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A STUDY OF HEINRICH OTT'S THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT:
HIS HERMENEUTICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

By

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FOR MY MOTHER AND FATHER
AND MY SISTERS LYNNE AND COLLEEN

ABSTRACT

This thesis is offered as a study of Heinrich Ott's theological programme. Our intention is to show that Ott's development is motivated throughout by a hermeneutical and ontological impulse. His goal is hermeneutical in that he intends to translate the biblical vision of reality into contemporary and relevant thought forms. His goal is ontological because he also believes that any such translation must be shown as articulating reality as such (i.e, being). This, he argues, is crucial, if the Gospel is to be shown as the most comprehensive account of human experience possible.

The study is also shaped by our conviction - a belief shared by Ott - that a genuine theology must meet two basic requirements: be worthy of the content of scripture and relevant to contemporary humanity. We apply this test of theological adequacy to Ott's own programme.

The study is divided into three major parts. Part One examines Ott's search for a universal theological ontology in dialogue with Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Martin Heidegger. At this stage, Ott's programme is essentially Barthian. Karl Barth is considered by many to be the greatest theologian of this century. His theology is characterized

by its theocentric emphasis and by a thoroughgoing conviction that humanity's knowledge of God cannot be attained apart from revelation. It is Ott's belief that by aligning Heidegger with Barth, he can overcome the anthropocentric restrictions in Bultmann's ontology and move toward a hermeneutical ontology that is more in keeping with scripture. Part Two examines and assesses the critical response to Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth and Ott's response to it. We argue that Ott's alignment leads to an abstract objectivism that fails to relate theological statement to secular and human experience. We show, moreover, that his failure to distinguish properly between philosophy and theology leaves the impression that the contents of theology are determined by Heidegger's philosophy.

Part Three examines Ott's willingness to abandon the Barthian premise that theology must properly begin by taking for granted the existence of God. Since belief in God is no longer a generally credited fact, Ott acknowledges that theology must now show how it is that God is present in our ordinary and secular experience. Ott turns, then, to a theology of showing and pointing in which existential interpretation is now made the exclusive horizon of theological statement. Here we detect a discernible shift toward the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. The shift toward Bultmann is qualified, however, via Ott's appeal to the universalist Christology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Ott turns to Bonhoeffer

in order to break free of the exclusivist tendencies in Barth's and Bultmann's Christologies (i.e., to show Christ as present to those outside the Church). Part Three concludes with an examination of Ott's existential interpretation of the personal reality of God.

We conclude that Ott's theology - while true to the contents of scripture - still falls short of the contemporary situation. He continues, in effect, to take God's existence too much for granted, the consequence being that he fails to convince those who do not already believe. We affirm, however, that Ott's theology is a major step in the right direction. He clearly shows that the hermeneutical and ontological question is an inevitable issue for the kind of theology that would be true to scripture and speak to our current situation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONSxii

INTRODUCTION 1

1. Studies of Ott to Date5

2. The Dialogical Method 6

3. Ott's Point of Departure: The Legacy of Barth and
Bultmann10

 (a) Karl Barth10

 (b) Rudolf Bultmann 16

4. The Unity of Ott's Development24

PART ONE

I. OTT ON BARTH, BULTMANN, AND HEIDEGGER: TOWARD A
UNIVERSAL THEOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY26

1. The Anthropological Slant of Bultmann's Theology . . 28

 (a) To Speak of God is to Speak of Man28

 (b) The Concept of Self-Understanding30

2. The Bifurcation of the Existential and Objective
Orders.34

 (a) The Double Concept of History.34

 (b) The Basis and Legitimacy of the Bifurcation. .37

 (c) Tertium non Datur 40

3. The Lack of an Ontological Basis of Community . . .41

4. Toward a Broadened Existentialism: The Contribution
of Barth and Bultmann44

5. The Significance of Martin Heidegger: The
Anthropological Misunderstanding 51

6. The Relationship of Philosophy and Theology54

 (a) The Necessity and Character of their Relation 54

 (b) The Phenomenological Method: Ontological
Destruction and Theological Reconstruction . .58

7. The Unity of Heidegger's Thought 62

 (a) The Turn from Nothing (das Nichts)
to Being (das Sein) 64

 (b) Theological Implications68

 (c) Overcoming Metaphysics70

8. God and being77

9. Thinking and Being: Theology and Experience83

(a) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Bultmann . . . . .	.83
(b) Non-Objectifying or Primal Thinking	87
(c) Theological implications . . . . .	.91
10. Language and Being: Theology and Hermeneutic . . . . .	.93
(a) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Bultmann . . . . .	.94
(b) Non-Objectifying Language . . . . .	.95
(c) Theological Implications . . . . .	.102
11. Theology for the Sake of Preaching . . . . .	.105
12. The Fourfold (<u>das Geviert</u>) and the Thing (<u>das Ding</u>): The Unity of Corporeality and Significance . . . . .	.111

PART TWO

II. RESPONSE AND COUNTER-RESPONSE: OTT AND HIS CRITICS	118
1. Karl Barth	119
2. Rudolf Bultmann . . . . .	.124
3. Philosophy and Theology . . . . .	.128
(a) The Bultmannians	130
(b) The Barthians	141
(c) Martin Heidegger . . . . .	.147
(d) The Analogy of Proportionality (<u>Analogia</u> <u>Proportionalitatis</u>)	154
Summary and Remarks	157
4. God, Revelation, and Being	159
(a) The Immanent Character of Heidegger's Thought	160
(b) The Contradictory Aspect of Ott's Correlation of God and Being	167
(c) The Devaluation of the Historicity of Revelation . . . . .	.170
(d) The Superfluous Character of Ott's Alignment of Barth and Heidegger . . . . .	.176
Summary and Remarks	179
5. The Problem of Non-Objectifying Thinking	182
(a) The Bultmannian Response . . . . .	.183
(b) Heidegger's Contribution at Drew . . . . .	.189
(c) Other Responses	196
Summary and Remarks	207
6. Theological Hermeneutic: Ott, Barth, and the Later Heidegger	202
Summary and Remarks	207
Conclusion - Part Two . . . . .	.209

PART THREE

III. TOWARD AN INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE . . . . .	.211
1. The Questionability of God in our Time	212

(a)	The Failure of the Salvation-Historical Schema	212
(b)	The Hegemony of the Scientific and Technological Model of the World	215
(c)	God Renders Himself Questionable: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, A Case in Point	216
2.	Positive But Inadequate Alternatives: The Validity of an Existentially Interpreted Theism	218
3.	The Incarnational Agenda: Its Methodological Implications	224
(a)	The Necessity of Existential Interpretation: The Unity of Relevance and Truth	225
(b)	Theology as Philosophical Theology: Taking Atheism Seriously	227
(c)	The Reality of the Real: Theology's Metaphysical Slant	229
4.	The Significance of Bonhoeffer	235
(a)	Non-Religious Interpretation	236
(b)	Jesus Christ as the Ontological Basis of Reality	243
5.	The Personal God	256
(a)	The Need for a Personalist Ontology	259
(b)	The Priority of the Personal: The Relativization of the Scientific Technological Viewpoint	264
6.	God as Supra-Personal	270
(a)	The "More" (<u>das Mehr</u>) of God's Person	271
(b)	The Problem of Anthropomorphism	273
(c)	Talk of God: Symbolic and Non-Objectifying	274
7.	God's Mode of Disclosure	281
(a)	The Locus: Humanity as Questioner of the Whole	281
(b)	The Experience of God as Transcendental	283
(c)	The Significance of "the Between" (<u>das Zwischen</u>).	285
(d)	The Significance of "the Non-Disposable" (<u>das Unverfügbare</u>)	287
8.	The Certainty of Faith: An Illustration of God as Person	291
(a)	Certainty as Total	291
(b)	Certainty as Expectation	293
9.	The Trinity: A Theological Anthropology	295
(a)	The Intention of the Dogma	295
(b)	God as <u>das "Urgestalt des Zwischen"</u>	296
(c)	Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	298
CONCLUSION		303
1.	Ott's Test of Theological Adequacy	303

2. Hermeneutical Theology and the Role of
Philosophy309
 (a) Theology as Hermeneutical 310
 (b) The Relation Between Philosophy and
 Theology312
 (c) Apologetics and Proof 314
3. Legacy as a Theological Tool 316
4. A Closing Word 320

BIBLIOGRAPHY322

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS*

- DB Reality and Faith. Vol. 1, The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1966).
- DS Denken und Sein: Der Weg Martin Heideggers und der Weg der Theologie (1959).
- G God (1971).
- GH Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns (1955).
- PG Wirklichkeit und Glaube. Vol. 2, Der Persönliche Gott (1970).
- RU Das Reden vom Unsagbaren: Die Frage nach Gott in unserer Zeit (1978)

* For complete data on these works, see bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Today theology is in a state of crisis. Talk of God and our experience of reality seem increasingly out of alignment. For many, the world view of the Bible belongs to a past that has now given way to the advances of modern science. Indeed for some talk of God is not only irrelevant, it is meaningless as well.¹ How, for instance, can one speak of God having personal dealings with humanity in a world increasingly patterned on the workings of a machine? How, too, can one speak of God as the Lord and basis of nature, if science interprets nature as running on its own? And how can one say that Christ is man's Saviour in a world increasingly open to

¹ See, for instance, Reginald Bibby's book on current patterns of religious behaviour in Canada. Bibby shows that "believing" Christians now turn to the Church primarily to conduct significant rites of passage, and that they no longer subscribe to the Christian ideology in toto. They pick and choose particular aspects of the Christian viewpoint that speak to their own lives. Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada, (Toronto, Irwin Publications, 1987).

As for those who claim that religious utterances are meaningless, perhaps the best known school in philosophical quarters is logical positivism. While the roots of this school are in the Vienna Circle of the nineteen-twenties, it continues to exert a significant influence today. See A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, (New York: Dover Publications, 1957) esp. 33-45; 102-120.

the claims of other faiths? At stake in these questions is no less than the question of reality itself.

Questions like these are crucial for the Christian community. If belief in God is truly at odds with our current experience of reality, then faith, it seems, entails the denial of honesty. It becomes no more than a leap in the dark that flies in the face of reality.

The theology of Heinrich Ott is one such response to these problems. Ott believes that Christianity offers the most comprehensive account of human experience possible. He argues, in effect, that faith and reality ultimately coincide. For Ott, however, a claim like this cannot be merely asserted. It has to be demonstrated and shown. Precisely for this reason, Ott proposes a vision of theology that can be best described as hermeneutical and ontological.

Hermeneutic refers to the task of translating the Word of Scripture into terms that speak to the twentieth-century world. This is a crucial enterprise, since the worldview of scripture is obviously different from that which is current today. Indeed Ott speaks of the hermeneutical arch that stretches from the texts of the Bible to the contemporary preaching of the Church.²

² Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?," The Later Heidegger and Theology, New Frontiers in Theology, vol. 1, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr., (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 79.

Ott's programme is also ontological, since the hermeneutical task invariably raises questions about the structure of reality in general (i.e., being). How, for instance, can a particular historical event continue to be of universal significance today? Or better perhaps, how can a deed that occurred in the past continue to be constitutive of life in the present? Ott believes that an answer to this requires the development of a universal theological ontology. According to Ott, this would show that Christ is constitutive of reality. If this were done, the hermeneutical arch could then be crossed, since God's deed could then be seen as constitutive of experience in the present.

Ott's programme can also be described as an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and praxis. Indeed Ott rejects any form of theological discourse that cannot be related to the sphere of human experience. He aims, in effect, for a concrete thinking and speaking that can bring about a more intimate connection between theological statement and human reality. This accords with his hermeneutical and ontological programme, since only a Gospel concretely proclaimed can be heard once again today.

Our study proposes to focus upon the hermeneutical and ontological aspects of Ott's programme. We do this in two ways:

(a) First, we examine the extent to which Ott's project meets his test of theological adequacy. Ott claims,

and we agree, that a genuine theology must meet two criteria: it must (i) accord with the norm of scripture and (ii) speak to contemporary experience. In our study, we apply Ott's test of theological adequacy to successive stages of his programme. We do this for two reasons: first, it is our conviction that even at those points where Ott's programme fails, its deficiencies are nonetheless instructive. They point to the kinds of pitfalls and dangers that accompany the search for an appropriate hermeneutic. Second, by focusing on Ott's test of theological adequacy, we can account for significant shifts in his programme. We can show that changes are the direct result of his ongoing goal to meet this test with ever increasing precision.

(b) Second, we focus on Ott's attempt to develop a universal theological ontology that will relativize the positivist view of reality. This is crucial, since Ott believes that the worldview of science excludes the possibility of a genuine speaking about God. It impedes, in short, the hermeneutical transfer. As we shall see, Ott's attempt to relativize the positivistic viewpoint runs throughout his work. It culminates in a comprehensive personalist ontology.

Naturally our two loci of concern are intimately related. Hence we do not discuss Ott's test of theological adequacy first, and then discuss his theological ontology. We

think, rather, the unity of these concerns at each stage of his theological development.

1. Studies of Ott to Date

A study of Ott's theology is justified if only to bring the theological community, particularly the North American, up to date on his theological programme. Ott rose to prominence in the late nineteen-fifties primarily on the basis of his strikingly original correlation of Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger. Ott challenged the widely held assumption that the theology of Rudolf Bultmann was more in keeping with Heidegger than the theology of Karl Barth.³ Ott's study spawned a wide range of responses. It was not, however, until 1964, with the publication of The Later Heidegger and Theology that an extended analysis of Ott's alignment first appeared in English.⁴ This was followed in 1970 by Hendrik Krabbendam's From Bultmann to Ott: A Critique of Theological Thought in Modern Hermeneutic.⁵ Since 1970, however, there has been no assessment of Ott's theology as such. Alfred Jäger's study, Gott: Nochmals Martin Heidegger, makes

³ Heinrich Ott, Denken und Sein: Der Weg Martin Heideggers und der Weg der Theologie (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1959.)

⁴ James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr. eds., The Later Heidegger and Theology, New Frontiers in Theology, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

⁵ Hendrik Krabbendam, "From Bultmann to Ott: A Critique of Theological Thought in Modern Hermeneutic," (Ph.D. Diss., Westminster Theological College, 1970).

reference to Ott's more recent work, but it lacks a detailed analysis of his programme taken in toto.⁶

We, for our part, propose to examine Ott's development from its inception to the present. This will provide a much needed update and chronicle the development of a significant theologian whose hermeneutical and ontological insights are crucial for contemporary theology.

2. The Dialogical Method

An introduction to Ott's theology would be incomplete without a discussion of his dialogical method. To begin with, Ott believes that there is no such thing as the isolated thinker.⁷ A thinker, he argues, is always indebted to the larger community in which he lives and thinks. In this regard, the theologian is no exception to the rule. He, too, lives in community and works out his witness in the Church. For Ott, however, the theologian is also a member of the world. His witness, therefore, can also be developed with those outside the Church. Indeed Ott himself often enters into dialogue with philosophers and theologians from substantially different traditions.

⁶ Alfred Jäger, Gott: Nochmals Martin Heidegger, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1978).

⁷ See, for instance, Ott's discussion of the social character of existence, including the social ontology of knowledge (PG 57;253); See, too, "Hermeneutik als Fundament der Pneumatologie," Theologie des Geistes, ed. Otto A. Dilschneider (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1980), esp. 103-7.

(a) The Subject-Matter as Point of Reference

Perhaps the most significant feature of the dialogical method is its emphasis on the primacy of the subject (die Sache). At no point does Ott enter into dialogue simply to reconstruct another author's opinion. His goal throughout is to converse with others for the sake of his ongoing theme. Whether it be Karl Rahner or Martin Heidegger, all participants are referred to the subject at hand. Indeed Ott argues that thoughts can be taken out of context since a discussion is an "encounter with the subject and is not to be understood in itself".⁸ Of particular significance here, is Ott's rejection of the view that for another's thought to be useful, the interpreter must share his intention. Ott opts instead for a kind of picking and choosing that permits the use of specific features of another author's work. He draws, then, on a whole range of authors whose religious commitment or style of thinking is substantially different from his own. It would be wrong, however, to interpret this approach as a shallow kind of eclecticism. Thinkers are not lined up like apples and oranges on a string; nor are they reconciled in an artificial system. They are brought together solely in terms of Ott's project. In other words, the subject alone serves as the criterion for determining those aspects of an author's

⁸ DB 71-2.

work that are useful for advancing Ott's programme (i.e. the hermeneutical-ontological enterprise).

(b) The Idea of Legacy

An equally important feature of the dialogical method is Ott's notion of legacy. Ott believes that the thought of past, and even contemporary authors is never over and done with, but is capable of further development. Here Ott relies heavily on the hermeneutical insights of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer writes:

Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text is part of the whole of the tradition in which the age takes an objective interest and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and whom he originally wrote for. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always partly determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history. Not occasionally only, but always the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely reproductive, but always a productive attitude as well. Perhaps it is not correct to refer to this productive element in the understanding as 'superior understanding'. . . . it is enough if we say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all.⁹

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. and ed. by Garret Barden and John Cumming from the 2nd ed. 1965. (New York: Seabury Press).

It should be noted, however, that Ott does distinguish his own position from Gadamer's to some extent. Ott argues, for example, it is possible to speak of a "better understanding" in so far as a subsequent dialogue with a text may further clarify possibilities of meaning which are there implicitly, and "in so far as in some circumstances the historical consequences of a statement are only gradually disclosed. . ." (DB 87). See, too, Ott's discussion of truth and historicity in "Wahrheit und Methode," Freiheit in der Begegnung, ed. Jean-Louis Leuba and Heinrich Stirnimann (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1969), esp. 181-83.

Ott, too, is highly critical of the common assumption that the author's intention constitutes the meaning of a text. This, he argues, neglects the historicity of the interpreter. It assumes, in effect, a standpoint outside of history from which the author's original intention can be objectively reconstructed. For Ott, however, the reading of a text is always shaped by our own historical context. Consequently, interpretation is always a matter of integrating our horizon with that of the text in question. According to Ott, this contributes to a new disclosure of the text, since the questions put to it are always shaped by our own historical circumstances. That is, they bring about a different "fusion of horizons".

As we shall see, Ott is particularly indebted to this idea. His reading of a text often takes the form of trying to disclose that which an author could not or did not say given the scope of his own presuppositions. Hence he speaks of an author's legacy and of making this legacy "bear interest" (DB 67).¹⁰

¹⁰ The same approach has animated recent Catholic theology. Ott cites, for example, the twentieth-century "renaissance" in the study of Aquinas in which Aquinas's thought has been re-interpreted in the context of transcendental and existentialist philosophy. To be sure, Aquinas never articulated his own theology specifically in these terms; nonetheless, Ott observes that theologians like Karl Rahner and Johannes Bapt. Lotz have been able to show that by placing Aquinas in the horizon of current philosophy, our understanding of both Aquinas and his subject-matter has been immeasurably enriched (DB 72-3).

3. Ott's Point of Departure: The Legacy of Barth and Bultmann

The dialogical method is particularly evident in Ott's relationship to Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann are arguably the most important figures in twentieth-century Protestant theology. A student of both, Ott inherited a great but ambiguous legacy. Given their influence upon Ott, we undertake a brief introduction to both. Our account is necessarily brief, since our primary concern are those aspects of Barth's and Bultmann's theologies crucial for Ott's development.

(a) Karl Barth

Karl Barth rose to prominence with the publication of the Römerbrief, a commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans, in 1919. This was followed by a completely recast second edition in 1922. The work emerged from Barth's conviction that the ruling liberal theology threatened to destroy the sovereignty and otherness of God. Barth believed that the exponents of liberal theology had fallen prey to an anthropological emphasis that made humanity the ultimate measure of reality. In Barth's opinion, the deficiencies of liberal theology were especially evident in the preaching office of the Church. Here, he argued, it failed to provide the real message and resources that his congregation required. Barth was especially critical of what he believed was liberal theology's optimistic account of humanity. This conviction was reinforced with the outbreak of World War I.

Barth, for his part, proposed the kind of theology that stressed man's lostness in sin and his utter dependence on God. According to Barth, neither of these had been sufficiently acknowledged by the proponents of liberal theology. The liberals, he argued, failed to respect the infinite and qualitative distinction between God and humanity. In his Preface to the Römerbrief, Barth writes:

If I have a system at all, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite and qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this, as possessing a negative as well as a positive significance. . . . God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.¹¹

Barth's emphasis on the sovereignty of God soon characterized his entire programme, variously called "crisis", "neo-orthodox", and "dialectical" theology.

The stress on God as "totally other" (ganz Anderer) is particularly evident in Barth's discussion of humanity's knowledge of God. Barth resisted the liberal position that man qua man has a limited capacity for knowledge of God apart from his revelation. Barth insisted that knowledge of God was strictly a function of grace. There could, he argued, be no "point of contact" (Anknüpfungspunkt) between God and humanity that was not itself first created by God.¹² Precisely for this

¹¹ Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 10.

¹² See, for example, Barth's repudiation of Emil Brunner in "No!," Natural Theology: Comprising Nature and Grace trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946).

reason, Barth regarded as fatally flawed all theologies that did not take the Word of God as their starting point. Attempts to begin with humanity, knowledge of the world, or even knowledge of the Bible, were rejected by Barth as instances of human pride. They were all forms of what Barth called natural theology.

Barth took particular exception to the Catholic doctrine of the analogia entis. Barth argued that by postulating a similarity of being between God and humanity, the analogia entis denied the sovereignty of God. It presupposed that by starting with humanity, one could reason to similar attributes in God. For Barth, however, this assumed knowledge of God apart from his revelation (i.e., apart from his grace). By ascribing, moreover, our highest conception of being to the being of God himself, Barth believed that the being of God was reduced to a human construct. It became, in effect, an item at man's disposal thereby denying the infinite and qualitative distinction between God and humankind.¹³

Barth's indictment of natural theology also included his rejection of apologetics. Apologetics has been traditionally understood as the task of making Christianity credible to those outside the faith. It has usually involved the appeal to human reason. Barth's rejection stemmed from his

¹³ Karl Barth, "The Knowledge of God," Church Dogmatics vol. 2/1 § 26 trans. G.T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), 79-84.

belief that the apologist takes up a position superior to revelation. Barth believed that the apologist's task is to examine the claims of both the believer and non-believer. Or as Barth puts it, he becomes, in effect, the "just advocate of both".¹⁴ For Barth, however, this means that the apologist is no longer bound to the authority of revelation. He invokes, instead, his own standard of reason and ignores the sovereignty of the Word. Apologetics, then, can only be understood as another instance of sinful human presumption.

Barth's programme is also notable for its Christocentric focus. Indeed Barth devoted his magnum opus - the Church Dogmatics - to working out the Christological basis of every Church teaching. In the Church Dogmatics, teachings such as election, creation, and anthropology, are interpreted exclusively with reference to Jesus Christ. In the case of anthropology, for example, Barth reasons that as the definitive Word of God, Jesus Christ the God-man, is the sole criterion for determining God's will for humanity. Assuming this, Barth rejects all attempts to derive man's essence from a general theory of human nature. He begins, instead, with

¹⁴ Karl Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1972), 44.

the reality of Christ from which the essence of humanity is then deduced.¹⁵

Finally, it should be noted that Barth's insistence on God as "totally other" underwent a significant modification in his later work. In 1956, Barth conceded that his emphasis on the divine sovereignty had not done justice to the humanity of God. Barth writes:

It must now quite frankly be granted that we were at that time only partially in the right. . . . did it not appear to escape us by quite a distance that the deity of the living God - and we certainly wanted to deal with Him - found its meaning and its power only in the context of His history and His dialogue with man. Who God is and what He is in His deity He proves and reveals not in a vacuum as a divine being-for-Himself, but precisely and authentically in the fact that He exists, speaks and acts as the partner of man, though, of course, as the absolutely superior partner. . . . It is precisely God's deity which, if rightly understood, includes His humanity.¹⁶

Barth made it clear, however, that a "genuine revision" in no way entailed any form of "retreat".¹⁷ The gains won by neo-orthodox theology remained entirely justified. Hence any attempt to re-interpret the humanity of God was not to be accomplished at the expense of his divinity. It was to be carried out precisely in the context of his deity.

