antiquity in modern times, nor that of mankind in a last generation, but rather every part of history, no matter how small or great, shares in the ultimate, in the transcendent meaning of history.

These considerations force us to reject Utopianism and the belief in a general progress, since they attempt to locate the meaning of history in history itself. That is impossible and destroys the meaning of history through depreciating past and present in favor of an imagined future. In the idea of infinite progress, realization of meaning is never attained, and in Utopianism the inescapable disillusionment makes us despair of the meaning of history. And if the expected Utopia were to be found, history would be at an end. If Marx says that the prehistory of mankind ends and its history begins with classless society, one might ask whether this history really is history, or whether all real history does not rather belong to what he calls pre-history. With respect to the ultimate, all history is pre-history, and only through being "pre-history" does it have its historical meaning.

However, when one speaks thus of history, not only the progressive but the conservative organic conception of history is refuted. The immediate relation of all history to the ultimate does not imply the need of our resting in this immediacy, claiming ultimate meaning for a very conditioned and ambiguous historical situation in order to prevent criticism and progress. The conservative conception, to be sure, assumes an ultimate transcendent meaning of history. But the ultimate stands outside of concrete history at its mythological end and without essential relation to it. The ultimate becomes a mythical idea which has significance only in regard to the individual fate, but which leaves history untouched to become motion which remains in the circle of pure being. History, however, breaks through the circle of being; therefore it contains a revolutionary, transforming element in individual as well as in social life. That is the reason religious socialism believes that the socialistic movement has made the meaning of the ultimate more manifest than has Christian conservatism.

These ideas agree with the character of time. Time shows the same quality as being: of

transcending itself because of its ambiguity. It is ambiguous when it affirms and denies being at the same time. It is the form of development from potentiality to actuality, the form through which life really is life, that is, internal motion; and time is the form of limiting life definitely, it is the form of vanishing and ending. The three modes of time are the expression of the dual quality: past as the mode of negation, future as the mode of production, and present as the mode in which both are connected and time has its actuality, so to speak, its space. Therefore, past as well as future are immanent in the present, the former by remembrance, the latter by expectation. The transcendent character of being and history, their relation to the Unconditioned as the origin and as the ultimate, is independent of the modes of time; since these express just what is transcended in the relation to the Unconditioned, namely the ambiguity of being and history. The final seriousness of being and history is acknowledged by transcending the modes of time in the religious act. The meaning of history is untouched by the modes of past and future, by birth and death. Transcendence, therefore, can be defined neither as the beginning of time nor as the end of time, nor as the negation of time. It can be indicated only by the symbolic concepts of origin and ultimate, which do not mean either the first or the last moment of time, but something transcendent to which all modes of time are equally related. Only he who experiences in the impotence of being the transcendent power which supports being, only he who in the ambiguity of historical meaning experiences the transcendent meaning toward which history is directed, has the certainty of transcendence; in religious terminology, of eternal life. And the genesis and decay in time and space cannot prevent him from penetrating to that stratum of things where they transcend themselves.

And yet something else lies in time that is deeper than its being a mere form of unfolding life in three modes. Time has the character of one-sided direction forward, of unreversibility. The motion of mere being can be resolved into dimensions of space as mathematics show. It has no inner relationship to time. That it nevertheless takes place in time is the expression of its tendency to produce history. Only in history is the form of time, namely its one-sided direction, filled with its adequate content. From the point of view of being, this can also be expressed in another way: the tension of being, circling within itself, is directed toward breaking through the circle, toward setting up the new meaning and history. This is shown in that the might of being presents itself, not only as space but also as time. A philosophy that wants to maintain the closed circle of motion, must depreciate time, as *e.g.*, did Greek philosophy which was basically timeless. All vitalistic philosophy must also exclude time somehow. That is what Nietzsche did, in spite of the immense tension which he attributed to being, through his doctrine of the eternal return of all things. Only from its relationship to the ultimate can the definite direction of time be understood.