¹⁵ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3/2 § 43 trans. Harold Knight et al. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1960), esp. 3-54.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, "The Humanity of God," The Humanity of God, trans. John Newton Thomas (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1960), 42-46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

As we shall see, Ott intends to follow the major tenets of Barth's programme. Nonetheless, he also proposes to think further along the lines of Barth's own theology.¹⁸ Nowhere is this more evident than in Ott's resolve to take up Barth's later mandate. Ott writes:

(Today) . . . the important thing is to consider the repercussions of the divine word in the sphere of human realities - and where otherwise is the word of God to be found by us? The important thing is, to use an expression sometimes used by Barth himself, to work towards achieving a 'Theology of the Holy Spirit', which tries to say once more the same thing (and nothing else!) but which tries to say it from the point of view of man. This turning to a new point of view is today essential. For, after theology rediscovered its enduring basis in the great crisis of the twenties, it now sees itself faced by an abundance of problems which lie on the horizontal, the human plane. . . . We must thrust through to man himself, in a serious (that is strictly methodical) manner, and not in the style of an aphoristic essay, 'painting pictures on water'. . . and then from the understanding of man and in full view of the phenomena of human reality, unfold and exemplify the Word of God.¹⁹

In short, Ott discovers in the later Barth, an impulse, if still undeveloped, toward interpreting God in a "human direction". This, he argues, is essentially hermeneutical, since

¹⁸ Ott is fond of reminding his readers that one of Barth's greatest fears was that students would eventually turn his theology into a scholastic system. On his seventieth birthday, Barth is reported to have warned that "one can 'follow' him in one way only, by beginning at the beginning (as he did) and reworking the whole of theology". According to Robert C. Johnston, to whom Ott recounted this story, Ott takes this warning with the utmost seriousness. See Robert C. Johnston, "Who is Heinrich Ott: A Letter from Basel," New Theology No. 1, eds. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), 36-7.

¹⁹ Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 11-12.

it requires the translation of biblical statement into terms that speak on the "horizontal plane".

(b) Rudolf Bultmann

An equally important influence upon Ott's development is the work of Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann began as a theological liberal, but soon joined the ranks of dialectical theology. In the spirit of Barth, he, too, took up the battle against liberal theology. Despite a wide measure of agreement, Barth and Bultmann eventually parted ways. Barth believed that Bultmann was still too much of a theological liberal. He was particularly critical of the anthropological slant of Bultmann's theology. Despite Barth's criticism, Bultmann has enjoyed a greater degree of influence since the end of the Second World War.

The classical expression of Bultmann's programme is outlined in Jesus Christ and Mythology, a work published in 1941. Bultmann starts with the observation that today we find it increasingly difficult to understand the Church's proclamation. Bultmann traces the problem to the mythological thought forms of the Bible, most of which conflict with the modern worldview. He writes:

The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythological in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in its centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and of the celestial beings - the angels. The underworld is hell, the place of torment. Even the earth is more than the scene of natural, everyday events, of the trivial round and the common task. It is the scene of the supernatural activity of God and His angels on the one hand, and of Satan and his daemons on the other.

These supernatural forces intervene in the course of nature and all that men think and will do. Miracles are by no means rare. This aeon is held in bondage by Satan, sin and death. . . . 'In the fulness of time' God sent forth his Son, a pre-existent divine Being, who appears on earth as a man. He dies the death of a sinner and makes atonement for the sins of man. His resurrection marks the beginning of the cosmic catastrophe. Death, the consequence of Adam's sin is abolished, and the demonic forces are deprived of their power. The risen Christ is exalted to the right hand of God in heaven and made 'Lord and King'. . . .²⁰

Not surprisingly, Bultmann argues that the biblical worldview is no longer credible. According to Bultmann, it necessitates a sacrifice of the intellect that twentieth-century humanity is not prepared to make. For Bultmann, then, the key question is whether the proclamation continues to be relevant. Assuming that it is, he intends to show how and why by developing a new kind of biblical hermeneutic. This has been variously described as "demythologization", "existential" or "anthropological interpretation".

Bultmann starts with the assumption that mythological categories are intended to express a "certain understanding of human existence" (italics mine).²¹ According to Bultmann, this understanding can be summarized as follows: (i) that the origin and purpose of the world is beyond, not within it; (ii) that humanity is dependent on invisible powers; and (iii) that

²⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth vol. 1 ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K, 1953), 1-2.

²¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 19.

humanity can be freed from bondage to these powers. It is Bultmann's conviction, however, that the thought forms typical of myth obscure its real intention.²² Bultmann writes:

Mythology speaks about this power inadequately . . . because it speaks about it as if it were a worldly power. It speaks of gods as if they were men and of their actions as human actions, although it conceives of the gods as endowed with superhuman powers and of their actions as incalculable, as capable of breaking the normal, ordinary order of human events. It may be said that myths give to the transcendent reality an immanent, this worldly objectivity. Myths give a worldly objectivity to that which is unworldly . . . all this holds true also of the mythological conceptions found in the Bible.²³

To illustrate his point, Bultmann cites the biblical image of God's "domicile in heaven".²⁴ The image depicts God as living at a distance from the human and celestial orders. It appears to make a cosmological statement about a particular location of God. For Bultmann, however, its real meaning is anthropological. That is, it is intended to express the self-understanding of the biblical witness before God (i.e., their experience of God's transcendence). It does not compete, then, with the cosmological viewpoint of science.

Here it is noteworthy that Bultmann's analysis of myth coincides with his conviction that the Gospel is not to be understood as a history of sacred facts (i.e., Heilsgeschichte). That is, it is not to be understood as a series of facts

²² Ibid., 19.

²³ Rudolf Bultmann, New Testament, 10-11.

²⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, 20.

that have nothing to do with our actual and lived experience. It is to be seen, instead, as issuing a challenge to the deepest levels of our self-understanding. For this very reason, Bultmann insists that talk of God always proceed as talk about human existence. Thus the need for anthropological or existential interpretation. Bultmann justifies his programme by citing instances of existential interpretation within the New Testament itself. Bultmann points, in particular, to Paul and John, especially their accounts of eschatology. Bultmann argues that in the case of Paul the eschatological drama is not interpreted as a cosmological event that is yet to come about (i.e. a mythological event). It is interpreted instead as occurring already in the Church's proclamation of Christ. Hence, for Paul, the Church, or the eschatological community, now experiences victory over death. Here Bultmann argues that Paul engages in an existential interpretation of eschatology. Rather than interpreting it as a cosmic event to come, he relates it instead to the believer's self-understanding (i.e, to his new life in Christ). In short, Bultmann argues that existential interpretation is not only permitted but practised in the New Testament itself.

Having examined the rationale and justification of Bultmann's programme, we turn now to a brief discussion of its execution. As noted, Bultmann argues that biblical mythology encapsulates a particular understanding of human existence.

Assuming this, Bultmann claims that an appropriate reading of the Bible always entails asking a certain kind of question.

Bultmann writes:

I approach the Biblical texts with this question for the same reason which supplies the deepest motive of all historical research and for all interpretation of historical documents. It is that by understanding history I can gain an understanding of the possibilities of human life and thereby of the possibilities of my own life. The ultimate reason for studying history is to become conscious of the possibilities of human existence.²⁵

To be sure, Bultmann acknowledges that other perspectives can be brought to our reading of the Bible. Indeed, for Bultmann, one invariably brings some perspective to the reading of any text. This means that an interpreter always has some understanding, if only limited, of what a text means. According to Bultmann, without this "pre-understanding" (Vorverständnis) a text could never speak. That is, it could never make contact with the interpreter's own existence. For Bultmann, then, the key question is not whether we are to have a pre-understanding, but what pre-understanding is appropriate for reading the Bible. In order to choose such a pre-understanding responsibly, Bultmann believes that one must clarify the structures of human existence. This, he argues, requires the assistance of philosophy.

Simply put, Bultmann argues that philosophy provides a formal analysis of the structures of human existence that are presupposed by the Gospel. Taken together, they serve as

²⁵ Ibid., 53.

the "point of contact" (Anknüpfungspunkt) between the biblical proclamation and the hearer's own existence. They provide, as it were, the anthropological structures that enable, in turn, an existential interpretation of biblical mythology (i.e., a clarification of the biblical understanding of human existence). Bultmann argues that knowledge of these structures is of paramount importance for the preacher, since they specify the ontological range within which sermons have to fall. In other words, they specify the anthropological horizon outside of which the Gospel will not make sense.

Not surprisingly, the question arose as to which philosophy could best articulate the biblical view of humanity. Of the various alternatives available, Bultmann chose the analysis of man offered by existentialist philosophy. Bultmann writes:

At this point we must realize that there will never be a right philosophy in the sense of an absolutely perfect system, a philosophy which could give answers to all the questions and clear up all the riddles of human existence. Our question is simply which philosophy today offers the most adequate perspective and conceptions for understanding human existence. Here it seems to me that we should learn from existentialist philosophy, because in this philosophical school human existence is directly the object of attention.²⁶

Bultmann appealed, in particular, to the philosophical anthropology developed by Martin Heidegger in Being and Time (1927). According to Bultmann, Heidegger's emphasis on the necessity

²⁶ Ibid., 55.

of choice, his distinction between inauthentic and authentic existence, and his account of historicity and guilt, are all modes of existence presupposed by the Gospel. Taken together, they constitute the "point of contact" or "pre-understanding" for an intelligible hearing of the Word. For example, Bultmann argues that the Gospel's call to authentic existence would not be intelligible were man not the kind of being capable of experiencing guilt. Guilt, then, is part of the pre-understanding that he brings to his hearing of the Gospel and which Heidegger's philosophy can clarify.

Bultmann makes it clear, however, that Heidegger's analysis of existence is of formal significance only. It is not concerned with specific choices but with possible ways of being. It should not be seen, therefore, as determining the content of the Gospel. For Bultmann, moreover, philosophy and theology also part company on the question of salvation. Whereas philosophy assumes that humanity can save itself, theology insists on the need for divine deliverance.

Finally, it is important to note that for Bultmann, existential interpretation has nothing to do with easing our acceptance of the Gospel. Bultmann dismisses - much like Barth - apologetics completely. Indeed Bultmann argues that existential interpretation actually reveals the true scandal of faith. What it shows is that the real scandal does not consist of having to believe in an ancient worldview, but being challenged to accept a new self-understanding. This,

he argues, is pre-eminently given in the preaching of the Cross. Here we are challenged to die with Christ and to our old way of being (i.e., the Old Adam). This, he claims, means placing our trust entirely in God and renouncing all forms of self-justification. For Bultmann, in fact, faith in the resurrection is identical with faith in the "redemptive efficacy of the cross".²⁷

Summing up, Bultmann's theology has proven to be timely for the contemporary mission of the Church. In an age that questions the continuing relevance of the Gospel, Bultmann poses the inescapable fact of the hermeneutical problem. He has shown, moreover, that the hermeneutical problem is intimately related to matters of theological ontology. Here, in fact, Ott acknowledges his own indebtedness to Bultmann:

To Bultmann, I owe the compulsion to inquire into the matter of theological ontology, or rather the ontological questions in theology: I owe to him the insight that question must be faced if, under the broadly understood heading of hermeneutics, we wish to consider the reality of man confronted by the reality of the living God. Rightly understood, hermeneutics and ontology are bound up with each other in the closest possible way. Hermeneutically, we inquire into the specific modus loquendi the mode of speaking (and therewith into the 'whence') of the individual biblical testimonies; ontologically we inquire into the specific modus essendi; the mode of being of the reality to which they testify. We shall not succeed in achieving the break-through to the

²⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, New Testament, 40.

real man . . . if we neglect these closely interconnected questions.²⁸

As we shall see, Ott finds Bultmann's assistance invaluable in seeking a way to this breakthrough. Again, however, Ott's intention is to develop the Bultmannian legacy.

4. The Unity of Ott's Development

If we use the words carefully, it is possible to speak of the "early" and "later" Ott. By the former, we refer to that phase of Ott's development that is carried out in a Barthian context. By the latter, we refer to that phase in which Ott's style of thinking is more in keeping with Bultmann. This distinction, however, must be carefully qualified. As we shall see, Ott sought to mediate Barth and Bultmann as early as his dissertation at the University of Basel. To speak, therefore, of the "early" Ott as Barthian and the "later" Ott as Bultmannian is not to say that the "early" Ott did not absorb a significant dimension of Bultmann; nor does it mean that the "later" Ott severs all ties with Barth.

We, for our part, propose to show that the "early" Ott appropriates Bultmann as a Barthian, while the later Ott tends to do the reverse. To say, of course, that the "later" Ott continues to use Barth is not to say that Ott remains faithful to the Barthian programme. Indeed we believe that Ott

²⁸ Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, 13.

stretches his Barthian legacy to the breaking point. Nonetheless, we do not deny the unity of Ott's development, since it is not dependent on Ott's allegiance to Barth. It stems instead from the hermeneutical-ontological motive that runs throughout his theology. Seen as such, the "early" and "later" Ott are but two aspects of a unified programme.

Exhibiting this unity will require some patience on behalf of our reader. Ott's development is not the unfolding of an original insight that permits an immediate grasp of the whole. It is more akin to the linear unity of a novel in which the necessity and place of a particular chapter only make sense upon completion of the book. His development, then, is marked by a spiralling rhythm upward in which his earlier thought, for the most part, is not left behind, but broadened. To clarify this movement, we have indicated, from time to time, how a thought anticipates or completes another. By so doing, we intend to establish the unity of Ott's project. We turn now to the study itself.

PART ONE

OTT ON BARTH, BULTMANN, AND HEIDEGGER: TOWARD A UNIVERSAL THEOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

The first phase of Ott's development is essentially Barthian. We noted, however, that this by no means excluded Ott's appreciation of Bultmann. This is evident as early as his dissertation, subsequently published as Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns (1955).²⁹

While studying under Barth at the University of Basel, Ott received from Barth the privilege of writing his dissertation on Rudolf Bultmann. He dedicated his study to Barth and Bultmann, a sign that he intended, as he noted in his Forward, to contribute to an understanding between his two distinguished mentors.

The work's basic thesis is that the theologies of Barth and Bultmann are essentially compatible. This was a controversial position, since it was generally assumed that Barth's emphasis on the sovereignty of God radically

²⁹ Heinrich Ott, Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns, Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie, vol. 19, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955)

contradicted the anthropological emphasis in Bultmann. Nonetheless, Ott proposed a fundamental basis of unity, where most saw only opposition. Elsewhere Ott writes:

The concern of each is on the way to a fruitful synthesis. For they both embark from the same premises. Both take the first commandment as the axiom of their theology. Barth seeks to maintain Jesus Christ in his intrinsic self-hood and God's sovereignty revealed in him. Bultmann uses existentialist interpretation in order to show the relevance of the living Word of God to man's existence. He does it scientifically, yet always in the service of the Church's proclamation. In my opinion, these two concerns in the last resort are not contradictory, but complementary.³⁰

Of particular significance here is Ott's remark that "the concern of each is on the way to a fruitful synthesis". Ott implies that the unity of both still remains unthought. As we shall see, it is Ott's intention to take the first few steps toward establishing this unity.

While Ott's dissertation is essentially a criticism of Bultmann, it still assumes that Barth and Bultmann have much to learn from each other. Simply put, Ott takes the position that Bultmann's ontology presupposes an anthropological slant that restricts the biblical witness. Barth's emphasis on the sovereignty of God can, he argues, serve as a necessary corrective. It can do so, moreover, in such a way that the hermeneutical motive in Bultmann's theology is not suppressed but affirmed.

³⁰ Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism," Kerygma and Myth vol. 2, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 334-5.

In the forward to his dissertation, Ott also makes reference to Martin Heidegger. We are given, as it were, advance warning that Heidegger's thought is to occupy an increasingly central role in Ott's development. Indeed by 1959, Ott had published Denken und Sein, a work in which Ott proposed that a Heideggerian ontology could be integrated into Barth's theology while overcoming the ontological restrictions in Bultmann. Because this work also belongs to his Barthian phase, it, too, is taken up in the first section of the study.

1. The Anthropological Slant of Bultmann's Theology

As we just suggested, Ott advances the argument that Bultmann's theology is fundamentally restricted by his ontological presuppositions. In his dissertation, Ott develops this argument by (i) revealing the key sources of Bultmann's restrictions and (ii) by illustrating the consequences for major biblical themes. We begin, then, with Ott's analysis of Bultmann's essay, "What does it Mean to Speak of God?" (1925).

(a) To Speak of God is to Speak of Man

In "What does it Mean to Speak of God?", Bultmann argues that speaking of God always entails speaking of human existence. To speak of God directly, or to speak outside this relation, necessarily entails the objectification of God. Bultmann writes:

. . . every 'speaking about' presupposes a standpoint external to that which is being talked about. But there cannot be any standpoint which is external to God. Therefore it is not legitimate to speak about God in

general statements, in universal truths which are valid without reference to the concrete existential position of the speaker.³¹

For Bultmann, then, talk of God can only proceed in terms of human existence. To speak of God is always to speak of God's reality "for me" (pro me). To speak outside this relation is to place God in the subject-object schema. Here one tries to talk as though God were an item at our disposal. For Bultmann and Ott alike, this is a denial of the sovereignty and otherness of God.

While Ott concurs with Bultmann's intention, he is nonetheless critical of what he sees as an anthropological restriction built into Bultmann's position. He traces this restriction to Bultmann's postulate that talk of God can "only" (nur) proceed by speaking of human existence (GH 74). Ott believes that this is a significant departure from a position taken earlier in the essay. Earlier he had written that of God "must simultaneously" (immer zugleich) proceed as talk about human existence (GH 74). To say, however, that talk of God can only proceed as talk about humanity is, for Ott, to forget that the Bible is primarily a witness to God. To be sure, Ott acknowledges that the Bible also speaks of humanity. Nevertheless, Ott contends that talk of God should never be restricted to talk about God "for me". According to

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, "Welchen Sinn hat es von Gott zu Reden?," Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Rudolf Bultmann vol. 1, 3rd ed., (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr and Paul Siebeck, 1972), 26.

Ott, God's acts should also be spoken of directly as the basis of saving experience. In theological language, the "benefits of Christ" (beneficia Christi) should be securely anchored in the being of God "for himself".

Bultmann, we recall, had argued that statements about God could only proceed indirectly, and that speaking about God directly was objectifying by definition. Ott, however, is open to the possibility of speaking about God directly without falling prey to objectivism. How he proposes to do this is the subject of a later discussion. For the time being, our focus remains Ott's analysis of Bultmann's anthropological slant.

(b) The Concept of Self-Understanding

Ott argues that the anthropological slant in Bultmann's theology is ultimately rooted in his concept of self-understanding. It is here, more than anywhere, that one discovers the source of his restricted ontology.

To illustrate his point, Ott draws a distinction between self-understanding as an "exclusive" concept and self-understanding as an "inclusive" concept. According to Ott, both tendencies are included in the phrase, "I understand myself" (GH 160). The first, or inclusive tendency, is indicated by placing the stress on "I understand myself". This, he argues, indicates openness to the world and openness to reality in general. It suggests that our self-understanding is constantly modified in its encounter with new reali-

ties. For Ott, however, this is curbed by a counterveiling or exclusive tendency. This can be illustrated by shifting the accent to "I understand myself". Now the self tends to become the primary criterion of reality. The consequence is that we tend to overlook certain aspects of reality. This, he argues, is also the case with Bultmann (GH 157). Ott writes:

That I am myself ultimately the object of my own understanding, implies that the 'wither of my self-understanding' - the encountering reality which claims, indeed, constitutes me in my self-understanding, that is, in my being, stands from the beginning under the essential law of understanding and the to-be-understood-I; thus this reality, as it were, is totally incapable of unfolding its own essential law through encounter. In the case of Bultmann, the essential law of understanding and of the to-be-understood-I . . . defines, as it were, the paths in which the encountering has to be encountered (GH 158).

For Ott, then, Bultmann's concept of self-understanding is marked by an exclusive tendency. That is, it defines the scope of reality in a way that is unduly narrow. This is crucial for Ott's assessment of Bultmann, since Bultmann interprets faith as an instance of self-understanding. From here it is but a short step to Ott's contention that the restrictive tendency in self-understanding brings about a corresponding restriction in the content of faith. Ott cites three such examples.

(i) The Unity of, and Lordship over the World

Ott points first to the question of the lordship and unity of the world. According to Ott, Bultmann believes that the question addressed by the Gospel is not a question about

the meaning of reality in toto. It has to do with the question of authentic existence. For Ott, however, this leads to an artificial separation of theology and metaphysics. It wrongly assumes that the question of authentic existence can easily be divorced from the question of reality as a whole. Ott locates the source of the problem in Bultmann's assumption that cosmological statements lie outside our self-understanding (i.e., that they are mythological). For Ott, however, cosmological statement cannot be avoided because scripture attests that Christ is Lord of the world. By excluding, for example, cosmological statement, Bultmann ignores the crucial question of how Christ is encountered by those outside the Church. It is Ott's belief that this question is an inevitable question for faith, since if Christ is Lord of the world, he is also Lord of the non-believer (GH 161).

(ii) The Restriction of Extra-Subjective Reality to the Status of a Postulate

The second restriction cited by Ott is Bultmann's "reduction of extra-subjective reality to the status of a postulate" (GH 164). For Bultmann, we recall, speaking of God directly is mythological or objectifying by definition. According to Ott, this means that talk of God outside our self-understanding can only take the form of a "postulated that" (GH 167). In other words, his reality can be assumed, but can never be spoken of directly. Ott argues that the

problem here is that the object of faith remains at the edge of our self-understanding. This, he claims, is particularly evident in Bultmann's account of Jesus Christ as person. Ott cites Günther Bornkamm as follows:

The event of salvation is reduced in his case to the brutum factum, the naked, fully impenetrable fact, one which precisely in its total non-groundability requires the subservience of belief. . . . Jesus Christ has become a mere fact of salvation and ceases to be a person . . . hence the primacy of the Gospel of John in the thought of Bultmann, in which indeed the mere ego eimi (I am . . .) of the Revealer is attested with concentrated force. And hence also the characteristic receding and paling of the synoptic kerygma (GH 166).

In short, then, Ott concludes that by reducing extra-subjective reality to the status of a postulate, the object of faith is unduly restricted.

(iii) The Restriction of the 'Because' of Faith

Thirdly, Ott argues that the concept of self-understanding restricts what he calls the ground or "because" (quia) of faith. Ott develops his point by distinguishing between two aspects of belief. On the one hand, Ott claims that faith is characterized by a risk for the "utterly uncertain" (GH 168). It is a leap into mystery for which there is no proof. This, he says, is clearly evident in Bultmann's insistence that faith is incapable of proof (i.e., incapable of grounding itself). On the other hand, Ott argues that faith is characterized by a sense that it has its own reasons (GH 168). That is, people believe because it illuminates their lives. For Ott, however, this aspect never comes to

adequate expression in Bultmann, because the ground of faith is never properly made manifest. Ott's criticism here is a variation on his claim that extra-subjective reality is reduced to the status of a postulate.³²

2. The Bifurcation of the Existential and Objective Orders

Ott's account of the restricted character of self-understanding is also related to what Ott perceives as Bultmann's cleavage between existential and objective reality. This becomes particularly clear in Ott's discussion of Bultmann's concept of history.

(a) The Double Concept of History

It is Ott's contention that Bultmann draws too sharp a distinction between two kinds of history. This, he argues, creates, in turn, a bifurcated view of reality. To illustrate his point, Ott cites Bultmann's distinction between Historie

³² Here Ott is clearly giving expression to a Barthian concern. Barth writes:

So I think I can see in the New Testament message of Christ crucified the subject who has already suffered the judgment of death which brings salvation to all men. . . . Although much of this remains obscure and is not susceptible of proof, I can, I think see certain contours and colours. I can see a person and his work. I can, I think hear a word which is self-explanatory, where all Bultmann can see is darkness and silence, where all he can see is that the cross is God's saving act . . . apparently the demythologized Kerygma must remain silent about that which causes faith. It has a cause, it is not just a paradox, but it is not susceptible of proof.

Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann - An Attempt to Understand Him," Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate vol. 2, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), 99-110. See also GH 168.

and Geschichte and the modes of knowing that correspond to each.

To begin with, Ott observes that the kind of knowledge appropriate to Historie is the positivist model of the subject-object relation. The subject - or in this case, the historian - interprets history by standing at a distance from the flow of historic experience. The consequence is that history becomes an object of human calculation. This, he argues, is especially evident in the historian's attempt to situate events chronologically (i.e., on a time line). By restricting events to particular points in time, his control of history is thereby maximized. For Bultmann, however, the positivist drive to control can never reveal the true meaning of history. Authentic history, or Geschichte, is only possible if the human subject is open to transformation. This means that the controlling attitude of positivism must give way to a genuine dialogue with history. Nowhere is this more crucial than in interpreting the biblical proclamation, since it is here, above all, that our self-understanding is challenged.

Ott believes that in his understanding of Geschichte, Bultmann is proposing a radically new conception of biblical reality (GH 43). Nonetheless, it is Ott's conviction that he continues to permit the positivist view of history. Here he points to Bultmann's claim that the positivist approach is still "indispensable" for dating historical events (GH 10).

According to Ott, the consequence is that the existential and positivist approaches are allowed to co-exist. This is crucial, since Ott believes that each approach, or each mode of knowing, presupposes a different conception of being. The upshot is that reality is split into two distinct regions: the existential and the objective.

Ott describes this split as rupturing both the "vertical" and "horizontal" unity of history (GH 17). Ott locates the vertical split in Bultmann's cleavage between significance and corporeality. The source of the problem is then traced to Bultmann's restriction of the corporeal order to the sphere of objective reality. The consequence is that the sphere of corporeality is entirely excluded from the sphere of historic existence (i.e., our self-understanding). In short, Ott concludes that Bultmann's cleavage between significance and corporeality denies our unity as historic beings (i.e., corporeal creatures).

This, too, has decisive consequences for Ott's fidelity to scripture, particularly references to the bodily resurrection, the coming Kingdom, and Christ's healing of the sick. According to Ott, the solution lies in a broadened theological ontology that overcomes the split between significance and corporeality (GH 18).

Ott launches a similar criticism against Bultmann's restriction of the horizontal unity of history. By this, he means the significance of the course of history taken in its

entirety (GH 19). Once again, Ott takes the position that Bultmann draws too sharp a distinction between Historie and Geschichte (i.e., the objective and existential orders). The outcome is that the linear view of history is entirely divorced from our self-understanding. For Bultmann, we recall, the linear view of history belongs to objective reality. Talk of God's deeds in the past and future must, therefore, be rejected as entirely mythological. Indeed Bultmann speaks of the "here and now" as the exclusive locus of genuine historicity. For Ott, however, by restricting historicity to the existential "now", Bultmann excludes the biblical idea of expectation and fulfillment.³³ He rejects, moreover, any real connection between the history of Israel and the revelation in Christ.

In sum, Ott concludes that what is required is a broadened theological ontology that can bridge the gap between the linear view of history and our self-understanding (i.e., an existential interpretation of the past and future as such that will also include the existential "now" (GH 133).

³³ Bultmann's restriction of historic time to the "existential now is rooted in the assumption that if the past and future are to matter to man, they must be experienced in the present (i.e., within of our self-understanding). Despite his agreement that time must matter, Ott argues that Bultmann's analysis of time is subject to the same kind of weakness that afflicts his account of history. That is, by allowing the linear view of time to exist alongside its existential counterpart, he inadvertently restricts the absolute significance of the latter. Heinrich Ott, GH 132.

(b) The Basis and Legitimacy of the Bifurcation

According to Ott, Bultmann's double concept of history is the presupposition of demythologization. In other words, demythologization presupposes the objectifying order of myth and its existential counterpart in which the mythological thought forms are existentially interpreted. Ott, however, has serious doubts about the *raison d'être* of demythologization, since he questions the fixity of Bultmann's split between existential and objective reality. Ott's argument hinges on Bultmann's distinction between myth and Weltbild.

To begin with, Ott observes that myth only becomes a problem with the rise of modern science. With the rise of science, the non-disposable reality of which myth makes so much is increasingly objectified and controlled. Hence the need for demythologization. At this point, Ott cites an important alteration in Bultmann's programme that is inconsistent with the Heideggerian schema. Ott's claim is significant, since it had generally been assumed that Bultmann relied entirely upon Heidegger for his ontological categories. Indeed Bultmann himself had implied as much.

In a word, Ott argues that the fixity of Bultmann's distinction between the existential and objective orders is relativized and overcome in Heidegger's philosophy. According to Ott, this places Bultmann's entire programme in jeopardy, since demythologization presupposes the fixity of this distinction. To illustrate his point, Ott cites Heidegger's

essay "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" (1938). In "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", Heidegger argues that the objectifying approach to reality is a byproduct of modern subjectivism. According to Heidegger, it first appeared in Cartesian metaphysics, the experimental sciences, and modern source criticism. Ott's point here is that Heidegger assumes that there has only been one Weltbild (i.e., the modern world). For Ott, then, it is illegitimate of Bultmann to use this concept to describe the mythical viewpoint. Ott writes:

Heidegger does not appear to be familiar with the extension of objectivity into the sphere of the ontic and the status of a fundamental principle. The comprehension of reality as it set over and against the knower is understood by him as a passing phenomenon, present only in our 'Age of the Weltbild' (GH 171-2).

If Heidegger is right, the distinction between the existential and objective orders is historically relativized (i.e., no longer fixed) and demythologization loses its *raison d'être*. For Ott, in fact, the restoration of myth is a real possibility:

In the domain of myth one could no longer speak exactly of a world-picture, but rather, as it were, of a 'mythical experience of reality'. If, however, the myth is not a world picture i.e., if it no longer lies on the level of objectifying thinking and representation, there is no longer any reason to negate it at any price from the viewpoint of the modern worldview and to exclude in advance the possibility of its restoration. Modern world-picture and myth then can no longer simply be related to each other alternately and exclusively; for they no longer belong in any way to one and the same level of objectifying thinking. The possibility of objectifying thinking is assuredly given historically, but it no longer pervades the entire world history as the fundamental possibility as though every representation and conception, therefore, even the mythical, would have to be understood in its terms (GH 39).

(c) Tertium non datur!

Ott concludes his discussion of Bultmann's concept of history by revealing the systematic principle that underlies the split between Historie and Geschichte. Just as he sought to show that the double concept of history is the presupposition of existential interpretation, now he exposes the systematic principle of the double concept itself.

To reveal this principle, Ott focuses, in particular, on "Das Christologische Bekenntnis des Okumenischen Rates", a lecture delivered by Bultmann in 1951. Bultmann takes as his starting point, the confessional statement that "Jesus Christ is God". Bultmann argues that the statement can be interpreted in two distinct ways: either as a declaration of Christ's nature, that is, his metaphysical essence, or as a statement concerning his soteriological significance. According to Bultmann, the proper choice depends on whether the Bible speaks of his cosmological reality or his saving significance for humanity. If one opts for the former, Christ is interpreted objectively. What becomes central is his being in itself (An-sich-Sein). If one chooses the latter, what is given precedence is his saving significance "for me" (pro me). Not surprisingly, Bultmann chooses the soteriological option, since this accords with the postulate that talk of God always proceeds as talk about human existence.

What Ott finds significant here is Bultmann's assumption that the statement "Jesus Christ is God", must be interpreted either cosmologically or soteriologically. This means that a principle of mutual exclusion lies at the basis of his double concept of history. On the one hand, Bultmann pairs cosmological statement exclusively with Historie. On the other, soteriological discourse is exclusively wed to Geschichte. For Ott, then, Bultmann excludes any chance of synthesizing the cosmological and soteriological viewpoints. Tertium non datur is the systematic principle of his double concept of history (GH 48).

3. The Lack of an Ontological Basis for Community

Ott's analysis of the restricted character of Bultmann's ontology also includes an assessment of his individualism. From the outset, Ott makes it clear that one must speak with the utmost caution about the individualist slant in Bultmann's thought.³⁴ Bultmann, he notes, nowhere addresses the issue of individualism explicitly. Indeed Ott claims that individualism is not so much an idea as an "atmosphere" in his thought (GH 192).

³⁴ Ott, for example, acknowledges specific passages from Bultmann's own work in which the notion of community appears to be ontologically prior to the decision of believing individuals. See R. Bultmann, Theologie des Neuen Testaments, (Tübingen: Lieferungen, 1 -3 Mohr, 1948/51/53), 92. References like this remind Ott to proceed with his analysis carefully.

Having said this, Ott proposes to reveal the relation between Bultmann's ontological presuppositions and his individualist leanings. He does this in two steps. First, he points to those features in Bultmann's theology that betray an individualist slant. Second, he shows that Bultmann's concept of self-understanding excludes an ontological basis for an organic conception of community (GH 188).

Ott begins with a short discussion of the individualist features in Bultmann's theology. These can be summarized as follows:

(i) First, Bultmann claims that the message of Jesus is directed to the individual, unlike the Old Testament Prophets, whose message was directed to the community.

(ii) Second, Bultmann interprets the Church as a community of individuals who become disciples through a personal decision of faith.

(iii) Third, Bultmann's use of concepts such as authenticity and inauthenticity are only applicable to the life of the individual (i.e., his self-understanding).

(iv) Fourth, Bultmann practises theology as a solitary endeavour without engaging in dialogue with the theological tradition.

(v) And finally, when Bultmann speaks of God's saving deed, it is only expressed in the self-understanding of the individual believer (GH 182-85).

From here, Ott notes that Bultmann's individualism is not to be confused with the restricted notion of a "solitary

ego" (GH 186). According to Bultmann, the individual is structurally open to his neighbour. However, Ott believes that alongside, and perhaps more fundamental than his talk of openness to the other, is a persistent sense that the ontological basis of community (i.e., the Church) is grounded in the decision of believing individuals. According to Ott, this conflicts with the biblical idea of community, particularly as this is manifest in God's establishment of the covenant in the Old Testament. The community, he argues, established in the Bible is solely contingent upon God's election; it is never a function of the individual's decision to believe.

Ott's analysis of the relationship between self-understanding and Bultmann's individualism is also based on his earlier criticism that the concept of self-understanding restricts the object of faith. The consequence is that Christ as the ontological basis of the Church never comes to adequate expression. Not surprisingly, Ott locates the source of the problem in Bultmann's restriction of theological statement to talk about God "for me" (pro me). Ott writes:

The 'Christ for me' cannot found any community in the sense of a genuine community, rather only Christ in himself. For the 'pro me' (as the structural law of their eschatological existing which repeats itself in all individual believers as the condition of their believing self-understanding) to be sure brings about kinship, (all are similar to each other, are related to each other in that they - each for himself - realize the same inner movement) but not unity, communion. By means of the pro me the individual is not bound to the one, but rather, as it were, (assuredly graced by the one), referred back to himself. The Christ pro me, even if he is one, is

nevertheless in his historical significance many: He is the 'Christ pro me' of every single believer, the principle of the history of belief of every individual; however, He is not the 'principle' or 'subject' of his history, not the head of his body. Only where Christ pro me (which he also always is), but simultaneously as the Christ pro se, is he able to gather the individuals to himself, and can the concept of the Church be conceived in the sense of an organic community (GH 190).

Similarly Ott claims that by restricting historicity to the existential "now", (i.e., to the individual's self-understanding), the possibility of a divinely established community prior to the decision to believe is excluded from the outset. The history of God's deeds, then, can never be appropriated by the Christian community as such; it can only be a reality for its individual members. Ott concludes that in order to establish an ontological basis for community, the sphere of historic being (i.e., Geschichte) and, by implication, the sphere of our self-understanding, will have to be expanded to include both the past and the future. Only then will it be possible to speak of a "common origin and destiny" that binds the community together (GH 189).

4. Toward a Broadened Existentialism: The Contribution of Barth and Bultmann

Having highlighted some restrictive tendencies in Bultmann's ontology, (we shall speak of more later), and having exposed their structural origins, Ott raises the question of Bultmann's significance for the current task of theology. Ott proposes that faced with this question theology has three options: (i) it can reject his programme altogether;

(ii) it can conform to his programme completely; or (iii) it can engage in a productive criticism of Bultmann. Ott argues that to reject Bultmann completely would be foolish, since Bultmann poses the inescapable fact of the hermeneutical problem. He is aware, moreover, that ontological issues are integrally related to this problem. For Ott, however, it would be equally foolish to accept his programme completely, since this would mean that his ontological restrictions would not be overcome. Ott opts, then, for a constructive criticism of Bultmann.

Ott believes that a constructive criticism of Bultmann would push his theology toward a universal theological ontology. According to Ott, this would entail widening the scope of our self-understanding. Ott believes that this, in turn, would broaden the range of existential interpretation by including contents of scripture currently excluded by Bultmann's restricted ontology. Ott, then, is not rejecting the concept of self-understanding. His criticism is restricted to its exclusive tendency and the negative consequences for Bultmann's fidelity to scripture.³⁵ Indeed

³⁵ Ott, for instance, is critical of Barth's position that the concept of self-understanding should be dismissed altogether. Ott writes:

Barth would seem to go too far in rejecting out of hand the whole doctrine of self-understanding. In the last resort it is a theory intended to help the theologian to explain the crucial historic act of understanding and to elucidate its nature. It is particularly relevant to the believing understanding of the New Testament. Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism," 321. What is important for Ott, then, is to broaden, not to dismiss the

Ott draws a distinction between Bultmann's theology as a task and Bultmann's theology as a doctrine and sees in the former the promise of a broadened ontology (GH 201). Ott writes:

We should then carefully open the doors again which Bultmann has closed one by one. Where he imposes the judgment of existential irrelevance, we should initiate a new existential interpretation. Then it should be possible - while preserving Bultmann's fundamental concern - to correct again his rash negations and 'executions'. Methodologically speaking, we should then undertake, in each individual case, to investigate the 'existential remainder' which may still remain left over in that which Bultmann has excluded from the historic realm through his critical interpretation (GH 201).

Here we need only think of Ott's criticism of Bultmann's cleavage of history and his failure to articulate the ultimate unity of reality.³⁶

concept of self-understanding.

³⁶ Elsewhere Ott argues that Bultmann recognizes the validity of the question of reality in toto, despite the fact that his own ontology is incapable of supporting this question. Ott observes, for example, that Bultmann speaks of the future of historical events as belonging to their very nature and that it is only at the end of history that their definitive meaning becomes known. But Ott asks: if Bultmann rejects the Last Judgment as mythological - the point at which reality as such is revealed - how can he say that an historical event has meaning? Or as Ott puts it, how can he say that "an historical event has meaning if the place where this meaning becomes known is nonexistent not only for the historian but in principle?". (Heinrich Ott, "Rudolf Bultmann's Philosophy of History," The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed., Charles W. Kegley, trans., Niels C. Nielson Jr., (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 58.

Ott, however, points to an exigence in Bultmann's own theology that would appear to solve this problem. Ott cites the following from the Gifford Lectures. Bultmann writes:

But there still remains the question of the meaning of single historical phenomena and single historical epochs. To speak more exactly: there remains the question of the meaning of importance of single historical events and deeds of our past for our present, a present which is charged with responsibility for our future. For instance:

It is Ott's belief, moreover, that a constructive criticism of Bultmann would also overcome his anthropological slant and do greater justice to the biblical emphasis on God. As part of this task, Ott proposes that a necessary corrective can be found in the theocentric slant of Karl Barth. Ott argues that Barth offers a "broadened existentialism" that respects both the sovereignty of God and the need to make

. . . what is the meaning and importance of the rise of capitalism and socialism for the problem of economic organization? and so on. In all these cases the analysis of motives and consequences gives light for the demands of our future. Judgments concerning the past and present belong together, and each is clarified by the other. It is by such historical interaction that the phenomena of the past become real historical phenomena and begin to disclose their real meaning. I say they begin - that is to say, objectivity of historical knowledge is not attainable in the sense of absolute ultimate knowledge, nor in the sense that the phenomena would be known in their "being in themselves" which the historian could perceive in pure receptivity.

(Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology, (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1957), 120-21. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in "Rudolf Bultmann's Philosophy of History", 61-62.

Here Ott believes that Bultmann's reference to responsibility for the future would appear, in intention, at least, to overcome his individualistic and punctiliar view of history. To be sure, Bultmann can still maintain that the authentic meaning of history continues to be disclosed in the "now" of historic decision; but his notion of responsibility now includes the past and future as such. Ott writes:

Drawing on the heritage of the past, it shapes the future creatively. Drawing on the meaning of the past, it gets the power to impart creatively new meaning to the future".

(Heinrich Ott, "Rudolf Bultmann's Philosophy of History," 63) This, then, is an excellent example of what Ott means by opening the doors that Bultmann has closed prematurely. He broadens, as it were, Bultmann's ontology and goes on where Bultmann leaves off.

contact with human experience.³⁷ Ott, we recall, is particularly critical of Bultmann's claim that talk of God only proceed as talk about human reality. Indeed Ott believes that the solution lies in completing the stress on God's promiseity with the Barthian emphasis on God's presenceity. Here he appeals to the Barthian conviction that the benefits of Christ (i.e., God's promiseity) be securely anchored in God's presenceity. For Ott, this is crucial, if God is to be spoken of directly as the transcendental condition of the benefits of Christ.

Barth's argument stems from his conviction that who God is "for me", he is in himself, already. He argues, for example, that God is the Father of humanity, because he is,

³⁷ Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism", 326. In this regard, Ott rejects the Bultmannian criticism that Barth stresses God's presenceity at the expense of his promiseity. Ott writes:

Der Vorwurf: Barths Theologie mache Gott zu einem starren, nicht mehr genuinely existenzbezogenen Objektum (so erhoben von den Leuten um Rudolf Bultmann.) Doch auch dies ist wiederum eine 'schreckliche Vereinfachung'. Natürlich muß Barth mit allem Nachdruck darauf beharren: daß Gott das souveräne, unableitbare und unauflösbare 'Er selbst' ist, das sich niemals als Funktion eines nun vielleicht letztlich doch noch irgendwie subjektivistisch gefärbten Existenzbegriffs verstehen läßt. Nichtsdestoweniger aber sind alle die angeblich 'objektivierenden' Aussagen 'über' Gott bei Barth eo ipso höchst existentielle Aussagen, weil sie ja Aussagen sind über die Grenze der Existenz, welche doch gerade nicht wirklich die Grenze der Existenz sein könnte, wenn sie nicht eben so, nämlich als selbstherrliche, verstanden wäre!

Heinrich Ott, "Der Gedanke der Souveränität Gottes in der Theologie Karl Barths," Theologische Zeitschrift 3 (May-June 1956): 421-22; See also Heinrich Ott, "Eröffnung des Karl Barth Symposiums am 10. Mai 1986 durch den Dekan der Theologischen Fakultät," Theologische Zeitschrift 42 (1986): 277.

in himself, already, the Father of his Son. So, too, God is the Son who is with us, because he is, in himself, already, the Son of God the Father. In short, Barth anchors the promise of God in his antecedent being for himself.³⁸ According to Barth, and here Ott agrees, this will ensure that the object of faith is brought to its proper expression. The inclusion, for example, of God's promise would henceforth mean that his extra-subjective reality could not be reduced to a postulated "that". It would also mean that the ground (i.e., the "because") of faith could be spoken of directly as the basis of saving experience. Moreover, if God's promise were interpreted as the structural basis of every aspect of experience, it would be possible to speak of the meaningful unity of reality (i.e., of all things being grounded in God). In short, then, the inclusion of God's promise offers a con-

³⁸ Ott's stress on God's promise is clearly intended to avoid the same kind of criticism which Barth launches at Bultmann. Barth writes:

Apparently the kerygma must suppress or even deny the fact that the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the total Christ event, is the event of our redemption, that it possessed an intrinsic significance of its own, and only because it has that primary significance has it a derived significance here and now. Yet this event is the ground of faith and of the kerygma, and faith and kerygma are only secondary to it and derivative from it. Apparently the kerygma must suppress or even deny the fact the Christ event has founded a community which throughout its history has had a Lord distinct from itself, a Lord whom it follows in discipleship. All this would, it seems, have to go by the board if we demythologized the New Testament à la Bultmann.

Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann: An Attempt to Understand Him," 110. Referred to by Heinrich Ott in GH 163.

structive means of overcoming some key ontological restrictions in Bultmann's concept of self-understanding.

For Ott, moreover, by beginning like Barth with the history of Christ, one can avoid Bultmann's dependence on a neutral philosophical analysis (i.e., Heidegger). That is, one can avoid ontological restrictions by beginning instead with the object of revelation. This, he argues, could result in a broadened existentialism. Ott writes:

The real issue is whether a restricted Christological existentialism can compete in a genuinely ontological way with a broad, neutral existentialism as Bultmann understands it. If so, it will probably turn out to be broad, rather than narrow, enabling us to understand in existentialist terms what ordinary existentialism can make nothing of. The primary material for such a type of existentialism in this new sense is the existence of Jesus Christ.³⁹

For Ott, then, a broadened existentialism would give full play to God's proseity as the most comprehensive determinant of human existence. Ott makes it clear, however, that statements of God's proseity must still be related to all promeic discourse. So, too, statements of God's promeity are only to be deemed adequate if they fully express his proseity.⁴⁰

Finally, Ott observes that in order to be understood, talk of God's proseity must first begin with the benefits of Christ.⁴¹ This, however, should not be seen as a lapse into

³⁹ Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism," 326.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 330.

⁴¹ Ibid., 329.

Bultmann's position that talk of God can only proceed as talk about human existence. Ott's point here is that although one starts with the benefits of Christ, these, in turn, must then be subjected to a transcendental analysis. This will show that the benefits of Christ are ultimately anchored in the proseity of God.

We can see, then, that it is Ott's intention to steer a mediating course between the theologies of Barth and Bultmann. On the one hand, he wants to preserve the Barthian emphasis on the sovereignty of God with all this implies for a proper witness to scripture. On the other, he is firmly committed to Bultmann's position that theology raises hermeneutical and ontological questions. Of the two theologies, however, it is clear that his Barthian heritage prevails. Nonetheless, Ott nowhere concludes that Barth renders Bultmann's theology superfluous. He argues, in fact, that Bultmann's theology is a step in the right direction from which Barth himself can learn. For this very reason, Ott proposes a constructive criticism of Bultmann that can move toward a universal theological ontology.

5. The Significance of Martin Heidegger: The Anthropological Misunderstanding

In the conclusion to his dissertation, Ott remarks that Martin Heidegger may be of considerable assistance in overcoming the ontological restrictions in Bultmann's theol-

ogy. Simply put, Ott believes that Bultmann makes only limited use of Heidegger. According to Ott, by restricting his appeal to the early Heidegger (i.e, the philosophical anthropology of Being and Time), he ignores the fact that Heidegger's analysis is a preparatory step in the Seinsfrage. He falls prey, in effect, to an "anthropological misunderstanding". Ott writes:

Characteristic of the distinction in the thought of both men is this: In Bultmann it is for man a matter of existence; with Heidegger it is for man first of all a matter of being. Has Bultmann not seen this? Has he perhaps even fallen victim to the widespread 'anthropological' misunderstanding of Heidegger's thought to which he appeals at decisive points? (GH 173)⁴²

The problem, then, is that Heidegger's concern for the Seinsfrage plays little, if any role, in Bultmann's formulation of his theological ontology. This is crucial, since Ott believes that the later Heidegger can help in overcoming the ontological restrictions in Bultmann's theology. Moreover, Ott believes that Heidegger's thought, if taken as a whole, is more in keeping with Barth's than with Bultmann's theology.

What Ott finds in Barth and Heidegger is a common concern to overcome an anthropocentric or subjectivist view of reality. Both, he argues, have sought to interpret man in a context broader than human subjectivity. Barth, for his

⁴² Here, for example, Ott observes that a number of theologians and philosophers seem to have made the same mistake. Ott cites Karl Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre as specific cases in point. Both, he argues, have overlooked the centrality of being (das Sein) by focusing upon on the anthropocentric concept of Existenz (DS 54).

part, has sought to overcome the anthropocentric thinking of liberal theology by developing a theology of the Word. Heidegger, for his part, has attempted to overcome the subjectivist thinking of western metaphysics by interpreting humanity in the broader context of being (das Sein). Given this kinship, Ott suggests that Heidegger's philosophy may offer valuable resources for developing the ontology implicit in Barth's theology. Here, he argues, a Barthian theology would draw on Heidegger precisely where Bultmann leaves off (GH 202).⁴³

Ott pursued this project in Denken und Sein, a work published four years after his dissertation. Since the time of his dissertation, Ott had reached the conclusion that the ultimate basis of Bultmann's theology could not be revealed by an ontological analysis. He now believed that Bultmann's conceptuality was ultimately rooted in a "personal religious decision" which had its basis in the Lutheran dualism of Law

⁴³ Heidegger himself writes:

As long as anthropological-sociological conceptualizing and the conceptualizing of existentialism are not overcome and pushed to the side, theology will never enter into the freedom of saying what is entrusted to it.

Martin Heidegger in a letter to Heinrich Ott upon the publication of Denken und Sein. See "What is Systematic Theology?," 110.

and Gospel (DS 8).⁴⁴ Consequently, Ott claimed that his own alignment of Heidegger and Barth (i.e., Denken und Sein) could not be interpreted as a direct refutation of Bultmann. Ott writes:

One will not be able to refute Bultmann on the basis of Heidegger. One can at most show that Bultmann legitimately appeals to Heidegger to a very limited degree. . . . Nonetheless this changes nothing with regard to the internal consistency, the worth and exemplary clarity of Bultmann's theological path (DS 8).

Instead of focusing, then, upon Bultmann's "failure" to execute the theological implications of the later Heidegger, Ott proposes to develop a more consistently Heideggerian theology. It should be noted, however, that despite Ott's remarks, he does use the later Heidegger to overcome restrictions in Bultmann's theological ontology.

6. The Relationship of Philosophy and Theology

Ott's intention to draw Heidegger into dialogue presupposes a certain understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology. This must first be clarified if the "how" and "why" of Ott's proposal is to be understood correctly.

⁴⁴ Ott's insight has since been systematically corroborated by others. Roger Johnson, for example, locates the origins of Bultmann's conceptuality in a peculiar blend of Marburg neo-Kantianism and the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel. See Roger A. Johnson, The Origins of Demythologizing, 33.