#### **4. FULFILLMENT AND DECISION**

How can the ultimate now be more exactly defined? Evidently through looking at history and seeing what it contains as an indication of its transcendental meaning. That is how it is done in the religious intuition; that is what we will try to do in our descriptive theory. The

comprehension of what occurs in history may be achieved in two steps. In the first step, we arrive at two concepts which define the ultimate more exactly. The ultimate is *fulfillment* and *decision*.

Fulfillment here means that the meaning of history has overcome ambiguity and meaninglessness. The ultimate, therefore, is the transcendent fulfillment, the unconditionally fulfilled. Conditioned fulfillment is menaced by the threat of meaninglessness, by the threat that history will end negatively, that the demon of the past will conquer every possible future, that all those events, deeds, meanings which belong to history will finally be drowned in the infinite ocean of nothingness. Eschatology is the theoretical expression of the Christian belief that in every historical event in past and future there is a relationship to an ultimate fulfillment, which lends meaning to relative and conditioned fulfillment.

The other element implied in the ultimate is decision. Decision means that the realization of meaning in history is possible only by freedom. If there were necessity in the process of historical fulfillment it would be neither history nor fulfillment at all. It would be nature and the circular motion of everything in servitude to its own nature. History, since it depends on freedom, implies decision. But every historical decision remains ambiguous. It is always decision for and against meaning at the same time. Therefore the ultimate, being fulfillment, must be decision at the same time, definite, unambiguous, unconditioned decision. The ultimate, from this point of view, is that which is decided, and consequently is not subject to a new decision as is everything in history. So we must say that the ultimate is the unconditioned decision intended in every ambiguous decision in history and the unconditioned fulfillment intended in every ambiguous fulfillment in history. And both qualities of the ultimate belong together: no fulfillment without decision, since freedom is the presupposition of history; and no decision in which fulfillment is not affirmed or denied, since meaning is the content of free decisions.

Through this consideration, human activity received absolute weight; history, absolute meaning.

History in its relationship to transcendent fulfillment and decision receives absolute seriousness. It is not the realm where man acts without relationship to God. There is no such realm. History is the realm where the ultimate is intended. There is nothing in the ultimate that is not in history. In the ultimate there is no fulfillment that is not intended in history. In the ultimate there is no decision that is not prepared in history.

The ultimate is that which is fulfilled, which is decided. That does not mean that the ultimate is a state of existence which brings the end of time. A concept of an end of time, in a temporal sense, cannot be maintained. It would not be an end, but a discontinuance. The thought of a discontinuance of time, however, is itself a time-determined thought, and therefore contradicts itself. The end of historical time is its relation to the ultimate. Thus the ultimate stands equally close to and equally distant from each moment of history. The ultimate is end-catastrophe, is a

mythical conception, in which, to be sure the absolute weight of history in decision and fulfillment is expressed in very plastic images. We have to interpret those images, however, not keep them as dogmas. The religious names for the dual quality of the ultimate are the Last Judgment and the Kingdom of God. Last Judgment expresses the character of decision implied in history. The Last Judgment is the transcendental meaning of every historical decision. Therefore the Gospel of John emphasizes that the judgment is going on in history, wherever the "light" becomes visible and is accepted or rejected.

The Kingdom of God is the fulfillment intended in history and implied in the ultimate. The Kingdom of God is the transcendent fulfillment, the name for the ultimate from the point of view of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God therefore embraces everything in the course of history as its transcendent meaning. We do not know where real history is. We do not even know it in the events whose subjects are men. We know it still less in the events that are enacted by the other creatures. We actually know of history, only as we stand active within it, and as we are able to transform every foreign history into our own history through our own decisions. Therefore we cannot say *a priori* which elements of reality are related to the ultimate as having history. In myth nature also reaches fulfillment in the ultimate. And, indeed, not only in the sense that without nature there is no realization of meaning at all, since pure spirit is an empty abstraction, but also in the sense which modern natural science has revealed to us. For science shows us the single direction in the development of nature, from the destruction of atoms and the dying of the stars to the death of the species and the transformation of psychical abilities. Of course, we cannot understand this development as history, but neither can we deny that it belongs to history.