(a) The Necessity and Character of the Relation

To begin with, Ott speaks of the theologian as the "personal union" of philosophy and theology (DS 14). This, he argues, is possible because philosophy and theology are both confronted by one truth and one world (DS 16). For Ott, moreover, philosophy and theology are capable of conversing on both the formal and material planes. That is, they not only share specific concepts, but are also concerned with some of the same problems. According to Ott, this has been possible since das Christliche has become an integral dimension of occidental consciousness (DS 13). It seems to us that what Ott means here is that it is no longer possible to draw a sharp distinction between the teachings of Christianity and particular aspects of western culture. In this regard, Ott observes that creatio ex nihilo has been the object of both philosophical and theological discussion (DS 13). Indeed Ott believes that discussions like these can assist theology in a systematic examination of its own concepts. This, he argues, is crucial, since theology requires philosophy to ensure its intelligibility. Ott writes:

For theology, the permanent dialogue with philosophical thinking is a vital necessity, and indeed for at least two reasons: 1. The specific perspectives in which theology sees humanity must be established as true, that is, they must be shown as plausible and coherent 'in competition' with other ways of seeing. 2. Theology must strive to translate its viewpoint into the horizon of those contemporaries who are unwilling to tie themselves to the biblical vocabulary from the start. For that purpose, it

requires from epoch to epoch, the hard won categories of philosophy.⁴⁵

Ott observes, moreover, that theology is frequently criticized for lacking the provisionality that is typical of philosophy. This, he claims, is due to the fact that - unlike philosophy - it is required to risk answers to life's basic questions (DS 16). Still, Ott believes that theology must always remain open in order to ensure its continuous elucidation from the philosophical viewpoint (DS 15). This means, in turn, that its use of concepts must always be provisional. Ott writes elsewhere:

At bottom concepts in the field of theology - just as in philosophy - are not simply labels for things or states of affairs of which one is unequivocally certain in advance without concepts. Concepts here are more like implements, provisional resources, gradually modified in dialogue with one another, and furthermore, in order to strive gradually to show the spiritual state of affairs with which one is occupied. The unequivocal definition of concepts stands as a rule, therefore, not at the beginning but at the end of a theological thought process.⁴⁶

While in this sense open, Ott observes that a good dogmatic also requires an integral account of faith. It requires, in effect, a complete articulation but in such a way that a "rigid orthodoxy" is avoided (DS 16). This, he argues, is only possible if theology is interpreted as a path of thought that is constantly open to its subject (i.e., die Sache).

⁴⁵ Heinrich Ott, Fritz Buri, Jan Milic Lochman, Dogmatik im Dialog vol. 2, Theologie, Offenbarung, Gotteserkenntnis, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1974), 63.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 79.

The dialogue between philosophy and theology is also crucial for the preaching office of the Church. Indeed Ott argues that the theological enterprise is ultimately for the sake of preaching and that, properly understood, theology is "nothing other than the reflexive function of preaching" (DS 15). We shall speak more of this later. Suffice it to say that theology's openness to philosophy is a necessary ingredient in establishing its relatedness to both the world and human reality. This ensures that theology takes the form of a concrete thinking and speaking that does not fall prey to empty speculation. Ott writes:

In standing before the problem of the being of man and the world, theology cannot ignore philosophy any longer as an effort to understand. In its relationship to philosophy it will have to establish its own relatedness to reality and thereby its intelligibility. It will have to be shown as true that the words of theology are not only empty words, its propositions are not only empty propositions, but rather that they are spoken in the consciousness of the width and depth of the real problems and the possibilities of thought which would provide a solution to these problems (DS 16).

Finally, while philosophy can assist theology, Ott makes it clear that at no point should philosophy control the contents of theology. That is, theology can draw on philosophy, but it should restrict its use to concepts that illuminate the object of faith. Ott believes that the same obtains for philosophy's relation to theology. In short, Ott conceives of the relation between philosophy and theology in a manner analogous to human friendship. Each gives to the

other in such a way that neither is co-opted but becomes more properly itself.⁴⁷

(b) The Phenomenological Method: Ontological Destruction and Theological Reconstruction

Ott's account of the relationship between theology and philosophy, and more specifically, his and Heidegger's thought, is clarified further in his discussion of phenomenology. Ott begins by observing a striking parallel between the phenomenological slogan, "Return to the things themselves", and the Protestant formulation Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres (DS 52). According to Ott, what both share in common is a concern to articulate their subject (i.e., die Sache) in terms appropriate to their theme. This, he argues, is crucial, since, according to phenomenology, the way things are studied is often obscured by inappropriate thought forms. It is here, in fact, that Ott believes theology has much to learn. By applying the phenomenological method, Ott believes that theology, too, can expose those categories that obscure its own subject. Indeed Ott suggests that the phenomenological method coincides with the Barthian

⁴⁷ Note also Schubert Ogden's claim that Ott aligns philosophy and theology more closely even than Bultmann. As Ogden observes, Bultmann restricts philosophy to a formal (i.e., ontological) analysis of human existence whereas theology is reserved for the ontic contents of the Christian faith. By contrast, Ott speaks of one truth confronting both philosophy and theology and of their mutual power in illuminating it. Schubert Ogden, "The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 157.

requirement that theology steer clear of foreign conceptualities (DS 47).

Heidegger, for his part, adopts phenomenology to penetrate categories that impede the development of the Seinsfrage. According to Heidegger, this is necessary, since traditional accounts of being have been dogmatically conceived. By this, he means that traditional accounts have interpreted being (das Sein) as an objectifiable entity as opposed to the being of beings. Heidegger points to three such dogmas in particular:

(i) The first stems from the assumption that being is the most universal concept (Oberbegriff). The assumption here is that an understanding of being is given with our knowledge of any particular entity. For Heidegger, however, the universal character of a genus is an inappropriate category for articulating being, because it fails to elucidate the connection between being as universal and the multiplicity of individual entities.

(ii) The second dogma stems from the assumption that being is indefinable because it is the most universal of concepts. The assumption here is that a definition always occurs in terms of a broader class. By virtue, then, of being the broadest concept, being, in principle, cannot be defined. For Heidegger, however, this objection need not preclude a genuine enquiry into being. It simply suggests that the Seinsfrage be put in a different way.

(iii) The third dogma arises from the assumption that the meaning of being is self-evident, because it is invariably used in every assertion that is made. For Heidegger, however, this, at best, is an "average intelligibility" and offers no assurance that the meaning of being is clear.⁴⁸

For Heidegger, then, what is required is the kind of investigation that exposes being (das Sein) in thought forms appropriate to itself. Precisely for this reason, Heidegger proposes an "ontological destruction" of the history of western philosophy. Heidegger had originally planned to investigate several leading philosophers with a view to their analysis of the Seinsfrage (e.g. Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant etc.). His goal was to show how each man's thought both revealed and obscured significant dimensions of being. By breaking through, as it were, their inappropriate categories (i.e., by undertaking an "ontological destruction"), he intended to show what was appropriate, and what was not, in their attempt to articulate being. For Heidegger, then, the "ontological destruction" is essentially a positive activity. It is a key component in his attempt to articulate the meaning of being appropriately.⁴⁹

Ott believes that theology's exposure to the "ontological destruction" could prove invaluable. Ott writes:

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (New York: Harper Bros., 1962), 21-24.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 41.

In the course of the theological-philosophical confrontation, one will perhaps achieve a clarification of the theological problems brought into play, due to the light which the interpretation of Heidegger throws upon the very subject-matter which expresses itself in them or upon their previous treatment. It will probably also lead step by step to the destruction of familiar theological concepts and thought-schemes, in that by means of Heidegger's unveiling of the intellectual background of philosophical thoughts and concepts their effects in theology became problematic, and behind them the subject-matter itself appears in an original possibility of thought (DS 27).

Ott points to several themes, in particular, that he intends to expose to Heidegger's path of thought. First and foremost, Ott cites Heidegger's account of thinking. Ott cites thinking, since, according to Ott, the phenomenon of being only becomes visible in Heidegger's search for the transcendental condition of the history of western thought. In fact, Ott believes that the original impulse of Heidegger's thought is more to be found in the wonder of thinking than the wonder of being itself (DS 22). From here, Ott observes that Heidegger speaks of being as manifest in three related horizons: language, time, and world. Ott argues that each of these horizons can be correlated, in turn, to respective themes in theology. Ott's assumption is that biblical revelation - like that of being - is also given through each of these horizons. It is Ott's assumption, moreover, that theology is a kind of thinking and thus may learn from Heidegger's analysis of thought. Finally, Ott proposes that Heidegger's analysis of being can overcome Barth's objections to the analogia entis while thinking these objections more radically than Barth

himself. In short, Ott prepares the way for an "ontological destruction" of theological concepts on the basis of correspondences between Heidegger's philosophy and specific themes in theology.

7. The Unity of Heidegger's Thought

Before drawing Heidegger into dialogue, Ott undertakes an extended examination of the unity of Heidegger's thought. For Ott, this is necessary, if he intends to show that Heidegger's philosophy is more in keeping with Barth's than with Bultmann's theology. If, for example, the early Heidegger were radically different from the later, one could argue that the early Heidegger corresponds with Bultmann and the later Heidegger with Barth. One could just leave it at that. This, however, would undermine the proposal that Barth's theology corresponds more with Heidegger's thought in toto. In other words, there would be no such thing as a unitary Heideggerian philosophy. Thus, for Ott's thesis to be defensible, he must demonstrate the unity of Heidegger's thought.

Ott takes the position - now held by most commentators - that Heidegger's thought is governed throughout by the Seinsfrage. To be sure, all commentators, including Ott, acknowledge change in the course of Heidegger's development. The problem concerns its nature and degree. The issue, for the most part, hinges on the so-called "turn" (die Kehre) in Heidegger's path of thinking. To this we now turn.

Simply put, the turn arose from Heidegger's belief that his manner of approaching the Seinsfrage was unduly narrowed in his early thought. To understand why, we must first examine Heidegger's understanding of the "existential analytic". The "existential analytic" refers to Heidegger's analysis in Being and Time of the formal structures of human existence (i.e., Dasein). Heidegger believed that such an analysis was necessary, since, according to Heidegger, man alone is capable of raising the Seinsfrage. The analysis itself is phenomenological, since Heidegger argues that humankind is caught in a mode of being that obscures its real nature. This, he argues, is an "average intelligibility" in which humanity is controlled by the dominating norms of the crowd (das Man). The function, then, of the phenomenological enquiry is to penetrate this "everydayness" and expose the structures of authentic human existence. This exposure is "existential-ontological". The "existential analytic" is the phenomenological investigation of how these structures are interrelated and connected (DS 55). For our purpose, it is sufficient to note that the "existential analytic" and the posing of the Seinsfrage are intimately related. This, in fact, contributed to the turn in Heidegger's subsequent thought.

As Ott observes, Heidegger came to believe that the question of being was unduly narrowed in Being and Time by being posed in the context of the "existential analytic". By

interpreting being in the context of man rather than vice versa, Heidegger claimed that his analysis of being was still too anthropocentric. This conviction served as the basis of the turn.

We shift now to Ott's interpretation of the turn itself. The interpretation proceeds along three related lines: (i) the shift from nothing (das Nichts) to being (das Sein); (ii) the overcoming of metaphysics; and (iii) what Heidegger calls "the step back" (der Schritt zurück). The latter is discussed in conjunction with the overcoming of metaphysics. Our goal, we recall, is to show how Ott establishes his thesis that Heidegger's thought, if taken as a whole, is more in keeping with Barth's than with Bultmann's theology.

(a) The Turn from Nothing (das Nichts) to Being (das Sein)

In illustrating the unity of Heidegger's thought, Ott first examines the turn from nothing (das Nichts) to being (das Sein). He traces this turn through successive editions of What is Metaphysics?. The first edition of What is Metaphysics? was originally based on his Inaugural Address at the University of Freiburg.

The Address begins with Heidegger's claim that science is concerned with beings (die Seienden) and "beyond that

nothing".⁵⁰ Heidegger takes as his focus the reality of nothing which science affirms by way of its dismissal. To establish its reality, Heidegger first excludes a logical account of nothing. He argues that if nothing were solely the negation of being, or the power of the mind to negate, the question concerning nothing would not be able to proceed. To ask this question would be self-contradictory, since nothing is ultimately nothing. The question, then, is where does nothing reside?

Heidegger, for his part, locates the reality of nothing in the pre-logical experience of anxiety. Unlike fear, Heidegger argues that it has no determinate object. To be anxious at all, is to be anxious of nothing. For Heidegger, moreover, the experience of anxiety cannot be understood as a particular mental faculty. Anxiety is a determination of our total human existence (Grundgeschehen). Of crucial importance, for Heidegger, however, is that the nothing revealed in anxiety draws our attention to the amazing fact that anything exists at all. In other words, it reveals the fact that beings exist as such. From here, Heidegger concludes that nothing is the condition of science, since science is concerned with the study of beings as beings.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," Basic Writings, ed. and trans. J. Glenn Gray et al., (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 97.

Ott argues that Heidegger's shift from nothing to being is already evident in the original version of What is Metaphysics?. Ott cites the following:

Nothing is that which makes the revelation of what is as such possible for our human existence. Nothing not only provides the conceptual opposite of what is but is also an original part of essence (Wesen). It is in the being (Sein) of what is that the nihilation of nothing occurs.⁵¹

and in the Epilogue:

Nothing as the other to beings is the veil of being.⁵²

In the first excerpt, Ott claims that Heidegger interprets nothing transcendently. That is, nothing is described as the condition of the possibility of humanity's openness to beings. Here, moreover, nothing is described as belonging to the essence of beings. Given this, Ott believes that his subsequent breakthrough to being signals the movement to a more primary transcendental level. According to Ott, this level, while founded on nothing, grounds the latter as well. Here his paradoxical analysis accords with Heidegger's formulation that nothing is the "veil of being". Ott writes:

The speaking of being and its destiny is in Heidegger the natural and necessary continuation of the speaking of das Nichts. The concept of das Nichts (as the result of the specifically Heideggerian transcendental enquiry) did not permit any standstill by it, but rather stimulates a transcendental 'asking further' about the condition of the possibility of the governance of das Nichts (in Heidegger's terminology: of the nihilating of das Nichts).

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik?, 5th ed., (Frankfurt am Main, 1949). Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 82.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik?, 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1949), p. 46. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 76.

In this 'asking further', Heidegger has executed what we call the 'turn' (DS 83).

It is Ott's position, then, that the nothing which reveals being pushes Heidegger beyond this fact to the being of beings itself. In other words, the analysis of nothing in What is Metaphysics? must be seen as a preparatory step in the Seinsfrage that is ultimately consistent with being. According to Ott, this becomes particularly clear in successive editions of What is Metaphysics?, especially in the Epilogue (1943) and the Introduction (1949), in which the phenomenon of nothing is explicitly identified with being.⁵³

⁵³ Ott's conviction that the turn (die Kehre) from "nothing" (das Nichts) to "being" (das Sein) does not entail a break in Heidegger's philosophy is contested, among others, by Karl Löwith. Löwith argues that in Being and Time the existential analytic interprets humanity solely in terms of itself. Heidegger, he claims, makes no reference to a transcendental reality. For Löwith, however, this changes completely in the later Heidegger when humanity is interpreted as grounded in being. Indeed Löwith argues that Heidegger's contention that nothing is the "veil of being" is an artificial injection of later into earlier insights. He rejects, moreover, the later Heidegger since, according to Ott, Löwith believes that the only moods of groundedness are the "Christian-theological" and the "Greek-cosmological" (DS 81).

Ott argues, for his part, that Löwith ignores the transcendental character of Heidegger's analysis of nothing and being. Against Löwith, Ott argues that by grounding logic in the phenomenon of das Nichts, Heidegger is not involved in an irrational enquiry into the basis of logic. He is involved instead in a phenomenological account of its transcendental condition. Ott believes that the same kind of analysis is also at work in his later account of being. For Ott, however, Löwith erroneously interprets the early Heidegger as a subjectivist and the later Heidegger as a mystic because he ignores the unity of both of these phases in his transcendental analysis. According to Ott, the consequence is that Löwith mistakenly interprets the later Heidegger's analysis of being in an hypostasized way. This, he argues, would never have happened, if Löwith were aware of the

The turn from nothing to being is also accompanied by a distinctive change in both the mode and style of Heidegger's thought. The resolute will of Being and Time is now exchanged for a peaceful abiding in the openness cleared by being. So, too, the attainment of authenticity is no longer seen as a human achievement but as a gift bestowed by being. The methodological rigour of Being and Time is also dropped in favour of a poetic thinking that is more evocative than conceptual. We shall return to this in greater detail in our discussion of Heidegger's notion of non-objectifying thinking.

(b) Theological Implications

In a brief aside, Ott correlates the believer's experience of creation with the turn from nothing to being. Here, we recall, Heidegger speaks of the experience of nothing as occasioning the wonder as to why there is something rather than nothing (i.e., beings). This, for Ott, can be correlated, in turn, with the believer's wonder in experiencing beings as created (i.e., creatio ex nihilo). However, as Ott observes, Heidegger himself never draws this conclusion. Heidegger argues, in fact, that the biblical idea of Creator precludes our wonder before being. Heidegger writes:

To whom, for example, the Bible is divine revelation and truth, he already has the answer before the questioning of the question: why is there something rather than nothing? Beings, to the extent they are not God himself,

transcendental character of Heidegger's analysis. In short, Löwith would have realized that being is neither a theological nor cosmological object, but the transcendental dimension of Heidegger's entire enquiry (DS 80-82).

are made by him. . . . Who stands on the grounds of such faith can in some sense certainly enact the questioning of the question but he cannot authentically ask without giving himself up as a believer with all the consequences of this step. He can only do 'as if'. . . .⁵⁴

Ott argues that Heidegger's remarks stem from his assumption that the biblical idea of Creator has been moulded by the fate of western metaphysics. According to Heidegger, western metaphysics has been characterized throughout by an impulse to ground reality in one distinct cause. This cause (i.e., causa prima) has frequently been identified with God. He refers, in fact, to the history of metaphysics as the history of "onto-theological" thinking.⁵⁵

Despite Heidegger's criticism, Ott insists that the biblical idea of Creator is radically different from that of a causa prima. That is, it should not be understood as a metaphysical answer to a metaphysical question:

. . . the teaching of Christian faith, the teaching of creatio ex nihilo, is certainly not an answer of subjectivistic metaphysics, which would not be appropriate, through the indication of a causa prima, to halt the fundamental question: why are there beings at all rather than nothing and which would be appropriate to release the human being from persisting in this question. . . . Even here faith cannot be fitted into any metaphysic, but to think along with Heidegger, it is precisely the uncompromising standing through of the fundamental question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' Faith persists in this question. It lets itself pass over the abyss, knowing that only the living God

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953), 5-6. Quoted by Heinrich Ott - - in DS 87.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Die Onto-Theo-Logische Verfassung der Metaphysik," Identität und Differenz, 2nd ed., (Pfullingen: Gunther Neske, 1957), 35-73.

himself and no created causa sui whatsoever can catch it. It should be held against Heidegger that the fundamental question by no means surpasses belief in creation: rather the latter objectively integrates the former.⁵⁶

In short, Ott's claim is that the biblical response to "why there is something rather than nothing?" does not negate the awe that first occasions this question. It persists, in fact, in the believer's wonder before the awesome fact of creation. Here, of course, Ott assumes the kind of God that cannot be understood as a causa prima. We shall return to this problem in greater detail later.

(c) Overcoming Metaphysics

Ott also discusses the turn (die Kehre) in the context of Heidegger's goal to transcend metaphysics. Since his early writings, Heidegger's attitude to metaphysics has undergone a significant shift. In early works such as What is Metaphysics?, humanity is described as being metaphysical by nature. However, in later works, the term is used in an

⁵⁶ Kramer reinforces Ott's criticism of Heidegger in a somewhat different way. At a consultation at Hofgeismar in December, 1953, Heidegger argued that faith is shielded from questioning because it rests on a basis of confidence. "As is well known", he remarked, "philosophy can only question". He suggested, moreover, that many people convert because they cannot withstand the arduous task of questioning. Kramer objected, however, arguing that Heidegger had neglected the distinction drawn by theology between certainty or certitudo and security or securitas. Kramer claimed that an integral component of faith is that faith endure uncertainty and what Kramer called the "temptation" of thinking. See "Conversation with Martin Heidegger", The Piety of Thinking, translation, notes, and commentary by James Hart and John Maraldo (Bloomington, U.S.A., Indiana U. Press, 1976), 65-66.

increasingly pejorative sense (DS 91). Heidegger's change in attitude can be clearly traced to a growing conviction that metaphysics is ultimately a form of subjectivistic thinking. To this extent, it impedes the pursuit of the Seinsfrage and the attempt to interpret humanity in a context broader than itself (i.e., a context broader than subjectivism).

Heidegger traces the source of metaphysics to humanity's attempt to ground itself and the rest of reality in one supreme cause. For Heidegger, however, this attempt at grounding has obscured the phenomenon of being, since being is not a being but the very being of beings. This eclipse has been further accentuated by what Heidegger calls the objectifying thinking of metaphysics. Here his claim stems from a conviction that the history of metaphysics has been characterized throughout by the subject's attempt to force reality to conform to its cognitive framework. According to Heidegger, this framework, particularly since the sixteenth century, has tended to place reality over and against the subject. The consequence is that reality has been reduced to the subject's "representation" (die Vorstellung). Nowhere is this more evident than in the positivist approach of science in which reality conforms to the objectifying propositions of the subject (i.e., the scientific method). The problem here is ~~that~~ that being is passed over and forgotten in the scientific pursuit of particular entities. Precisely for this reason, Heidegger proposes a "step back" (Schritt zurück) in which

being is revealed as the transcendental condition of science, and for that matter, all forms of metaphysical thinking.⁵⁷

The "step back" also coincides with his attempt to reveal the ontological difference between being and beings. Heidegger's assumption here is that by thinking being in its difference from beings, the former can be shown as the transcendental condition of the latter. This means, in turn, that Heidegger can overcome the objectifying thinking of metaphysics, which excludes, in principle, any thinking of being.

In his later thought, and in keeping with the turn, the forgetfulness of being is interpreted more from the standpoint of being itself. The consequence is that the history of metaphysics is now interpreted as a determination of being. This means, in turn, that the forgetfulness of being (i.e., metaphysics), is no longer interpreted as an error in human thought. Indeed Heidegger argues that if thought has a history, then its transcendental condition (i.e., being) must also have a history (DS 106). As Ott observes, Heidegger's conclusion accords with his goal to overcome the subjectivistic thinking of metaphysics:

On this basis we can say: Heidegger's talk of a history of being has its basis in the principle of a transcendental thinking on the one hand, and in the consistent overcoming of subjectivism on the other. Precisely because thinking must not be understood (subjectivistically) as the self-empowered act of the thinking subject, its history which it actually has, must

⁵⁷ See Martin Heidegger, Vorträge und Aufsätze, (Pfullingen: 1954), 184. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 102.

be understood transcendently as the history of being itself (DS 106-7).

In short, then, for the later Heidegger, being is the transcendental condition of both the history of thought and the history of metaphysics. Hence Heidegger can speak of the history of metaphysics as tantamount to a fate which befalls humanity at the hands of being itself. Being, in effect, covers itself up.⁵⁸ Heidegger traces the origin of this covering to Plato's conception of truth. Prior to Plato, Heidegger contends that truth was conceived as an uncovering of being itself (aletheia). With Plato, however, this changed significantly when truth was conceived as conformity to the "ideas" (ἰδέα). This inaugurated, in turn, the idea of truth as correspondence (i.e., the correct correspondence between a thought and its object). According to Heidegger, this marks the beginning of humanism and the subjectivistic thinking that subsequently characterizes the history of metaphysics. For Heidegger, what began as an impulse in Plato becomes increasingly pronounced in Descartes, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Ultimately Nietzsche's "will to power" culminates in technology's "will to will" and humanity itself is threatened. Indeed Heidegger claims that being itself is so

⁵⁸ Given that the history of metaphysics is the fateful disclosure of being, the overcoming of metaphysics must also be understood as enfolded in this destiny. That is, too, can only happen when being makes this possible.

thoroughly objectified that technology interprets humanity as a resource at its own disposal (DS 116-20).

Having described Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics, Ott situates Being and Time and What is Metaphysics? in the context of the turn. His goal, we recall, is to show that the Seinsfrage is already at work in Heidegger's early work and that the turn occurs precisely because of this theme.

With this in mind, Ott observes that Heidegger came to believe that Being and Time was still caught in the subjectivistic thinking of metaphysics. For Heidegger, the problem lay in the treatise's use of static and objectifying concepts. Heidegger believed that concepts like these were still rooted in a subjectivism that restricted being to the subject's conceptual framework. The consequence, according to Heidegger, was that being as such could never be properly exposed. It remained, as it were, an item at humanity's disposal. This, for Heidegger, was crucial, since, in accordance with the turn, he intended to show that being, not man, was the ultimate basis of thought. Indeed Heidegger speaks of thinking (Denken) as essentially a form of thanking (Danken) since thought, like being, cannot be solicited or controlled.⁵⁹ For Heidegger, then, if being were to be shown

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, What is Called Thinking?, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 139.

as the ultimate basis of thought (i.e., its transcendental condition), subjectivistic thinking would have to be renounced. What would be required is a form of thinking that could respect both the non-disposability and sovereignty of being. As we shall see, Ott proposes a post-metaphysical, or better perhaps, non-objectifying thinking as his own solution to the problem.

Despite Heidegger's criticism of the subjectivistic thinking in Being and Time, Ott claims that even here the turn is underway. He points, for example, to Heidegger's notion of "being-in-the-world" (in-der-Welt-sein) as already anticipating the "dethronement" of subjectivity (DS 98).

Briefly put, the concept of "being-in-the-world" is rooted in Heidegger's attack on the subjectivistic view of a worldless ego. In Heidegger's opinion, this is nowhere as evident as in the philosophy of René Descartes. Descartes' philosophy had been founded upon the subject's certainty of its own self-consciousness (cogito ergo sum). Assuming this as his starting point, Descartes then established the reality of the external world. For Heidegger, however, the external world in Descartes arrives, as it were, too late, since, according to Heidegger, the real self is always in its world. The self, he argues, is always shaped by its relationship to history and its relations to other persons. In short, Ott - - takes this as a sign that in Being and Time the divestiture

of subjectivity is already underway. Being and Time is accordingly placed at the earliest point in the turn.

Ott places What is Metaphysics? in a mediating position between the earliest point in the turn and the "hinge" of the turn itself (DS 95). Ott observes that in the first edition of What is Metaphysics?, being and nothing are still not explicitly identified. The work, moreover, continues to exhibit a structural affinity to Being and Time in as much as the analysis of nothing continues to be achieved from the standpoint of human existence. Nonetheless, Ott believes that the analysis of nothing in What is Metaphysics? moves significantly beyond that of Being and Time. He notes, for example, that the concept of nothing is now accorded a decidedly greater role. This is significant, since nothing, we recall, is actually the "veil of being" (see pp. 66-67). The work, moreover, also shows signs of transcending metaphysics to the extent that its question is non-metaphysical (i.e., the question of nothing). That is, it raises the question of its own possibility without resorting to onto-theological thinking. Still, Ott observes that the work remains caught in the objectifying thinking of metaphysics. For Heidegger, however, this is unavoidable, since the overcoming of anything always entails some dependence on that which is overcome. For these reasons, Ott locates What is Metaphysics? between Being and Time and the hinge of the turn itself.

Summing up, it is Ott's view that Heidegger's development constitutes an organic unity. The turn from nothing to being, and the turn to a post-metaphysical thinking, are not to be understood as breaks in Heidegger's development. They stem, instead, from his persistent pursuit of the Seinsfrage.

8. God and Being

Having established the unity of Heidegger's thought, Ott proceeds to correlate Heidegger's notion of being with that of the biblical God. The correlation proceeds on the assumption that Heidegger's thought, if taken as a whole, is more in keeping with Barth's than with Bultmann's theology. This, we recall, was the primary reason for Ott's demonstration of the unity of Heidegger's thought. The correlation itself is hypothetical. That is, Ott asks the following question: how might one conceive of God if thought in terms of Heidegger's analysis of the Seinsfrage?

Before proceeding, Ott responds to the widespread objection that Heidegger's thought is atheistic in principle. As Ott observes, this objection takes several forms. Some argue that Sartre's atheism is a natural extension of Heidegger's. Others claim that Heidegger interprets being with no reference at all to a transcendental reality. Still ~~others~~ contend that being-in-the-world is intended to affirm a strictly worldly philosophy. In response to the latter objection, Ott argues that being-in-the-world is an

ontological-existential structure that describes our openness to being. In other words, it is not to be understood as an ontic statement about a particular state of affairs. In this regard, Ott claims that Heidegger's thought is neither atheistic nor theistic. As for the first two objections, these are traced to the anthropological misunderstanding of Heidegger (DS 138-39).

Ott also raises the question of Heidegger's remark that philosophy is "foolishness" for theology.⁶⁰ Taken at face value, Heidegger's remark would appear to subvert Ott's programme entirely. Significantly, however, Ott argues that Heidegger's statement is only directed at metaphysical philo-

⁶⁰ Heidegger writes the following:

Der theologische Charakter der Ontologie beruht . . . nicht darauf, daß die griechische Metaphysik später von der kirchlichen Theologie des Christentums aufgenommen und durch diese umgebildet wurde. Er beruht vielmehr in der Art, wie sich von früh an das Seiende als das Seiende entborgen hat. Diese Unverborgenheit des Seienden gab erst die Möglichkeit, daß sich die christliche Theologie der griechischen Philosophie bemächtigte, ob zu ihrem Nutzen, ob zu ihrem Schaden, das mögen die Theologen aus der Erfahrung des Christlichen entscheiden, indem sie bedenken, was im ersten Korintherbrief des Apostels Paulus geschrieben steht: οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου; Hat nicht zur Torheit werden lassen der Gott die Weisheit der Welt? (I Kor. 1, 20). Die σοφία τοῦ κόσμου aber ist das, was nach 1, 22 die Ἕλληνες ζητοῦσιν, was die Griechen suchen. Aristoteles nennt die πρώτη φιλοσοφία (die eigentliche Philosophie) sogar ausdrücklich ζητούμενη die gesuchte. Ob die christliche Theologie sich noch einmal entschließt, mit dem Wort des Apostels und ihm gemäß mit der Philosophie als einer Torheit Ernst zu machen?

Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik?, 9th. ed., (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1965), 19-20. Cited by Heinrich Ott in DS 147.

sophy. According to Ott, this means that Heidegger's philosophy is open and accessible to theology. Ott's assumption here, of course, is that Heidegger's philosophy is post-metaphysical. We shall return to Ott's interpretation of Heidegger's remarks in greater detail later. Suffice it to say here that Ott finds nothing in Heidegger's statement that would place his programme in jeopardy.

Assuming this, Ott proceeds with the basic question of how to interpret God in a Heideggarian theology: as being itself or a being? To begin with, Ott argues that if God is identified with being, one encounters the problem of the ontological difference. The problem here is that the ontological difference excludes an account of being as "something for itself" (etwas für sich) (DS 142). According to Ott, this stems from Heidegger's concern that being not be hypostasized, since being (das Sein) is not a being (ein Seiendes) but the very being of beings. For Ott, however, being-for-itself is an indispensable dimension of God. Presumably Ott takes this position because the biblical God is personal, or in some sense, self-conscious (i.e., for-itself). On this basis, Ott goes on to reject the identification of God with Heidegger's conception of being (das Sein).

Next Ott surmises that God must be a being, if he is to be interpreted at all in terms of Heidegger's philosophy. Ott corroborates his judgment by appealing to Heidegger himself. Ott points specifically to What is Metaphysics? in

which Heidegger includes God in a list of entities which are described as simply being. The list describes God as having the same mode of being as a rock, an angel, and a horse. By contrast, persons are described as the only entities whose mode of being is existence.⁶¹ On this basis, Ott assumes, by inference, that God must be a being like the rock, the angel, and the horse (DS 143).

As Ott observes, to conceive of God as a being raises the question of Barth's objection to the analogia entis. Barth, we recall, had argued that the analogia entis is a blasphemous assault on God's sovereignty. By starting with the assumption that God and man both participate in the same concept of being, Barth had argued that God is subsumed by a merely human construct. He argued, moreover, that the analogia entis takes for granted a knowledge of God apart from his revelation. It further establishes a static relation between God and man that suppresses the dynamic of the revelatory event. If this were not enough, it also drives a wedge between God's acts and his being that separates his being from his reconciling work in Christ. For these reasons, Barth proposed the analogia fidei instead.

Barth conceives of the analogia fidei as a correspondence initiated by God through the act of faith itself. He

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik?, 5th ed., (Frankfurt am Main, 1951), 14. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 142.

reverses, in effect, the traditional understanding of analogy. According to the principle of the analogia fidei, God is the analogue and man the analogate. That is, man's knowledge of God is utterly contingent upon the correspondence (die Entsprechung) effected by God between humanity's words and God's self-disclosure. Because, moreover, knowledge of God is utterly dependent on God's gracious acts, the analogia fidei overcomes the static character of the analogia entis.

For our purpose, what is significant is Ott's conviction that Heidegger thinks the Barthian criticism of the analogia entis more radically than Barth himself. Ott's argument hinges on the claim that Heidegger's concept of correspondence ought to replace the concept of analogy, including the notion of being that underlies this concept. Here it is important to note that by "correspondence", Heidegger means the response character of thinking as it attunes itself to being. Ott believes that if correlated with faith's relation to God, the notion of correspondence can overcome the Barthian criticism that being is a humanly controlled construct. As Ott observes, this is so, because Heidegger nowhere interprets being, like the analogia entis, as the most universal concept (i.e., an Oberbegriff). He interprets it, instead, as a non-disposable destiny to which thought must correspond. For Ott, then, the notion of correspondence meets the Barthian insistence that a subjectivistic (i.e., metaphysically conceived) concept of

being not be accepted. At the same time, however, it also thinks the Barthian criticism of the analogia entis more deeply than Barth himself by enabling him to retain a specific concept of being. Indeed Ott claims that Barth nowhere rejects the concept of being per se. He only rejects, like Heidegger himself, a notion of being that is subjectivistically determined (DS 144).⁶²

Having presented a Heideggerian critique of the analogia entis, Ott proposes that a Heideggerian theology would interpret God's being as follows:

The being of God means, as we have understood 'being' until now, an occurrence of unveiling; that God uncovers himself to thought as he, who he is; that he meets thought as a fate and gives himself to be thought as the subject-matter to be thought, that he encounters thinking as a claim and requires from man a correspondence in freedom. The thinking, however, encountered by the being of God is the thinking of faith (DS 148).

Ott believes that this accords with the biblical declaration, "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14) which also excludes the being of God as an Oberbegriff. It affirms, in fact, his non-disposability, his complete aseity, and his being as absolute mystery (DS 146).

Finally, Ott argues that a Heideggerian account of God would render certain questions superfluous. The question, for

⁶² Ott argues, in fact, that the doctrine of the analogia entis stems from a forgetfulness of being, and that the analogia entis is actually rooted in the more primordial occurrence of unveiling. Ott writes:

Damit wären wir wieder im Horizonte des Subjektivismus. Die Ermöglichung des Denkens ist nicht die Analogie, sondern das Sein als Entbergung (DS 145).

example, of how God is related to being in general would no longer be relevant, since being, for Heidegger, is only given in specific determinations. The same, he says, would also hold for how being is ultimately rooted in God. According to Ott, as an "occurrence of unveiling", God's being would no longer be seen as a causa prima from which reality as such is derived. It would be seen instead as a fateful destiny which gives itself to be thought (DS 148).

9. Thinking and Being: Theology and Experience

It is Ott's belief that a dialogue with Heidegger can also assist theology in the development of a new hermeneutic. In discussing this proposition, Ott focuses, in particular, upon Heidegger's analysis of thinking and language, since these, as it were, serve as the basis of the new hermeneutic. A key feature of Ott's discussion centres on the subjectivistic tendencies in Bultmann's account of thought and language and how it is that Heidegger overcomes this problem. The implication, again, is that Heidegger provides a non-subjectivistic analysis of both phenomena that is more in keeping with Barth's than with Bultmann's theology.

(a) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Bultmann

From the outset, Ott acknowledges that Bultmann aims to exclude a subjectivistic thinking. Ott observes that his ~~concept~~ concept of self-understanding and his emphasis upon decision both imply a certain openness to reality. Nonetheless, Ott argues that by driving a wedge between faith and reflection,

Bultmann falls prey to subjectivistic thinking. He allows, as it were, theological reflection to stand outside its object and to this extent control it (i.e., the subject-object schema). The consequence is that theological reflection is no longer determined by the object of revelation. It becomes, in effect, subjectivist (GH 166).

To illustrate his point, Ott cites Bultmann's cleavage between theology and preaching. This, he claims, presupposes a split between reflection and experience (i.e., faith). Ott cites Ernst Fuchs - a pupil of Bultmann - to illustrate his claim. Fuchs writes:

Theology does not to be sure investigate the revelation of God, rather it teaches God's revelation in the context of human speaking and thereby the human communication of truth and discusses its subject in concepts. Precisely for that reason the debate has raised among us the scientific character of theology as conceptual doctrine. The dispute concerns primarily the process of demythologizing the New Testament proclamation As is well known it is feared that Bultmann's way of speaking theologically precisely abridges the content and fullness of revelation. Behind this fear lies the misunderstanding, according to which theology would explicate the fullness of revelation. But this is a confusion between doctrine and preaching or the life of faith. However the task of theological doctrine is in the first instance one of control. For there is a difference between my imparting to others the divine revelation and my reflecting on the truth of this communication in the context of human speaking. This reflection, strictly speaking, applies to the communicability of what the communication says. It presupposes the communication but discusses to what extent the communication could be communicated. Then it says, as it were, why humanly speaking, a sermon was impossible. Theology is not preaching, but presupposes preaching as a possibility of such a communication as an act of man. Hence theology must not desire at all to declare the fullness of revelation (DS 172).

According to Ott, the assumption that theology's focus is the possibility of the sermon, but not its actuality, means that Fuchs - and by implication, Bultmann - adopt a standpoint that is independent of faith. That is, they presuppose a split between the preacher's experience (i.e., faith) and theology's reflection upon it.

The split between faith and reflection is also discussed in the context of Ott's analysis of pre-understanding and understanding. Bultmann, we recall, claims that an interpreter always brings some understanding to his reading of any text (i.e., pre-understanding). This, in effect, allows the text to speak. Furthermore, for Bultmann, pre-understanding also serves as the "point of contact" between our self-understanding and the event of revelation. This enables the non-believer to interpret faith as a meaningful possibility. Ott makes it clear, however, that Bultmann draws a sharp distinction between pre-understanding and understanding per se. By the latter he means understanding in its encounter with the object. Understanding, therefore, always includes the corrective influence of the object. If, for example, when reading a text, an interpreter is genuinely open, his pre-understanding is held in a state of suspension (i.e., his assumptions are modified in his encounter with the text). Hence while pre-understanding is the condition of understanding, pre-understanding is always transformed by the latter (GH 101). According to Ott, however, Bultmann fails

to articulate the "how" of this transformation. Ott believes that by interpreting understanding solely with reference to pre-understanding, he fails to illuminate the corrective influence of the former (GH 101). This, he claims, has important consequences, since faith itself is a particular kind of understanding. Bultmann, for example, is unable to show how our pre-understanding is actually modified by the object of revelation. Ott writes:

If a preceding understanding is possible, if the understanding before the event is apparently not distinguished with regard to its contents from the understanding after the event, then what is the nature of the event itself? What modification takes place in it? In what does it consist? Or are limits placed here on our reflection upon the event, upon the act of understanding encounter itself? (GH 104)

Certainly Ott believes that limits are placed on the "act of understanding". In fact, Ott argues that because the modification is never properly illumined, its content in faith (i.e., the Christ-event) is never adequately shown. Ott writes:

The Christian self-understanding, faith, remains in its specific existentialist structure unclarified, an enigmatic leap, for which the name of Jesus Christ serves as a cipher . . . (GH 108).

Ott traces the source of the problem to Bultmann's cleavage between the existential and objective orders. Ott argues that by restricting the conceptual to the sphere of the objective, Bultmann restricts reflection to the sphere of objective reality. He prevents, in effect, any explication of the contents of faith (i.e., existential reality). Ott believes

that Bultmann's restriction stems from a concern to preserve both the non-disposability and mystery of faith (GH 105).

As we shall see, Ott appeals to Heidegger's notion of non-objectifying thinking to overcome this difficulty. Ott contends that Heidegger's analysis can bring about a more intimate alignment of theological reflection and the believer's experience of faith. Thought, then, would not be restricted to a preliminary function (i.e. our pre-understanding) that is ultimately left behind by the experience of revelation. It would be seen instead as thinking from within the experience of faith itself.

To understand how, we must first discuss Heidegger's understanding of non-objectifying thinking. To this we now turn.

(b) Non-Objectifying or Primal Thinking

In his later thought, Heidegger speaks of thinking as humanity's most distinctive trait. It serves, as it were, as the place where being clears. As the point of this clearing, Dasein, which literally means "being there", is now interpreted as the "there" where being speaks. For Heidegger, then, genuine or primal thinking is not to be confused with the self-empowered thinking of positivism or metaphysics. It entails, instead, a kind of renunciation in which thought relinquishes the controlling interests of the subject. Thought, as it were, hands itself over to that which being

grants, and takes its lead from the phenomenon of being itself.

Heidegger's account of thinking is further clarified in "What is Called Thinking?" (1952).⁶³ Here he begins by defining thinking in terms of what it is not.

First, Heidegger distinguishes thinking from the methodical approach of science. Heidegger's point here is that science is concerned with the conveyance of information. The implication is that original or primal thinking does not have this as its goal. Indeed Heidegger claims elsewhere that "science does not think", because its objectifying thinking is oblivious to the phenomenon of being (i.e., the condition of its own possibility).⁶⁴

Second, Heidegger excludes thinking that serves as a guideline for living or services our practical needs. The implication here is that primal thinking is not concerned with a pragmatic search for results, but with the thinking of being for its own sake alone.

Finally, Heidegger excludes primal thinking from the kind of thought that tries to solve the ultimate "riddles" of

⁶³ This was originally published as "Was heißt Denken?" in Verträge und Aufsätze, (Tübingen: Pfullingen, Neske, 1954), 129-43.

⁶⁴ Heidegger is reported to have made these remarks at the last annual meeting of Old Marburgers. See Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?," 77-78.

he universe.⁶⁵ Presumably Heidegger means here the traditional thinking of philosophy which interprets being as a puzzle (i.e., onto-theological thinking) instead of an absolute mystery.

Elsewhere Heidegger distinguishes primal thinking from the kind of thought that insists on proof or the strict verification of the sciences. Primal thinking, by contrast, is described as a form of thought that is essentially concerned with showing the reality of its object.⁶⁶ It is, he notes, not as intent on proving its own assertions as it is on disclosing a thoughtful experience of being. Despite the fact that it does not insist on strict verification, Heidegger believes that primal thinking is considerably more rigorous than its conceptual counterpart. This is because primal thinking, unlike science, thinks from within the experience of being itself. It does not, as it were, adopt a viewpoint outside this experience, from which it disposes over being. It bridges the gap between thinking and being in a way not possible for the objectifying thinking of science.

Put more positively, Heidegger interprets primal thinking as a path of thought which the primal thinker must follow. Following this path is variously described as a

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, Was heißt Denken?, (Tübingen, 1954), 161. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 162.

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik?, 5th ed., (Frankfurt am Main, 1949), 44. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 169-70.

destiny (das Geschick), a bidding (das Geheiß), or a claim (der Anspruch). Heidegger makes it clear, however, that a path of thinking is never cleared in advance. There is, as it were, no objective standpoint from which the path can be seen in its entirety. Primal thinking is the actual event of clearing the path itself.

According to Heidegger, the event of clearing is ultimately expressed in language. We shall discuss this point in greater detail later. Suffice it to say here, that Heidegger speaks of humanity, or better perhaps, mortals, as charged with speaking that which being grants. As Ott observes, this occurs as the same fateful relation that exists between thought and being (DS 176). Heidegger writes:

Primal thinking is the echo of the favour of being, in which the simple lights itself and lets itself happen: that being is. This echo is the human answer of thinking, is the origin of human words, which word only lets language as the transpiring of the words emerge in words Thinking, obedient to the voice of being seeks on its behalf the word out of which the truth of being comes to language.⁶⁷

Here, being is interpreted as the transcendental condition of thought. It is, in fact, only because man is first addressed by being, that humanity can respond and think. Again, primal thinking is not to be construed as a self-empowered act.

Finally, Heidegger believes that the relation between thought and being is most primally expressed in the words of

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik? 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1949) 44. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 169-70.

the great poets. According to Heidegger, the poet speaks the simplicity of being in such a way that mystery of being is both revealed and preserved. He renounces, in effect, any form of calculative thinking and speaks from within the experience of being itself. For Heidegger, however, while poetry and thinking both arise from the same experience of being, each responds in a somewhat different way. The poet names "the holy" (das Heilige) while the thinker "bespeaks being" (sagt das Sein).⁶⁸

(c) Theological Implications

Having discussed Heidegger's conception of primal thinking, Ott examines its theological significance. To begin with, Ott claims that if correlated with primal thinking, theology would be understood as an instance of primal thought. This implies several things. First, theology would renounce all forms of scientific and metaphysical thinking and opt instead for a genuine thinking of encounter. It would not, as it were, adopt a viewpoint outside this encounter from which it could dispose over God. It would start instead like primal thinking from within the experience itself. This experience, according to Ott, is faith's encounter with God. Theology, then, properly understood, is the self-explication of faith from within faith itself. Ott claims that this

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, Was ist Metaphysik? 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1949), 46. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 160.

accords with the traditional view that theology takes the form of fides quaerens intellectum (i.e., faith seeking understanding). Indeed, for Ott, theology takes place precisely as prayer, since it is shaped throughout by humanity's encounter with God. Ott writes:

Prayer constitutes not only the foundations on which theology is founded, but theology as science has in its execution the character of prayer. Just as every empirical science is a thinking appropriate to its subject - it never has its subject 'behind it' in order to turn exclusively towards the construction of a system, but always investigates, observes, experiments, returns to the historical sciences -so, too, theology never has prayer in order to speak about prayer occasionally, but itself necessarily becomes prayer again and again. It persists in the sphere of its experiential foundations. Only so does it remain appropriate to its subject.⁶⁹

It is Ott's belief, moreover, that by thinking faith from within faith itself (i.e., as primal thinking or prayer), theology overcomes the split between faith and thinking. This, we recall, constituted a major part of Ott's criticism of Bultmann. Ott argues that a closer alignment of faith and reflection also solves the problem in which thought is left behind by the event of revelation. The assumption here is that if thought abides in the experience of revelation, it can articulate its structure. This, too, would also bring an end to the strict separation of theology and preaching, since both would belong to the one continuum of thinking and existence.

⁶⁹ Heinrich Ott, "Theologie als Gebet and als Wissenschaft," Theologische Zeitschrift 14 (March-April 1958): 124. See also Heinrich Ott, "La Prière Comme Langage de la Foi," Parole et Avènement de Dieu, ed. H. Cazelles et al., (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971), 66.

For Ott, in fact, theology is "nothing other than the reflective function of preaching" (DS 15). We shall return to Ott's analysis of theology and preaching after our discussion of Heidegger's conception of language. We will then be able to expose their relationship more clearly.

Finally, Ott claims that theology understood as primal thinking would renounce the attempt to interpret itself as a self-contained system, the concern of which is the conveyance of information. It would opt instead for the kind of thinking that opens one up to a genuine experience of God. This, however, could not be proven, but only disclosed and shown. Ott writes:

Theology in any case is itself a being-on-the-way. It is a showing (weisendes) not a proving (beweisendes) thinking. It remains along with the proclamation within the 'showing' of the 'call', of the destiny. It is itself, like the proclamation, 'language of fate'. The ontology of fate of the thinking of theology - its specific call - is the revelation of God. It is the claim to which this thinking must correspond (DS 175).

10. Language and Being: Theology and Hermeneutic

Ott's analysis of Heidegger's conception of language must be seen in conjunction with his understanding of thinking. Nor is this surprising, since Heidegger claims that thinking is thoroughly linguistic. For Ott, moreover, Heidegger's conception of language is a crucial ingredient in developing a hermeneutic that can overcome subjectivism and ensure the sovereignty of God. In developing his position,

Ott turns, first, to Rudolf Bultmann, focusing, in particular, on the subjectivistic traces in his understanding of language.

(a) The Strength and Weaknesses of Bultmann

Ott takes Bultmann's essay, "The Concept of Word in the New Testament" to illustrate his point. Here Bultmann argues that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments is not to be understood as a universal statement. Nor, he says, can it merely be understood as a teaching. It consists instead of an historic address that speaks to our concrete existence. According to Bultmann, this occurs differently in each Testament. The Word of God in the Old Testament speaks through the prophets or the cult. It reminds humanity of God's past deeds and of his ongoing work in the present. By contrast, the Word of God in the New Testament is the actual event in which man is encountered by God. God is present as the preached Word itself (GH 175).

Ott believes that by interpreting the Word as event, Bultmann is true to the biblical view that the Word of God has its own intrinsic efficacy (GH 175). To this extent, he overcomes the kind of subjectivism that interprets words as instruments at man's disposal. Despite this achievement, Ott argues that Bultmann's account of language is still caught in a subjectivism. Ott points, in particular, to Bultmann's formulation of the task of exegesis. Ott writes:

Bultmann . . . has formulated the fundamental rule of such exegetical analysis as follows: Exegesis has as its first task to discover the possibilities of discourse that are given for the author with the tradition in which he

stands. We are far from wanting to place this exegetical rule as such rashly into question. It appears to us nonetheless, that it brings to expression a certain attitude typical of Bultmannian thinking which should, however, be questionable: In principle, Bultmann enquires behind the word about the representations and concepts that lie at the basis of the word. Such an appeal, in principle, however, must finally be rooted in a certain understanding of language and word: the word is not creative, it has a purely instrumental function: it serves as a means in order to express concepts, representations, and thoughts (GH 177).