Outside of genuine eschatology stands the question of the individual after death. Neither purgatory nor an intermediate state before the general consummation, neither transmigration of souls nor reincarnation, neither the doctrine of other realms of existence beyond our known world nor the will to merge in the ocean of life, directly touches upon the question of the ultimate. All this lies within the realm of nature in the broadest sense. It belongs to development and perhaps to history, but not to the fulfillment of history, to the ultimate. What comes to expression in those ideas are certain interpretations of history from the point of view of personal attitude and fate. In the Christian, especially the Protestant doctrine, the character of decision in history is emphasized; in the majority of other religions, the character of fulfillment is predominant. In Christianity the internal unity of the personal life is emphasized. In other, *e.g.*, Indian religions, the unity of every being with every other being is more important. From the point of view of the ultimate, a decision concerning these problems can be given only as far as in the Christian doctrine alone an historical consciousness has developed. That leads us to the second step of our question regarding the content of the ultimate.

## 5. HISTORY AND SALVATION

Our first step produced the answer that decision and fulfillment are the contents of the ultimate.

Our second step provides the answer that salvation is presupposed in the ultimate. Since the realization of meaning goes on, not as a necessary process, but as history, that is, through freedom and decision, a basic ambiguity remains in all history. History cannot be calculated; it has the character of a leap; and its leaps can be followed by a fall into a demonic, rather than by a rise into a divine fulfillment. What occurs may contradict meaning rather than fulfill it. The struggle of pure powers in history is more meaning-defying than meaning-fulfilling; and the question always is, whether history is more than a series of such struggles. The answer to this question can be given by belief only, by a belief which acknowledges the victory of meaning in history, or by a belief in salvation. Everyone who recognizes a meaning of history, recognizes salvation through history, for without salvation history would fall into the abyss of a demonic meaninglessness. Fulfillment implies salvation, consequently, decision is decision for or against salvation. The Last Judgment is the symbol for this ultimate decision that is the transcendent meaning of every empirical decision. Here is rooted the idea of a dual transcendent fate, the expectation of an ultimate salvation or condemnation. The mythological form of this idea cannot be maintained, because the concept of the ultimate and the concept of condemnation contradict each other: the first implies fulfillment of meaning, the second, negation of meaning. The truth of this idea, however, is that fulfillment is possible only through decision, consequently that in eternity fulfillment cannot be enforced. Fulfillment without freedom belongs to nature, not to history at all. Meaning can be contradicted as long as history is going on. Salvation can be accepted or can be denied. We can exclude ourselves from meaning and no purgatory or hell can change this decision; or, more exactly, purgatory and hell themselves are the decision against the ultimate meaning.

All eschatological concepts become meaningless when they are deprived of their relationship to history. In this instance they are supposed to represent an independent sphere of objects and events. But such a sphere is a mere product of imagination and cannot be understood as reality at all. The method of phenomenological intuition makes it impossible to lose the real basis of theological thought, human existence itself. Scholasticism derives concepts from concepts instead of from objects. That leads to a large number of meaningless concepts, for whose sake theology is challenged and religion denied. But these concepts, although sometimes given by an old tradition, do not belong to living religion; they do not express the paradox of the ultimate and the depth of religion. They can and must be cast off in order to make visible the concrete and living meaning of the religious symbols. This method, which we have tried in order to find the meaning of those symbols through believing intuition of reality, is unusual. It uses neither the traditional theological terminology nor the concepts of empirical sciences such as, empirical psychology and history; it attempts to discover things directly without terminological prejudices. Consequently it cannot make any other claim for itself than to be an attempt. The present theological status demands that such attempts be made, although there be no guarantee of success. But without daring, even frustrated daring, the impasse of present theology cannot be resolved.