Ott claims, then, that despite Bultmann's intention to overcome a subjectivist view of language, he continues to grant this viewpoint a significant degree of status. The consequence is that the ontological primacy of the biblical Word cannot be expressed in its fullness. For this reason, Ott turns to Heidegger, since Ott believes that Heidegger offers promising resources for restoring the Word to its primacy.

(b) Non-Objectifying Language

A discussion of Heidegger's conception of language can best begin with Heidegger's assertion that "language is the house of being".⁷⁰ By this, he means that language is not an accident or property but the very horizon in which being comes to presence. It serves, as it were, as the linguistic clearing in which reality as such subsists. From this, it follows that there is no such thing as an extra-linguistic

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," Basic Writings, trans. and ed. J. Glenn Gray et al. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 213.

world. Words, for example, are not like tags which are subsequently applied to things. Things are things and manifest as such because they subsist linguistically from the start.

Heidegger believes that the same holds true for humanity. It is, he says, only because humanity is first addressed by being that man can respond and speak. Heidegger's point is that human language is transcendently determined by that which "being speaks".⁷¹ Language, then, is not so much a human act as it is gift bestowed by being. For Heidegger, however, this perception has been radically eclipsed by the subjectivist turn in western metaphysics. The consequence is that the transcendental relation between language and being is now passed over and forgotten. This, he argues, is particularly manifest in the widespread assumption that language is instrumental. This view takes the position that words are instruments for expressing thoughts accompanied by conventional sounds. According to Heidegger, this account is subjectivistic in three related ways. First, it assumes that the function of language is to render manifest the deepest reaches of the individual's soul. Second, it assumes that language is ultimately rooted in man. And third, it interprets language as an ideal construction by means of

⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Way to Language," On the Way to Language, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row), 121.

which reality is presented to the subject. What, he claims, binds each of these assumptions together, is the common failure to recognize being as the transcendental condition of language.⁷²

Heidegger argues that the subjectivist view of language reaches its apex in the scientific-technological viewpoint. Here words are reduced to univocal signs which then get used as instruments at man's disposal. Defined by humanity, and produced by humanity, words are removed from their ontological matrix (i.e., being). The upshot is that language denies its indebtedness to being and being is passed over and forgotten.

Despite this forgetfulness, or better perhaps, destiny, Heidegger argues that there is a language that allows being to speak. This is the language of poetic speaking and thinking. To clarify Heidegger's position, Ott examines Heidegger's interpretation of "A Winter Evening", a poem by Georg Trakl. Trakl writes:

When the snow falls against the window,
The evening bell rings long,
The table is prepared for many,
And the house is well appointed.

Many a one on his travels
Approaches the gate on dark paths.
Golden blooms the tree of grace
From the earth's cool sap.

Wanderer quietly steps inside;
Pain has petrified the threshold.

⁷² Martin Heidegger, "Language," Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. and intro. by Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 192-94.

Then shines forth in pure brightness
 On the table bread and wine.⁷³ (DS 180)

As Ott observes, Heidegger speaks of Trakl's words as bespeak-ing the winter evening. The poem, then, is not to be understood as the sum total of signs that mirror the poet's image. Nor are its words simply those of the poet. Indeed Heidegger claims that Trakl never applies words to things at all, since his naming of things is a response to that which has granted their names already (i.e., being). In this respect, primal speaking, like primal thinking, is a response to that which being has already spoken. In effect, Trakl's naming is transcendently conditioned by that which the being speaks.

According to Heidegger, the poet's naming also permits the gathering of the "fourfold" (das Geviert). This is comprised of the earth, sky, mortals, and gods. We shall return to this in greater detail later. Suffice it to say here, that taken together, the fourfold constitutes what Heidegger calls the world. It is Heidegger's belief that in the poet's naming, the world is permitted to emerge. To this extent, genuine naming is also a kind of showing in which the unity of the fourfold (i.e., being as world) is gathered up in the thing. For example, in "A Winter Evening", Heidegger speaks of Trakl's naming of the snowfall as bringing man under

⁷³The translation of the poem is by Herbert Lindenberger. See Herbert Lindenberger, Georg Trakl (New York: Twayne Pu. Inc., 1971), 103.

the sky: of the vesper bell as taking him before the gods; and of the house and table as bringing him before the earth. Each thing, as it were, is a calling forth of the world.

Ott observes that Heidegger's account of the thing and world is structurally identical to his former distinction between beings and being (i.e., the ontological difference). Now, however, the ontological difference is articulated as the difference between things and the world. Of significance for us, is that Heidegger interprets this difference as the ontological source of language. Heidegger writes:

It gathers out of itself these two - world and thing . . . the difference is the bidding out of which every calling is first called. The bidding of the difference has always already gathered all naming within itself. That call gathered within itself . . . is the tolling . . . the gathered calling is the bidding as the one which the difference world-thing calls in the simplicity of their intimacy: Language speaks as the tolling of stillness... Language lives as the occurring difference out of the world and thing . . . Only to the extent mortals hear in the tolling of stillness, are they capable of speaking in this way. The mortal speaking is a naming calling, is the naming of thing and world out of the simplicity of the difference (DS 182).⁷⁴

For Heidegger, then, the event of language is the mysterious bridge between world and things that emerges in the speaking of mortals. As this bridge, being clings in its simplicity and silence to the multiple words of the poet.

⁷⁴. Ott took this quote from an unpublished manuscript of Heidegger's entitled "Die Sprache". It has since been published and translated as "Language", Poetry, Language, and Thought, trans. and intro. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 202ff. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 182.

Ott believes that it is the bridge-character of language that positivism neglects. By turning words into signs - the meanings of which are univocal - positivism neglects the fact that being occurs precisely as the difference between things and the world (DS 183). It ignores, in effect, that being, in principle, cannot be spoken as the univocal identity of a word and its object. In this regard, Heidegger observes that the poetic speaking of Trakl allows both a drawing near and a distance. The bell, for example, is called into presence (i.e., named) but in such a way that it is not reduced to a sign at man's disposal. It emerges instead in the aleithic mode of concealing and revealing appropriate to being itself.

Finally, it is important to note that the world summoned by the poet is ultimately more real than its positivistic counterpart. This, however, cannot be proven, since, according to Heidegger, proofs belong to the world of calculative thinking. Consequently, Heidegger appeals to a phenomenological showing in which he invites the reader to enter that experience which comes to pass through the poem (i.e., being). Heidegger's hope is that the reader will then see for himself that the world of positivism is a secondary and derivative abstraction.

Ott developed Heidegger's position in a paper presented to the Drew Consultation on Hermeneutics (1964). Here he argued that to draw a distinction between the world of the

imagination and the world of reality wrongly assumes that a criterion exists for drawing such a distinction. This, he argued, is the assumption of positivism when it restricts poetic speaking to the sphere of the imagination. For Ott, however, no such criterion exists, since there is no way of knowing where the real world "begins" and the real world "ceases".⁷⁵ We cannot, as it were, stand outside reality in order to draw this distinction.

Casting doubt on the positivist monopoly of reality, Ott proceeds with a phenomenological analysis of poetic rhythm. His point is to show, or better perhaps, to intimate, that the world evoked by the poet is ontologically prior to its positivist counterpart. Ott's argument hinges on the claim poetic rhythm is suggestive of the fact that poetic language occurs as historic event. This, he claims, is evidenced by the fact that a poem's words, unlike signs, are not interchangeable. It is insufficient, for example, when translating a poem, to restrict the translation to its words. Fidelity to its rhythm is a basic requirement too. Indeed Ott implies that failure here is to disengage the poet's words from the event of being (i.e., the world) which occasioned these words in the first place. In sum, Ott concludes that for those willing to hear, the world disclosed by the poet,

⁷⁵ Heinrich Ott, "Das Problem des nicht-objektivierenden Denkens und Redens in der Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 61, (1964): 332.

and the rhythm that this entails, are closer to experience than the static world of positivism.⁷⁶

(c) Theological Implications

Applied to theology, Ott believes that Heidegger's account of language, like Heidegger's analysis of thinking, can be instrumental in the development of a new hermeneutic. This, he argues, can bring about a reassessment of the relationship between exegesis, dogmatics, and preaching.

To begin with, Ott observes that by overcoming subjectivism, Heidegger relativizes the positivist view of language. According to Ott, this is significant, since traditional exegesis (i.e., historical-critical) has tended to reduce language to the status of an instrument. It has defined its role as getting behind the author's words in order to expose his intention. With Heidegger, however, this changes dramatically, since the author's intention no longer serves as the "sole criterion" for determining a text's meaning (GH 180). Now what speaks through the text itself (i.e., being) is more important than the author's own intention. Given this, Ott argues that theological hermeneutic should be more concerned with the Word of God than the opinions of the biblical witnesses. That is, it should focus instead on the Word of God that comes to pass in their speaking. The parallel with Heidegger is clear. Just as Heidegger discloses - -

⁷⁶ Ibid., 333.

the simplicity of being that is given in the words of the poets, so, too, theology should disclose the Word of God spoken by the biblical witnesses. Ott writes:

We do not have to interpret Paul, John, and the synoptics, Isaiah, and the Psalms etc. by finding out precisely what they meant by every single phrase. (That one can and even ought to do this up to a certain degree is not to be contested!) Rather, we must above all enter into dialogue with them, let ourselves be brought by them in front of the common subject-matter of revelation, so that we can also give an answer to God's Word (for only by answering are we actually in a position to really hear) - and all this, because we belong with them all to a *communio sanctorum* (DS 190).

To be sure, Ott concedes that differences exist between the various biblical witnesses. For Ott, however, the Word of God can still be heard through the diversity of their accounts.

Ott believes that Heidegger's analysis of language also illumines the fateful character of theological discourse. According to Ott, theological language - like that of being - is preordained by its own linguistic horizon. This, he claims, has always been the "linguistic room" (Sprachraum) of the Bible. Ott writes:

. . . witnesses are brought together in the canon of Holy Scripture. They compose, as it were, the 'linguistic room', the universe of discourse, the linguistic set of coordinates, in which the Church has always resided and moved in its faith, its preaching, its prayer, and its theology.⁷⁷

By claiming this, Ott makes the Bible the determinative horizon for subsequent talk about God. In other words, Ott assumes that biblical discourse continues to qualify talk

⁷⁷ Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?," 86.

about God in the present. Note here, that, true to Barth, Ott ties God's proseity to the "linguistic room" of the Bible. He rejects, in effect, in opposition to Bultmann, the complete identification of the Word of God and his Act. This ensures that the current proclamation is never exhaustive of God's Act in the past. Just as his promise never exhausts his proseity, so, too, the biblical Sprachraum is never exhausted by subsequent talk about God. It remains, as it were, "prototypical".⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism," 333. Here it should be noted that by tying the Sprachraum to the proseity of God (i.e., his Act in the 'there and then'), Ott rejects the Bultmannian claim that talk of God is thereby objectified. Bultmann, we recall, takes the position that talk of God in the 'there and then' stands outside our self-understanding and must, therefore, be objectifying. For Ott, however, the 'failure' to identify the Act of God with his Word need not entail this problem. He argues, for example, that Barth interprets the biblical narrative in the sense of myth, but not in the sense of an objectifying thought form (i.e., not like Bultmann). Ott writes:

To suppose that all verbal narration not oriented to the existentialist schema is objectifying is a mere dogma. The critically minded theologian should be cautious about subscribing to that dogma! For it is in the Word, in a narrative, that we first encounter the history of Jesus Christ. It is, in the proper sense of the Word, a myth, not myth in the sense of a construct of objectifying thought. It may be that Bultmann and his disciples would still call this 'objectifying'. But then the term would lose its pregnant significance and its epistemological value.

Heinrich Ott, "Objectification and Existentialism," 325.

Ott implies here that if Bultmann were to make the biblical narrative the basis of his hermeneutic, he would not be controlled by a non-biblical philosophy. He would see instead that the biblical narrative speaks of God's deeds in the "there and then" as continuing to qualify the present. This means, too, that he would reject those categories that restrict God's Act to the scope of the "here and now". If, moreover, Bultmann were to acknowledge that biblical narrative already consists of a non-objectifying language (i.e. myth,

11. Theology for the Sake of Preaching

We turn now to Ott's discussion of the relationship between theology and preaching which we had anticipated, but delayed until Heidegger's conception of thinking and language had been clearly set out and established. Our postponement was necessary, since it is Ott's belief that theology and preaching are ultimately hermeneutical, and that hermeneutic is intimately related to matters of thinking and language.

Ott writes:

The problem of hermeneutics raises the question: what is understanding, (thinking) and how does a given text become intelligible? The problem of language asks: what is the nature of language, and how quo modo, does a given text speak (to us)? The two problems converge; in fact, they are both finally identical.⁷⁹

Ott argues, in fact, that theology is hermeneutical throughout, since it is always "directed toward the preaching of the Church".⁸⁰ That is, its primary task is one of translation which ensures both fidelity to scripture and the relevance of the contemporary sermon. In this respect, Ott speaks of the hermeneutical arch that stretches from the biblical texts of

properly understood), talk of God's deeds in the "there and then" could still proceed in a non-objectifying way. That is, God's acts could then be related to our self-understanding in a way not possible with Bultmann's current categories.

⁷⁹ Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, trans. T. Dean 21 (March, 1966): 276.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

the past to the contemporary preaching of the Church.⁸¹

More specifically, Ott speaks of the hermeneutical arch as constituted by one understanding that enables, in turn, a continuum between theology and preaching. Ott places theology and preaching on the same continuum, because he interprets both as instances of primal thinking (i.e, both bridge the gap between thinking and experience). Nevertheless, Ott speaks of theology as the "reflective function of preaching", and as thus belonging to a higher "level of reflection".⁸²

Pressing his image of the arch, Ott situates systematic theology between exegesis on the one hand - whose primary concern is the text - and preaching on the other - the goal of which is to render the Gospel intelligible. Since all belong to the same arch (i.e., within the same reflective act), Ott believes that none can be practised without due regard for the other. According to Ott, this amounts to a corroboration of the hermeneutical circle, viz., that the interpretation of texts always entails presuppositions.⁸³

Systematic theology, for its part, is distinguished from exegesis and preaching on the basis that its concern is the biblical canon proper as opposed to specific texts. Seen

⁸¹ Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?," 79.

⁸² Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," 288.

⁸³ Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?," 83.

in this light, the role of systematic theology is to ensure that the exegesis and preaching of particular texts accords with the Gospel in toto. Ott is aware, of course, that the entire Gospel (i.e., incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection etc.) cannot be preached in the scope of a particular sermon. His aim is to ensure that specific texts be preached in conformity with the one "unspoken" Gospel.⁸⁴ In this respect, the relation between theology and preaching is not unlike the relation between an iceberg and its tip. Like the tip, the sermon is sustained by that which remains submerged (i.e., the one "unspoken" Gospel). For Ott, then, systematic theology is charged to discern the unity of the Gospel in the biblical texts that are preached. It assures, moreover, that the preaching of texts accords with the unity of the Gospel. In this regard, its task corresponds to Heidegger's search for the oneness of being that comes to pass in the various poems of the poet.

Because, moreover, the Gospel is "indivisible", it is not to be confused with a number of sacred facts. Ott observes here, for instance, that a Christian does not believe first in the incarnation, then the resurrection, and then the ascension.⁸⁵ These are experienced as specific structures of a unitary Gospel to which the unity of faith corresponds. To

⁸⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 98.

illustrate his point, Ott draws an analogy with friendship. Friendship, he notes, is not experienced as a series of discrete facts. It is experienced instead as a "genuine unity of meaning".⁸⁶ Indeed Ott claims that even if aspects of a particular friendship are isolated for further study, this occurs within the experience of friendship (i.e., within the unity of its meaning). Ott writes:

All this can be spelled out as I reflect: and yet as I do I am not simply distant, "objectifying", beside the subject matter but rather I am thinking as friend, from within my friendship. This complex phenomenon that can be unfolded is what I call the 'elements of meaning' or 'structures of meaning', which together make up the whole body of meaning. But in spite of the structural complexity I must be responsible for my friendship in each instance as one and a whole, as a single complex of meaning.⁸⁷

Similarly Ott argues that theology unfolds a variety of dogmatic loci from within the unity of faith (i.e., structures of meaning). This presupposes, as Ott argues elsewhere, that the gap between faith and reflection has been overcome.

As suggested earlier, the transference of the Gospel to the contemporary situation also entails a non-objectifying thinking and speaking. This, in effect, is the transcendental condition of effective preaching. In Ott's opinion, it is commonly assumed that thinking and language only occur in an

⁸⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

objectifying way, that is, as a thinking or talking "about".⁸⁸ According to Ott, what both share in common is the suppression of "actuality", or better perhaps, presence. Ott cites the thinking of historicism as a case in point. Since thinking is invariably linguistic, his criticism of historicism is also aimed directly at the positivist view of language.

Typically Ott takes the view that by holding the object at arm's length from the subject, historicism prevents the object from transforming the existence of the subject. It is kept, as it were, locked in the past, and prevented from becoming present. For Ott, however, non-objectifying thinking and speaking both permit a genuine encounter with the object. They do not, as it were, suppress its "actuality" but enable it to speak and reach into the present. This, he argues, is crucial if we are to hear again that which grasped the first biblical witnesses. In short, then, a non-objectifying thinking and speaking is the transcendental condition of effective proclamation (i.e., for crossing the hermeneutical arch).

The hermeneutical transfer, or the becoming present of the "object", is also discussed, if somewhat more implicitly, in "The Historical Jesus and the Ontology of History". Here again Ott attacks the positivist view of history, that is, a view of reality that impedes the transfer - -

⁸⁸ Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," 290.

of the Gospel. Simply put, Ott claims that there is no such thing as a positivistic history, since all we have are historical pictures or impressions:

. . . our experience of reality always has to do with pictures and never with facts (we use the term 'facts' consistently in the sense of bruta facta). Reality always impresses itself upon us through pictures, perhaps in different ways to different people at different times. As it impresses itself upon us it creates within us an exposition, an interpretation, an explanation, a point of view in the widest sense: this does not even need to be conscious. When we receive an impression of reality, we create for ourselves a picture of it. In this sense, Nietzsche's dictum against positivism is justified. 'There are no such things as facts, only interpretations'. However, a picture does not first arise when we create a picture for ourselves. Instead reality itself is the first to impress itself upon us in the form of pictures. Therefore the picture is not at all something which originates only when the given facts have been examined. The pictures are primary; the facts are a secondary abstraction.⁸⁹

Finally, despite his indebtedness to Heidegger, Ott rejects the idea that theological hermeneutic is to be understood as the specific instance of a "general hermeneutic".⁹⁰ While Ott acknowledges that a specific hermeneutic may shed light on how a text speaks, Ott believes that its actual value can never be determined in advance. This means that each text has to be read on its own terms. Only then can one determine whether or not a general hermeneutic can be of any assistance. Ott's assumption is that understanding can never be placed in an "a

⁸⁹ Heinrich Ott, "Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und die Ontologie der Geschichte," Theologische Studien, 62, (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1960), 24.

⁹⁰ Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," 292.

priori anthropological schema".⁹¹ Like human existence itself, understanding is never at our disposal. Or as Ott puts it, we can never know "in advance what will be intelligible and what will not".⁹² Consequently, any hermeneutic, including Heidegger's, must always be held in suspension.

In sum, the constitutive components of the hermeneutical arch (e.g., primal thinking and language) can always be modified and changed. Theology, then, in the service of preaching is best described as the unceasing attempt to articulate more clearly (i.e., concretely) the object of revelation.

12. The Fourfold (das Geviert) and the Thing (Das Ding): The Unity of Corporeality and Significance

Ott's analysis in Denken und Sein concludes with an examination of the theological implications of Heidegger's notion of "world". Ott believes that Heidegger's notion world bridges the gap between significance and corporeality; a gap, we recall, of which Ott had been critical of Bultmann. Ott believes that by bridging this gap, Heidegger offers a novel conception of reality that paves the way for a more worldly articulation of biblical reality.

Ott's discussion focuses, for the most part, on Heidegger's analysis of "the thing" (das Ding), since it is here, above all, that his account of the world is disclosed.

⁹¹ Ibid., 282.

⁹² Ibid.

It is here, moreover, that Heidegger offers his most radical attempt to relativize the positivist conception of reality.

To begin with, Ott observes that Heidegger interprets the world as a specific horizon of being. The world, then, is not to be understood as a place in which things subsist. It inheres instead in the very being of things (i.e., it is transcendental).

The notion of world, as just suggested, is intimately related to Heidegger's conception of "the thing". This relation is developed at some length in an essay of the same title. Heidegger's analysis starts with the claim that the scientific-technological viewpoint fails to think things in their original "nearness" or reality.⁹³ While modern science has enabled humanity to cover great distances, it has, he argues, remained oblivious to the original nearness of things. Precisely for this reason, Heidegger proposes a phenomenological investigation that will expose the thing in its thingness. To assist in his investigation, Heidegger takes the everyday example of a jug.

Heidegger begins by describing the jug in terms of what it is not. The jug, he argues, cannot be understood as an "object of representation".⁹⁴ Conceived as such, the jug

⁹³ Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," Vorträge und Aufsätze (Pfullingen: 1954), 164. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 205.

⁹⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," 166. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 206.

is an entity with sides, a handle, and a space. For Heidegger, however, this account is not yet sufficient, since the jug by itself is always independent of our objectifying representation. To say, however, that the jug is itself when it stands on its own is still insufficient, since this is possible only because the jug was first produced by a potter. Nevertheless, Heidegger claims that the thingness of the jug is always more than its technological production:

The jug is not a vessel because it was made; rather, the jug had to be made because it is this holding vessel. The making, it is true, lets the jug come into its own. But that which is the jug's nature is its own, is never brought about by its making.⁹⁵

Prior, then, to the jug by itself, Heidegger claims that it is given as an idea to the potter. But, according to Heidegger, this, too, is insufficient, since it fails to show how the jug actually comes to be.

Having described what the jug is not, Heidegger turns to a more positive description. Here he focuses on the emptiness of the jug as enabling the holding of the wine. For Heidegger, in fact, the emptiness of the jug is the primary determinant in the potter's moulding of the clay. Properly understood, then, the jug is neither the product of the potter nor a function of his clay. It emerges, rather, from the emptiness of the jug itself.

— The emptiness of the jug is further described as con-

⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger "Das Ding," 170. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 206.

sisting of two aspects: a "receiving" (das Nehmen) and a "retaining" (das Einbehalten). These, in turn, are traced by Heidegger to the jug's capacity to pour. And this, for Heidegger, is the jug's most proper nature (i.e., its thingness).

Not surprisingly, Heidegger believes that the thingness of the jug could never be revealed by the positivist viewpoint of science. By insisting that the jug is actually filled with air, Heidegger claims that it would ignore the fact that the jug is truly empty precisely in its readiness for the "receiving" and the "pouring" of the wine (i.e. its thingness). Here his remarks constitute an attack on the positivist tendency to study things in abstraction from their lived context of meaning.⁹⁶

If the pouring of the wine restores the jug to itself, it also gathers what Heidegger calls the "fourfold". This consists of four dimensions: the earth, sky, mortals, and gods. Taken together, they constitute the world. Heidegger writes:

The giving of the outpouring can be a drink. It gives water, it gives wine to drink. The spring stays on in the water of the gift. In the spring the rock dwells, and in the rock dwells the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the grain and dew of the sky. In the water of the spring dwells the marriage of sky and earth. It stays on in the wine given by the fruit of the wine, the fruit in which the earth's nourishment and the sky's sun are betrothed to one another. In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, sky and earth dwell. But the gift of the

⁹⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," 170. Referred to by Heinrich Ott in DS 207.

outpouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell. The gift of the pouring out is drink for mortals. It quenches their thirst . . . But the jug's gift is also given at times for consecration. If the pouring is for consecration, then it does not still a thirst. It stills and elevates the celebration of the feast The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods. The gift of the outpouring as libation is the authentic gift The consecrated libation is what our word for strong outpouring flow, 'gush', really designates: gift and sacrifice In the gift of outpouring that is drink, mortals stay in their own way, they who receive back the length of giving as the gift of donation. In the gift of the outpouring, mortals and divinities each dwell in their different ways. Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring, mortals and divinities each dwell in their different ways. Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell together all at once. These four, at one, because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold.⁹⁷

Here the jug gathers the fourfold in its pouring. It gathers the earth growing grapes, the sky bestowing rains, the mortals whose thirst it quenches, and the gods for whom its wine serves as a libation. In short, the world gathers as the fourfold in the "thinging" of "the thing".⁹⁸

Ott argues that of crucial importance here is the fact that historicity is no longer determined solely by humankind. As one point of the fourfold, man is now conditioned by both the historicity of things and the world. By contrast, in

⁹⁷ Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," 170. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 207.

⁹⁸ Martin Heidegger, "Language," Poetry, Language, and Thought trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 200.

Being and Time, the historicity of both was exclusively derived from humankind. Things, for instance, were interpreted as tools (die Zeuge) whose historicity stemmed from their human function. So, too, the world was conceived as the utensilar whole in which these tools were used. With Heidegger's conception of "the thing", however, historicity is now ascribed to the world and things as such. This means, too, that the gap between significance and corporeality is now overcome, since the corporeality of things is taken up into historic reality (DS 218).

Heidegger's point, of course, is not that historicity occurs in man's absence, but that it no longer arises exclusively through him (DS 222). He rejects, in effect, what Ott calls a "pure personalism" in which historic reality is restricted to personal relations (DS 222).

Not surprisingly, Ott believed that Heidegger's analysis offered fruitful resources for theology. Specifically, Ott believed that Heidegger offered a novel conception of reality that could bridge the gap between the soteriological and cosmological orders, or better perhaps, significance and corporeality. As Ott observes, the split between these orders only became a problem with the rise of modern science. With the rise of science, reality was split into two distinct spheres: the existential and the objective. These, in turn, as noted earlier, created a split between historic existence and the corporeal order. For Ott, however, this split is

nowhere to be found in the New Testament. Hence Ott turns to Heidegger's analysis of "the thing" and the view of reality that the thing calls forth (i.e., the fourfold). In a word, Ott believes that the ontological conceptuality underlying the thing can be used to develop a more worldly theology. This, he notes, had not been possible for Bultmann, since he assumed that one must choose between interpreting reality in a personalist-existential or cosmological context (GH 48-50). The consequence, for Bultmann, was a disembodied theology (GH 18). For Ott, however, Heidegger's turn to "the thing" introduces a novel conception of reality in which the corporeal order is open to historicity (i.e., transcendence). This means that teachings like the bodily resurrection, the Last Supper, and the Kingdom of God can now be interpreted in such a way that they need not conform to historical or naturalistic criteria (DS 224). That is, they need not be "stripped" of their corporeality in order to be accepted as true (DS 224).

PART 11

RESPONSE AND COUNTER-RESPONSE: OTT AND HIS CRITICS

The response to Ott's correlation of Barth and Heidegger was not short in forthcoming. His alignment was criticized by Barthians and Bultmannians and ultimately by Heidegger too. In the following chapter we shall explain and assess Ott's most significant critics and, when applicable, examine his response to his critics. It is our contention that the criticism of Ott's programme stems largely from his failure to clarify the relationship between philosophy and theology. The consequence is that Ott leaves the impression that Heidegger's philosophy determines both the content and character of his own theology. Despite this deficiency, we propose that the theological propriety of Ott's programme can still be justified by clarifying his account of the relationship between philosophy and theology. We note, however, that such a clarification in no way guarantees the theological efficacy of Ott's project.¹

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See also John Cobb Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant?," The Later Heidegger and Theology, vol. 1, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 178.

We begin our second section with Barth's and Bultmann's responses to Ott's programme. We then discuss other responses to Ott's appropriation of Heidegger. We do so in terms of four general themes: (a) the relationship of philosophy to theology, (b) God, revelation, and being, (c) the issue of non-objectifying thinking, and (d) theological hermeneutic.

1. Karl Barth

Barth's references to Heidegger are, for the most part, critical. It is hardly surprising, then, that Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth met with such a luke warm reception in Barthian quarters. Barth, for example, characterizes Ott as a theological existentialist despite Ott's criticism of the anthropological interpretation of Heidegger.² Indeed Barth makes it perfectly clear that contemporary existentialism is "not the philosophy par excellence [that]

² Upon learning, for instance, of Ott's appointment to his chair at the University of Basel, Barth wrote the following to Helmut Gollwitzer:

In the face of the thrust of our theological existentialists I increasingly feel only more disgust and abhorrence. . . . But that is what is demanded today. Does it make much sense to write a thirteenth and fourteenth volume if I could not stop this deluge with my previous twelve volumes? Are not other and new voices such as your own (I am pleased with your ontology and the theology) needed to check it? Meanwhile I . . . sit at a little table in the corner laughing in an artful but friendly fashion, knowing the facts, getting a respectful hearing--but in the end not listened to.

Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Heinrich Stoevesandt, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 61.

merits our . . . exclusive attention".³

Barth's discussion of Heidegger in the Church Dogmatics focuses primarily on his conception of das Nichts. Heidegger, he argues, elevates nothing to the status of a god. In this sense, Barth claims that Heidegger's thought is atheistic in principle. It is difficult, he argues, to know how God could find a place in Heidegger's schema of beings, Dasein, and nothingness.⁴ In this respect, Barth believes that Heidegger's development has been thoroughly consistent. He observes, for example, that the identification of being and nothing in What is Metaphysics? remains unchanged almost twenty years later. Indeed Barth believes that Heidegger's identification of being and nothing is tantamount to declaring the devil as "the principle of . . . being and existence".⁵ According to Barth, this is to neglect the true reality of nothingness of which Jesus Christ is the exclusive ground of disclosure.

In "Philosophie und Theologie", an essay published a year after Denken und Sein, Barth readdresses, if only implicitly, the issue of Heidegger's significance for theology. To begin with, Barth claims that the relationship between philosophy and theology is characterized by a moment

³ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3/3 § 50 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), 334.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 347-48.

of unity (Miteinander) and a moment of opposition (Gegeneinander).⁶ Both, he argues, are "with one another" in as much as both confront one truth and one reality. The philosopher, therefore, ought not to be construed as the advocatus diaboli but as the advocatus hominis et mundi.⁷ The theologian, moreover, if only secondarily, is obliged to be conversant with the reality of the world. This, he argues, is because the world is God's witness reconciled to himself in Christ. It is Barth's conviction, moreover, that philosophy and theology can draw on each other's insights, even if these insights are used in a way that is contrary to their original intention. Neither, he argues, should resent this fact, since each is ultimately on a different path.⁸

According to Barth, their paths are different because theology starts with God and philosophy starts with man. It is true, he notes, that philosophy is acquainted with theology's movement from the sphere of the above to the below. For Barth, however, this is at best a pseudo-acquaintance, because the philosopher's notion of what is above is contained already in his notion of what is below. Barth writes:

He [the theologian] overlooks the fact that the movement from above to below which is absolutely primary for

⁶ Karl Barth, "Philosophie und Theologie," Philosophie und Christliche Existenz: Festschrift für Heinrich Barth (Basel and Stuttgart: Hebling and Lichtenhan, 1960), 93.

⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁸ Ibid., 103.

theologian is not as such alien to the philosopher. The theologian claims to see, however, that this movement is precisely not the primary movement in the thinking and talking of the philosopher but rather is the secondary one. Primary for the philosopher is the movement which for him, the theologian, can only be the counter-movement running from below to above. He sees the philosopher among the most various labels and titles as caught in a powerful rising upward - as it were from appearance to idea, from existing to being, from reason to logos, from existence to transcendence - always with the presupposition and with the reassurance or at least the indication that for him the second is in one way or another also included in the first. Therefore the second must necessarily also be considered and developed in the interpretation of the first in order then to return to his first through a condescension which has been enabled by the elevation to the second.⁹

Here Barth further defines the moment of opposition between philosophy and theology, in general, and Heidegger and Ott, in particular. Barth, it appears, would include Heidegger among those philosophers who move from Dasein to Sein despite his intentions to the contrary. That is, it seems likely that Barth would argue that Heidegger's notion of being is theologically insignificant because it is already contained in the self-understanding of Dasein.¹⁰ It should be noted,

⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰ It is noteworthy, for instance, that despite Barth's reference to Heidegger as an "existentialist", and despite his claim that Heidegger relies upon the ego cogito as the basis of his thinking (See Church Dogmatics, vol. 3/3 § 50, trans. G.W. Bromiley et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961), 343.) Barth at times does acknowledge Heidegger's intention to interpret man, or better perhaps, Dasein, in the broader context of nothingness or being. Barth writes:

Nothing is the basis, criterion and elucidation of everything, and in relation to it that which is can only be elusive and evanescent, and man can only be a locum tenens. . . . In the 'God' whom Heidegger and Sartre suppress by providing a substitute for Him, the Church cannot possibly recognize the One whom it calls God. Nor

however, that even if one affirms the legitimacy of Barth's motive, his appraisal need not preclude a selective use of Heidegger. This is particularly true, since Barth himself permits the use of philosophical concepts in a manner contrary to their original intention. Nonetheless, Barth, it seems, prematurely dismisses Heidegger's significance for theology. He fails, in effect, to be true to his own line of thinking. As we shall see, Barth's rather summary dismissal of Heidegger is adopted by some of his disciples.

can it recognize Him in the positive aspects of these mythologies, in their proposed substitutes for Him, whether it be said that man or that nothing is the first and last word, the being from which all things and in which they find their end. . . . (italics mine) In a "Letter on Humanism" written in 1946 to one of Sartre's French followers, and published in 1947 in the appendix to Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit, Heidegger does in fact effect this replacement, introducing the 'truth of being' as the subject of exactly the same assertions as in 1929 were made concerning nothing. In place of the 'nihilation of nothing' there now emerges with equal intensity and like effect the 'affirmation of being' (das Lichten des Seins), and existence as projection into nothing is now 'ecstatic' ek-sistere entry into the truth of being.'

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics vol. 3/3 § 50 trans. G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961), 343-48.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Barth recognized Heidegger's intention to interpret Dasein in the broader context of being. In this respect, Robinson's claim that Barth falls prey to an "existential misunderstanding" would appear to be too strong. One could argue, in fact, that it is precisely because Barth recognizes the later Heidegger's intention viz. to situate Dasein in the context of Sein, that he drives a wedge so firmly between his and Heidegger's work. He is determined, in effect, to stave off the kind of correspondence that was subsequently enacted by Ott.

2. Rudolf Bultmann

Bultmann's response was outlined in a letter sent to Ott shortly after Denken und Sein was published.¹¹ Bultmann begins his letter by noting that Ott's interpretation of the later Heidegger is important and of value. On the whole, however, Bultmann continues to defend the position that the early Heidegger is of greater value for theology.

To begin with, Bultmann is dubious of Ott's description of the relationship between philosophy and theology as one that is dialogical. According to Bultmann, this cannot be the case since philosophy and theology are not engaged in the identical search for the same truth. Each is qualitatively different. There is, he argues, "no common problem", since theology is concerned with how a sinner "can stand before God".¹² Nonetheless, Bultmann acknowledges that philosophy is related to theology. He argues, however, that this relation is formal only and therefore different from the material relation of the kind envisaged by Ott (see pp. 54-57).

Characteristically, Bultmann takes the position that the role of philosophy is to clarify the ontological structures of human existence. He notes, moreover, that a

¹¹ James Robinson summarizes Bultmann's letter in "The German Discussion," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 64.

¹² Ibid., 64.

clarification of the relationship between the structures of human existence and those of revelation will assist those persons outside the Church in understanding its message. For Bultmann, however, this by no means entails a dialogue with philosophy. Philosophy, he argues, can only establish the formal nature or the "how" of man's being; it is never concerned with the ontic content of individual choices. Theology, then, is dependent upon philosophy in this limited and formal sense. It is Bultmann's belief, however, that Ott is unduly controlled by the material content of Heidegger's philosophy. Here he points to Ott's admission that he is dependent upon the historical analysis of being that is worked out by Heidegger.¹³

Bultmann sheds further doubt on the legitimacy of Ott's proposal by arguing that philosophy, in principle, is unable to discuss certain theological problems. Philosophy, he argues, is limited to the problem of the eternity or finitude of the world. Consequently, it is unable to admit either the notion of God as Creator or the idea of world as creation. Philosophy, moreover, cannot acknowledge the reality of a revelation that is both historical and eschatological. In this regard, Bultmann argues that Ott fails to explain the connection between philosophy and eschatology. For Bultmann, moreover, if the history of philosophy occurs

¹³ Ibid. 65.

as the history of being, then theological reflection is uniquely tied to the history of revelation.¹⁴ Again, Bultmann's point is that Ott confuses philosophical and theological concerns.

Bultmann also argues that the later Heidegger seriously devalues the personal character of existence. Here he points to Heidegger's emphasis on the sovereignty of being as decidedly restricting the notion of responsibility. By ascribing, moreover, the individual's historicity to the phenomenon of being, Bultmann believes that Heidegger leaves the former seriously unclarified. The problem, he claims, is further aggravated, because the later Heidegger fails to speak of guilt and responsibility. This is crucial, since both of these structures are presupposed by the Church's proclamation.

Bultmann believes that the same holds true of Heidegger's analysis of "the thing" (das Ding). Bultmann's point is that things speak not so much of being (das Sein) as they do of their involvement with persons. A jug, he notes, may reveal the relationship to a friend from whom the jug was inherited. A thing, in fact, may reveal a whole range of concerns including "duty and responsibility, good and evil, guilt and forgiveness".¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., 67.

¹⁵ Ibid., 66-7.

John Macquarrie implies a similar criticism writing that Ott's appropriation of Heidegger "consorts ill with the Barthian, christocentric elements in his theology". Here I take Macquarrie to mean the personalist dimension of

In a similar vein, Bultmann takes issue with Ott's discussion of language. Bultmann argues that Ott's devaluation of the early, more personalist Heidegger, encourages an "antithetic" reading of Heidegger's account of language.¹⁶ According to Bultmann, this results in minimizing the fact that being comes to expression solely through the speaking of persons. Indeed Bultmann notes that the discussion of language as an inter-personal phenomenon is curiously absent from Ott's entire enquiry.¹⁷

In sum, Bultmann continues to emphasize the personal character of being, language, and things. This reflects his continuing conviction that the existential analysis of Being and Time is of greater value than Heidegger's later work.

In his response to Bultmann, Ott acknowledges that the later Heidegger lacks a personalist dimension. It is true, he notes, that Heidegger's account of language is developed in terms of our relation to things and the world. But this, he argues, is nothing that Heidegger would deny, since at no point is Heidegger's thought self-contained or complete. Indeed Ott believes that Heidegger's analysis of language

Barth's theology, and indeed theology in general. See John Macquarrie, Studies in Christian Existentialism, (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1966), 268.

¹⁶ "The German Discussion," 66.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

could easily be broadened to include the interpersonal. In a similar vein, Ott also acknowledges the lack of concepts such as guilt and responsibility in Heidegger's later thought. Again, however, Ott believes that this is not a problem, since Being and Time - which includes these concepts - is consistent with the later Heidegger.¹⁸ Here Ott appears to be open to integrating the personalist dimension of the early Heidegger into his later thought.

Having reviewed the responses of both Barth and Bultmann to Ott's programme thusfar, we now turn to the first of four themes that shape our discussion of Ott's analysis of Heidegger.

3. Philosophy and Theology

Ott's formulation of the relationship between philosophy and theology was roundly criticized by both wings of the theological spectrum. The left leaning Bultmannians and the orthodox Barthians of the right were consistently critical of Ott's proposal. Ott, we recall, spoke of the theologian as the "personal union" of philosophy and theology (DS 14). There was, he argued, no need to exclude a more intimate connection between philosophy and theology, since both shared the common theme of existence. Ott, of course, would never accept philosophy as the structural basis of theology. For Ott, however, this is no basis for reducing

¹⁸ Ibid., 218.

philosophy to a merely formal status (e.g. Bultmann) or banishing philosophy from theology altogether (e.g. Barth's more conservative pupils).

As we shall see, both the left and the right have characterized Ott's formulations as uncritical and as failing to affirm the necessary priority of theology. The Bultmannians, for their part, have tended to reduce the philosophy of Heidegger to the status of the law (i.e., in opposition to the Gospel). It is hardly surprising, then, that Ott's attempt to exhibit more substantial connections between Heidegger's thought and the Gospel has been dismissed by Bultmannians from the outset. The Barthians, for their part, have tended to fear the conflation of God's sovereignty with Heidegger's concern for the sovereignty of being. Consequently, they have drawn a sharp distinction between ontology and revelation with the effect of excluding Heidegger's significance for theology. As we shall see, this has suppressed a legitimate concern for ontological issues.

Our discussion of Ott's formulation of the relationship between philosophy and theology is not restricted to those who have responded to Denken und Sein. Ott is not the first theologian to examine Heidegger's significance for theology. As noted, Barth and Bultmann (the former less explicitly), had already established their own positions. Since then, their contributions have been supplemented by students such as Hermann Diem and Ernst Fuchs, a Barthian and

Bultmannian, respectively. Brief mention of their relation to Heidegger (amongst others) will enable us (i) to see those to whom Ott's proposal is addressed and (ii) to appreciate the distinctive character of Ott's formulation of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Our analysis of particular members of either school is necessarily brief, since we restrict our discussion to their assessment of Heidegger and/or their account of the relationship between philosophy and theology. We conclude with a brief discussion of Heidegger's evaluation of the relationship between philosophy and theology.

(a) The Bultmannians

Ernst Fuchs first responded to Heidegger in an essay written in 1933.¹⁹ Here he distinguished sharply between the philosophy of Heidegger and the content of theology. In Fuchs's opinion, Heidegger's thought was valuable only in so far as it made theology conscious of anthropological and metaphysical boundaries. This, he argued, did not amount to a dependency on philosophy, since Heidegger's remarks should already be evident on the basis of biblical exegesis.²⁰ For Fuchs, moreover, Heidegger's question, "why is there something

¹⁹ Ernst Fuchs, "Theologie und Metaphysik: Zu der theologischen Bedeutung der Philosophie Heideggers und Grisebachs," Heidegger und die Theologie, (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967), 136-46.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

rather than nothing?' is qualitatively different from God's address to humanity. According to Fuchs, theology's concern is not the Seinsfrage but the Word of God in the Church. To confuse the two is, he argues, a "blasphemy . . . against the Creator".²¹

In recent works, Fuchs has become increasingly indebted to the later Heidegger's analysis of hermeneutic and language.²² He has adopted, in effect, Heidegger's position that human existence is essentially linguistic and that hermeneutic is the linguistic articulation of the former. He accepts, moreover, Bultmann's programme of existential interpretation but now makes language appreciably more central in his analysis of humanity. He takes, for example, Heidegger's distinction between inauthentic and authentic existence and applies this, respectively, to objectifying and primal language. The former, in turn, is correlated with the life of unfaith and the latter with faith as this is expressed in the New Testament's words of Jesus.

It is clear, then, that Fuchs no longer restricts Heidegger's relevance to illustrating the limits of the

²¹ Ibid., 144-45.

²² See, for example, Ernst Fuchs, Marburger Hermeneutik, (Bad Cannstatt: J.C.B. Mohr, 1954) and Zum hermeneutischen Problem in der Theologie (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1959). See also James M. Robinson, The New Hermeneutic, (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 56. For my account of Fuchs, I am also indebted to the summary by John Williams in Martin Heideggers Philosophy of Religion (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1977), 21-22.

Seinsfrage. Nonetheless, Fuchs affirms his ongoing commitment to the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel with its repercussions for theology's relationship to Heidegger. In his review, for example, of Denken und Sein, Fuchs rejects the criticism brought by Ott that he fails to pursue Heidegger's path of thinking to its logical or natural outcome. This, he argues, was never his intention, since Heidegger's thought is an instance of the law and thus equivalent to works-righteousness.²³

Gerhard Ebeling, for his part, argues that the later Heidegger places both philosophy and theology in an entirely new context. Ebeling claims that theology has collaborated in the death of God by aligning itself with the metaphysical tradition. Like Fuchs, he, too, appropriates Heidegger's significance for theology in a manner consistent with the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel. "Theology", he argues, "is oriented by the distinction between Law and Gospel as the basic experience of faith".²⁴ Not surprisingly, then, Ebeling restricts Heidegger's philosophy to the status of the law. Indeed Ebeling argues that Heidegger's philosophy is only true in so far as it reveals what theology means by the

²³ Ernst Fuchs, "Denken und Sein," Philosophische Rundschau 8 (1960): 107-8.

²⁴ Gerhard Ebeling, "Verantwortung des Glaubens in Begegnung mit dem Denken M. Heideggers: Thesen zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 58 (1961): 122.

law. And even here, Ebeling believes that it cannot reveal the law's true meaning, since this is given only in relation to the Gospel. Nonetheless, Ebeling argues that Heidegger's thought is of assistance to theology in (a) interpreting humanity in its sinful state (b) and exhibiting the limits of the Seinsfrage.

For Ebeling, moreover, Heidegger's analysis of language is also significant for theology. It shows, he argues, that theology must re-establish the event-character of the Word while resisting all forms of metaphysical speaking.²⁵ For Ebeling, in fact, the "overcoming of metaphysics" is not a principle first proposed by Heidegger. He activates an impulse that is already at work in the theology of Martin Luther.²⁶

Eberhard Jüngel - a former pupil of Ernst Fuchs - also responds to Ott's analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology. To begin with, Jüngel argues that Ott's account of the dialogue between Heidegger and theology is remarkably one-sided.²⁷ While Ott uses Heidegger to criticize contemporary, and particularly Bultmannian theology,

²⁵ Ibid., 121-24.

²⁶ Ibid., 123.

²⁷ Eberhard Jüngel, "Der Schritt zurück," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 58 (1961): 107. See also Ernst Fuchs, "Denken und Sein?," 108.

Jüngel claims that he puts no questions to Heidegger.²⁸ For Jüngel, moreover, Ott's analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology is inconsistent. On the one hand, philosophy and theology are described as "independent"; on the other, their boundaries are said to have become "unclear".²⁹ According to Jüngel, this is particularly evident in Ott's reference to das Christliche.³⁰ Ott had argued in Denken und Sein that the separation between philosophy and theology could no longer be sharp, since das Christliche had become an integral dimension of occidental consciousness. Jüngel believes that Ott's failure to define das Christliche raises some serious questions. Das Christliche, he argues, could mean a number of things, including Karl Jaspers' "philosophical faith" in which biblical concepts are reappropriated in a philosophical context.³¹ This, he claims, should serve as a warning that what is required is a clear distinction between matters of faith and philosophy.³²

Jüngel also takes issue with Ott's use of the transcendental method in his approach to Heidegger's philosophy. Jüngel observes that Ott interprets "the step back" as

²⁸ Ibid., 107.

²⁹ Ibid., 115. See also Schubert Ogden's remarks in this regard. "Theology in Ott and Bultmann", 158.

³⁰ Ibid., 112.

³¹ Ibid., 112.

³² Ibid., 113.

an attempt to reveal the transcendental condition of the history of human thought (i.e., being). For Jüngel, however, this is a fundamental error, since the transcendental method is still caught in the subjectivistic thinking of metaphysics. It ignores, in effect, the intention behind Heidegger's turn (die Kehre). Jüngel writes:

The transcendental question in Ott's sense does not ask primarily: how does it stand with a thing, but how does it come to be that this thing is precisely thought as this . . .? Thinking, according to Ott, is asked about its presuppositions by 'the thinker of thinking' [i.e., Heidegger]. To ask about presuppositions, however, means to ask about 'suppositions' (acts of positing). Whoever understands being as the transcendental supposition of thinking, has therefore understood it has a 'supposition'. If being is understood as the presupposition of thinking, then the ontological difference between being and beings, despite all contrary assurances, is misconstrued. Thinking, then, determines the transcendental relation of 'thinking and being' - being becomes that presupposition of thinking which the transcendentially questioning thinking of itself presupposes. The subjectivism of metaphysics is not overcome but crowned under the veil of its opposite. If Ott thinks further, however, then he takes a 'step back' into metaphysics, but precisely not into the essence of metaphysics.³³

Finally, Jüngel rejects Ott's position that his own account of the relationship between philosophy and theology is essentially that of Barth's. Jüngel argues that Ott misinterprets Barth's openness to a philosophia christiana as allowing for the union of philosophy and theology in the theologian's person. It is true, he argues, that a theologian can reflect upon a philosophical text in a philosophical way. But this, he claims, in no way means that the theologi-

³³ Ibid., 109.

an's self-understanding is that of the philosopher. According to Jüngel, the theologian remains theologian. This holds true even if theology - interpreted as a specific faculty - is rendered superfluous by other sciences in the Church.³⁴

Hans Jonas, a former student of Heidegger and colleague of Bultmann, also rejects Ott's account of the relationship between philosophy and theology. In Jonas's opinion, Ott's assumption that theological thinking is a "special and applied case" of the relationship between primal thought and being amounts to a reversal of the proper relation between philosophy and theology.³⁵ According to Jonas, the adequacy of theology should never be determined on the basis of its correspondence to a particular secular philosophy:

. . . the turning around of the relationship as such is by no means a matter of indifference (as one might say 'correspondence is correspondence from whatever end I start'), for it reverses the whole locus of the standard of adequacy - of what has to be measured by what.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 113-114.

³⁵ Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," Review of Metaphysics vol. 18, no. 2 (December 1964): 213.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 213. Or as Gethmann-Siefert writes: Scheint doch die Philosophie bei Ott selbst die Theologie erst in ihr Wesen zu entlassen und auch der Einzelinterpretation so alles vorzugeben. Formale Setzung einer Disziplin bestimmt ja auch deren Inhalte. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Theologie im Denken Martin Heideggers, (Munich: Karl Alber, 1974), 167.

Indeed Jonas claims that Heidegger's philosophy is indebted to theology and not the other way around.³⁷ According to Jonas, a strictly phenomenological analysis could never disclose concepts such as "fallenness" or "guilt". Hence philosophy, he argues, ought to determine the validity of Heidegger's appropriation on purely philosophical grounds. The crucial question for the theologian, however, is whether or not Heidegger has altered theological concepts to such a degree that they can no longer be legitimately reappropriated by theology.³⁸

Jonas also takes issue with Heidegger and Ott for blurring the distinction between the ontological and the ontic, or in this case, the distinction between philosophy as the science of being and theology as the science of faith. Because being (das Sein) cannot be hypostasized (i.e., cannot be conceived as a particular being), and because God is a particular being for both Heidegger and Ott, Jonas concludes that no analogy between God and being should be possible at all. Jonas observes, however, that at the meeting of Old Marburgers in 1960, Heidegger advanced the formulation that "philosophical thinking is to being as theological thinking is to the self-revealing God".³⁹ This, according to Jonas,

³⁷ See also James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 39.

³⁸ Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 214.

³⁹ Ibid., 222.

would seem to affirm the analogy established by Ott between thought and being on the one hand, and theology and revelation on the other. In short, Jonas argues that neither Heidegger nor Ott is true to the cleavage between philosophy and theology that the ontological difference requires. We shall discuss the legitimacy of Heidegger's analogy in greater detail later.

Finally, worthy of note is Jonas's claim that theologians can learn from Heidegger, only to the degree that he grasps the truths of this world:

. . . its truth is at best the truth of this world; and of this world that the Christian has learned that it certainly does have its law (be it reason or fate) and its being and its power and its voice, or voices rather, as the plural 'the archons of the world' suggests; and so he can indeed learn from those doctrines, and the more so the truer they are, what he has to contend with - the nature of the principalities and powers - and what he himself is subject to, in so far as he too is a creature and citizen of this world. But adopt their vista for the understanding of his subject matter? No. This must be radically other to it.⁴⁰

Although himself not a Christian, Jonas situates Heidegger's significance for theology within a framework consistent with the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel.

Ott's response to the Bultmannian reception of Heidegger focused upon the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel. This, he argues, is raised to a "principle of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 219.

ontological and hermeneutical relevance".⁴¹ According to Ott, the Lutherans interpret Heidegger's philosophy exclusively as Law simply because it does not assume the explicit form of the Gospel. This means, in turn, that his own attempt to discover "correspondences fruitful for theology" is rejected by Lutherans from the outset.⁴² In short, the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel precludes the kind of continuity between philosophy and theology that Ott intends to establish. According to Ott, this lack of continuity also accords with Bultmann's claim that philosophy and theology ask different kinds of questions. He observes that, for Bultmann, moreover, the assumption that theology is dependent upon the philosophical analysis of historicity, is analogous to the presupposition that "the gospel, in order to be gospel, must be dialectically related to the law".⁴³ Ott, however, opts for a different position:

I myself am in a position to enter upon another path, since I - as a Reformed theologian and pupil of Karl Barth - do not think on the premise of the law-gospel pattern. I am able to take philosophy seriously as a theologian, without being forced by immediate application of the law-gospel alternative to regard it as an 'interpretation of the law' and on the other hand, without binding myself to any philosophical 'results'. Thus one can test from case to case the extent to which philosophy perhaps discovered something that the theologian too can acknowledge as

⁴¹ Heinrich Ott, "Response to the American Discussion," 198.

⁴² Ibid., 199

⁴³ Ibid.

suitable and helpful and hence appropriate.⁴⁴

In this regard, Ott cites Fuchs' review of Denken und Sein as typifying the weakness of the Bultmannian response. It is Ott's belief that Fuchs' alignment of word and gospel, thought and law, disregards Heidegger's analysis of the co-penetration of language and thought. According to Ott, Fuchs forgets that the "theologian also thinks".⁴⁵ It is true, he notes, that Heidegger's analysis of thinking may still not capture the distinctive character of theological thought. For Ott, however, this is still no reason to invoke so quickly the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel. According to Ott, it is better to think Heidegger's philosophy in its "whole incompleteness".⁴⁶

At this point, it is clear that Ott is appreciably more willing to look for correspondences between philosophy and theology than his Bultmannian critics. Indeed the Bultmannian application of the law-gospel distinction would appear to be somewhat hasty. To assume that the Gospel is utterly distinct from thought is to be blind to the possibility that not all thought may be creaturely in origin. Here, of course, Heidegger's notion of thought's indebtedness to being renders questionable the Lutheran assumption that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 199-200.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

thought as such is a variant of works-righteousness. The gospel, in fact, may already be operative in certain forms of philosophy.⁴⁷

(b) The Barthians

We now examine the Barthian or right wing analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology, and the response to Heidegger that this implied. We do so by means of a brief assessment of Hermann Diem and Gerhard Noller. Both offer a conservative interpretation of Barth's analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Despite minor variations, they also repeat the substance of Barth's criticism of Heidegger in the Church Dogmatics.

Diem argues, for his part, that Heidegger brings the modern tendency toward the independence of philosophy from theology to its most radical expression. Heidegger, he argues, thinks to its conclusion the metaphysical tradition by eliminating the philosophical conception of God. He does so, moreover, without referring in any way to revelation or scripture. According to Diem, the movement towards philosophical autonomy (i.e., freedom from theology) was inaugurated by Descartes in the seventeenth century. Descartes grounded knowledge of God upon the indubitable fact of the thinking "I". In effect, he replaced revelation as an aposteriori fact with an a priori deduction that was solely based on our self-

⁴⁷ See also Alfred Jäger, Gott: Nochmals Martin Heidegger, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1978), 100.

understanding. According to Diem, theology, in turn, subsequently became aligned with Descartes' form of thinking (i.e., a subjectivistic human-centred thinking). The question, he claims, of the propriety of this association was ignored so long as philosophy refrained from direct attacks on theology. Since, however, Heidegger has shown (i) that the philosophical god is rooted in a subjectivistic impulse to ground reality in toto, and (ii) that the overcoming of metaphysics requires the replacement of the god of philosophy with the concept of das Nichts, Diem concludes that the alliance between theology and the metaphysical tradition (i.e., philosophy) has clearly become a questionable matter.⁴⁸

Diem writes:

For if it seemed possible for theology to answer the question about God on the basis of thinking self-awareness, then it was not at all possible for philosophy to accept why it should not think completely and radically to the conclusion the mere concept of god, which had taken the place of God acting in revelation.⁴⁹

Diem argues that theologians can resist this possibility only by remaining within the theological circle. A reconciliation with metaphysics is out of the question, since revelation is only given in the Church's proclamation. In other words, it is never a function of human consciousness, but always a gift from God. He warns, for instance, against interpreting the

⁴⁸ Hermann Diem, Gott und die Metaphysik, (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1956), 5-10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

turn from nothing (das Nichts) to being (das Sein) as a kind of religious "conversion".⁵⁰ The turn, he claims, only takes place within the sphere of consciousness whereas knowledge of God, by contrast, is a radical breaking in from without. It is, he argues, only discovered through God's self-disclosure.⁵¹

In sum, Diem advances a conservative interpretation of Barth's account of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Since, as Barth insists, the difference between God and man is infinite and qualitative, Diem assumes that philosophy, in general, and Heidegger's thought, in particular, is a function of human consciousness.

Similarly Gerhard Noller, a student of Diem, also rejects Ott's alignment of philosophy and theology, and the theological relevance of Heidegger. To begin with, Noller criticizes both Bultmann and Gogarten for their anthropological interpretation of Being and Time. Noller argues the now generally accepted thesis that Heidegger's purpose is to interpret humanity in the broader context of being. According to Noller, Barth, too, has similarly sought to overcome subjectivism by defining humanity in its relationship to God. Despite this parallel, Noller dismisses any attempt to appropriate Heidegger in a theological context. According to Noller, "genuine theological thinking includes the ontic and

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

excludes thereby an ontology".⁵² Indeed, for Noller, only revelation provides existence with its ultimate purpose and end. This, he argues, can never be the function of an ontological enquiry. Precisely for this reason, Noller cites approvingly Barth's refusal to combine philosophy and theology and Heidegger's refusal to identify God and being.⁵³ Noller is especially concerned that Heidegger's account of being not be confused with theology's claim that God grounds creation and humanity's knowledge of God. He writes:

Against ontological thinking, the circle God-human being means that not being but rather the living God is ground and subject of the whole of reality and truth. Not that God is, but that God is.⁵⁴

Noller's cleavage between ontology and revelation is indicative of an equally pronounced distinction between philosophy and theology. This is especially evident in Noller's rejection of Heidegger's proposal that theology be interpreted as an ontic science. This, he argues, would subject theology to a more primary determination (i.e., a fundamental ontology, the object of which is being).⁵⁵

⁵² Gerhard Noller, "Ontologische und theologische Versuche zur Überwindung der anthropologischen Denkens," Heidegger und die Theologie, (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967), 308.

⁵³ Ibid., 306. Noller, for instance, proposes no criticism of Heidegger's directive that theology interpret philosophy as "foolishness". Noller, no doubt, believes this to be consistent with Barth's attitude toward philosophy.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 307.

⁵⁵ Gerhard Noller, Sein und Existenz, (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1962), 42-44.

Nowhere does Ott explicitly address Noller's assessment of Heidegger's significance for theology. Nor is this surprising, since Noller's response to Heidegger came two years after the publication of Denken und Sein. Ott, however, does respond to Diem and, in some respects, Ott's reply is also applicable to Noller.

From the outset, Ott makes it clear that he concurs with Diem that theology remain solidly entrenched in the theological circle. But Diem, he argues, excludes the possibility that Heidegger's elimination of the god of metaphysics does theology an "inestimable service" (DS 19).⁵⁶ Indeed Ott suggests that Heidegger permits greater access to a more appropriate conception of God. Despite Diem's summary dismissal of Heidegger, Ott believes that he does not exclude the kind of relationship to Heidegger that he himself intends. Here he points to Diem's remark that philosophers and theologians both assume one truth that cannot be monopolized by either as suggesting the possibility of a more substantial connection between philosophy and theology than Diem himself would initially seem to suggest (DS 57).

⁵⁶ So, too, Jäger notes that if Diem were to have adopted a less dismissive attitude toward philosophy, Heidegger's criticism of the notion of "ground" could have become the focus of a theological discussion that studied God's being as the "Grund des theologischen Erkennens". Alfred Jäger, Gott: Nochmals, 105; See, too, Gethmann-Siefert who is also critical of Diem's exclusionary approach to philosophy. Gethmann-Siefert, Das Verhältnis, 156.

Nonetheless - in practice, at least - Diem refuses to expose revelation to philosophy. The same is true of Gerhard Noller. Both, in fact, claim to advance the Barthian position that philosophy and theology are utterly incommensurable. If they mean by this, that Barth rejects any attempt to make of philosophy a springboard to revelation, they are, of course, correct. Still, it is by no means clear that his attitude toward philosophy is anywhere as exclusionary as Diem and Noller suggest. To be sure, Barth's polemic against liberal theology could easily have conveyed this impression. Upon closer inspection, however, Barth's position is significantly more eclectic than it is strictly exclusionary. Barth, we recall, permits the appropriation of philosophical ideas, if the appropriation is governed by the norm and content of theology (see pp. 120-21). In short, Barth's concern is not whether, but how theology ought to make use of philosophy.

Summing up, Diem, Noller, and Ott are of one mind that theology be bound to revelation. In this respect, their common patrimony is clear. It is questionable, however, that by excluding matters of philosophical and ontological concern, Diem and Noller actually do justice to Barth's conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Here Barth's rather summary dismissal of Heidegger may have contributed to this problem. There is, however, nothing in Barth's theology that would preclude, in principle, an eclectic appropriation of Heidegger.

Thus far, then, we have noted some typical Barthian and Bultmannian accounts of the relationship between philosophy and theology. We have also noted how these shape their respective responses to Heidegger. Moreover, we have also summarized Ott's responses to both of these schools for the purpose of clarifying Ott's own position. We turn now to Heidegger's formulation of the relationship between philosophy and theology and examine its significance for Ott.

(c) Martin Heidegger

Heidegger, for the most part, has maintained his life long cleavage between matters of faith and thought. He has restricted philosophy to the sphere of thought and refused to discuss theological concerns like the doctrine of God or the meaning of revelation. Indeed Heidegger argues that the idea of a Christian philosophy is tantamount to a "round square".⁵⁷

The germ of Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology is already evident in his early lectures at Freiburg. In a series entitled, Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion (1920-21), Heidegger draws a sharp

⁵⁷ Heidegger writes:

. . . a 'Christian philosophy' is a round square and a misunderstanding. There is, to be sure, a thinking and a questioning elaboration of the world of Christian experience i.e. of faith. That is, theology. Only epochs which no longer fully believe in the true greatness of the task of theology arrive at the disastrous notion that philosophy can help to provide a refurbished theology if not a substitute for theology, which will satisfy the needs and tastes of the time.

Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1958), 103.

distinction between the philosophical and biblical conceptions of reality. According to Heidegger, the primitive experience of the Christian is rooted in the historical facticity of the Cross. Of importance for Paul, he argues, is not the experience of quietude in God but sharing in the passion of Christ. This is especially clear in Paul's reference to a "thorn in the flesh that was given to harass [him], to keep [him] from being too elated" (11 Cor. 12:7).⁵⁸ For Heidegger, however, this experience has since been obscured by philosophical concepts foreign to the New Testament. Here he points, in particular, to the neo-Platonism of Augustine in which God is conceived as both a timeless object of enjoyment (fruitio Dei) and source of the soul's rest.⁵⁹

The spirit of the Freiburg lectures is also evident in Phänomenologie und Theologie, a work published in 1927.

⁵⁸ Otto Pöggeler, La Pensée de Martin Heidegger, (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), 49.

⁵⁹ Pöggeler suggests that Heidegger's account of the Cross is essentially a Lutheran idea. This raises the possibility that Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology may have been as much a theological as a philosophically inspired position. Indeed in his early lectures at Freiburg, Heidegger cites favourably the young Luther's rejection of metaphysical and theological speculation as an instance of theodicy (i.e., justification of God). He points, moreover, to Luther's distinction between philosophy and theology in the nineteenth and twentieth theses of the Heidelberg Disputation. Pöggeler observes that these theses were still relatively undiscussed in 1921 and only achieved prominence with the advent of dialectical theology. La Pensée de Martin Heidegger (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), 49-59. Given this, it is not particularly surprising that Lutherans like Bultmann were the first to appeal to Heidegger. See also Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 30.

This work represents Heidegger's most explicit statement on the relationship between philosophy and theology.

To begin with, Heidegger describes theology as historical, systematic, and practical.⁶⁰ Like other sciences, Heidegger argues that theology is concerned with a particular dimension of being (i.e., a positum). According to Heidegger, positive sciences like theology are distinguished, in turn, from the science of philosophy whose concern is being as such. Whereas the difference between the positive sciences is described as a difference of degree, the difference between the positive sciences and the study of philosophy is described as a difference in kind. It follows, then, that positive sciences like theology are radically distinct from philosophy.

More specifically, Heidegger believes that the particular positum of theology is the mode of existence determined by faith in the biblical God. As such, it does not belong to humanity per se but is granted by the object of faith.⁶¹ In this respect, the positum of theology is radically distinct from that of the other sciences.

Despite the cleavage between philosophy and theology, Heidegger argues that philosophy is presupposed by theology to ensure its scientific character. According to Heidegger,

⁶⁰Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," The Piety of Thinking, trans. and eds. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 14-15.

⁶¹Ibid., 16.

this is possible, because theological concepts presuppose an ontological understanding of human existence (i.e., Dasein). That is, Christian existence presupposes the ontological persistence - despite its ontic alteration - of the formal structures of the pre-Christian life. This, in effect, is what makes a science of theology possible (i.e., a rational articulation of the structures of faith).

As we noted in our introduction, Heidegger believes that the proclamation of the Gospel also requires a philosophical analysis of human existence in order to specify the ontological range within which theological statement must fall. Hence he and Bultmann both agree that a notion like sin ought to be subjected to an "ontological corrective" (i.e. thought within a formal analysis of the human structure of guilt).⁶² Only then, can a preacher be assured that the biblical proclamation (in this case, the meaning of sin) will address the hearer's existence.

In sum, it is important to remember that Heidegger interprets the relationship between philosophy and theology as strictly formal. Nor, it should be noted, does philosophy require theology although theology requires philosophy to ensure its status as a science.⁶³

⁶²Ibid., 19.

⁶³ Here it is noteworthy that Ott explicitly rejects Heidegger's view of theology as one science (i.e., one positum) amongst others whose positum is grounded in the fundamental ontology of Being and Time. "Against this", Ott claims "that theology itself is the true fundamental ontology"

If one examines Heidegger's written - as opposed to his oral remarks, his separation of philosophy and theology would appear to be strictly maintained. His approval of the publication of Phänomenologie und Theologie as late as 1969 can be used to support this view.⁶⁴ However, upon closer scrutiny the matter is not this clear. Here, for instance, one can recall Ott's interpretation of Heidegger's remark that philosophy is "foolishness" for theology. In Ott's opinion, this means that Heidegger proscribes theology's use of metaphysical thinking only, thereby leaving his own philosophy open and accessible to theology. Ott's assumption here, of course, is that there exists a more intimate connection between philosophy and theology that is left unthought in Heidegger's own philosophy.

Ott's interpretation clearly highlights the difficulty of determining Heidegger's position. On the one hand, Heidegger draws a radical distinction between matters of faith and thought. This is particularly true, if read at face value. On the other hand, a hermeneutic of retrieval - which Ott here employs - may suggest a buried exigence that is nonetheless consistent with Heidegger's own intention. The question, then,

(DB 343).

⁶⁴ See, for example, John Williams, Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), 95.

is whether or not Ott's proposal of a more intimate convergence between philosophy and theology is a legitimate explication of Heidegger's path of thinking.

The situation is further complicated by Heidegger's oral remarks. For example, Heidegger concluded the seminar of Old Marburgers in 1959 with the statement that although he rejected a metaphysical conception of God, he remained open to the possibility of other means of access to theology.⁶⁵ The fact, moreover, that Heidegger was initially impressed by Ott's correlation of his later thought with Barth and that he subsequently proposed an analogy of proportionality between philosophy and theology (of which we shall say more later), would seem to suggest a less rigid distinction between philosophy and theology than his writings would otherwise suggest.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 34.

⁶⁶ Nonetheless, it is only fair to note that at the subsequent meeting of Old Marburgers, Heidegger chided the theological participants for spending too much time debating the issue of being at the expense of the Gospel itself. See Carl Michalson, "Theology as Ontology and History," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 145-46.

Heidegger is reported to have said substantially the same thing at the Protestant Academy at Hofgeismar in 1953. Here, however, Heidegger stated that he did not intend to imply that philosophy and theology are entirely excluded from the influence of the other. He stated, in fact, that there are periods in history in which each passes the other by "without indifference". Unfortunately, Heidegger failed to specify the "how" of this passing by. See "Conversation with Martin Heidegger," The Piety of Thinking, (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1976), 64-65.

Despite the possibility of a buried exigence, and despite the ambiguity of his oral remarks, it is our conviction that Heidegger interprets all philosophy - his own included - as "foolishness" for theology.⁶⁷ Simply put, we believe that Ott fails to acknowledge Heidegger's account of the relationship between philosophy and theology taken as a whole. In the main, Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology would appear to be upheld.⁶⁸ If, indeed, the whole governs the parts, Heidegger's remark that philosophy is "foolishness" for theology, ought to be taken at face value.⁶⁹ The fact, moreover, that Heidegger's interest in Ott subsequently appeared to wane, and that he reaffirmed his customary distinction between philosophy and theology, suggests that Heidegger - if once interested - later rejected Ott's proposal of a more intimate alignment between philosophy and theology in his own path of thinking (this will become clearer in our discussion of Heidegger's contribution to the Drew Consultation of 1964). Before, however, Heidegger

⁶⁷ Note here, for instance, Heidegger's comment upon his claim that philosophy is "foolishness" for theology at the Protestant Academy at Hofgeismar, 1953. Here Heidegger is reported to have said that were theology to adopt this viewpoint, the mystery of revelation would be more properly maintained. "Conversation with Martin Heidegger," 65.

⁶⁸ We note, however, that not all his work has been published to date and that some of this material may throw a different light on this matter.

⁶⁹ See also Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik, (Tübingen: Max Niemayer, 1953), 61.

reasserted his customary position, he proposed a distinctive formulation of the relationship between theology and his own philosophy. This would prove crucial for Ott's subsequent evaluation of Heidegger. To this we now turn.

(d) The Analogy of Proportionality (Analogia Proportionalitatis)

Perhaps the most significant occasion upon which Heidegger appeared to relinquish his usual cleavage between philosophy and theology arose after Ott's presentation of "What is Systematic Theology?" at the meeting of Old Marburgers in 1960.⁷⁰ Heidegger proposed that the relationship between non-objectifying thinking and theological reflection be thought in terms of the analogy of proportionality viz. that faith's thinking response is to the occurrence of revelation what non-objectifying thinking is to the occurrence of being. Here, then, Heidegger interprets philosophy as significant for theology despite his claim that philosophy is "foolishness" for theology. It should be noted, however, that Heidegger proposed the analogy of proportionality hypothetically, that is, for the sake of discussion only. In other words, it was not intended as a retraction of his longstanding position on the cleavage between philosophy and theology.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 43.

⁷¹ See Hans Jonas' reference to this matter, "Heidegger and Theology," 222-23.

For our purpose, it is sufficient to note that Ott subsequently adopted Heidegger's proposal. He did so to clarify his own relationship to Heidegger and to resolve some difficult problems. What Ott had meant, for instance, by theology "fitting into" Heidegger remained a difficult question.⁷² Arnold Come writes:

Does Ott mean that Heidegger's philosophy in its account of being points to the same reality that Biblical faith grasps in its quite different way as the personal God? Or would Ott suggest the extreme view that Heidegger's formulations are fresher, clearer, and therefore more effective indicators of the same truths that traditional Christian theology has been trying to express, and that therefore the former may replace or at least be combined with the latter in a common language and conceptuality?⁷³

Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality tended to suppress questions of the latter kind. The emphasis was now to be placed on considerations of style and the kind of thinking that Heidegger and theology ought to share in common. It seems to us, however, that Ott's evasion of material considerations is exacted at too high a price. Crucial questions like the differentiation between Heidegger's conception of being and the being of God can now be excluded from the outset. This means, too, that "openness to God" (Gottesoffenheit) and "openness to being" (Seinsoffenheit) are

⁷² As Robinson notes, in Ott's oral presentation of "What is Systematic Theology?" reference to theology "fitting into" Heidegger was changed to "correspondence" in the written form of the address. See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 42-43.

⁷³ Arnold B. Come, "Advocatus Dei - Advocatus Hominis et Mundi," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 116-17.

now to be only formally equated.⁷⁴ It remains unclear, moreover, why theology ought to adopt its procedural form from philosophy (i.e., the analogy of proportionality).⁷⁵ And finally, the simple fact that some aspects of Heidegger's philosophy appear to be analogous to certain themes in theology in no way clarifies the significance of this phenomenon.⁷⁶

Suffice it to say here, that Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality significantly reduces Ott's estimation of Heidegger's importance for theology. His original plan to converse with Heidegger on more than formal grounds is now seriously abridged. Ott, we recall, had originally argued that theology's relationship to philosophy is also material, since both assume the existence of one truth and one world.⁷⁷

Summary and Remarks

On the whole, one can conclude that the accounts of Barth, Bultmann, and Heidegger, of the relationship between

⁷⁴ See also Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Das Verhältnis, 168; See, too, Alfred Jäger, Gott: Nochmals, 69.

⁷⁵ Gethmann-Siefiert writes:
 . . . die Kernfrage nach der Bedeutung und Berechtigung des Bezuges, des gleichen strukturalen Aufbaus der relativ selbständig scheinenden Glieder, wird nicht reflektiert. Das Verhältnis, 168. See also Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 213.

⁷⁶ John B. Cobb Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant for Theology?," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 178.

⁷⁷ See DS 15.

philosophy and theology are essentially at odds with Ott. Although Barth permits the theological appropriation of philosophy and acknowledges, in principle, the possibility of a Christian philosophy (philosophia christiana), his distinction between philosophy and theology, for all intents and purposes, is absolute. This disjunction is also clearly evident in the Bultmannian distinction between Law and Gospel, according to which theology presupposes a formal relationship to philosophy, to ensure both its scientific character and the intelligibility of preaching. So, too, Heidegger, we have noted, sharply distinguishes between matters of thought and faith.

Ott's position in Denken und Sein is significantly different. The boundaries, he argues, between philosophy and theology while "independent" still remain "unclear" (DS 15). He also argues that philosophy and theology are united in the person of the theologian and that both address the common theme of existence. Given this, it is hardly surprising that Barth, Bultmann, and Heidegger ultimately reject the substance of Ott's programme. Nonetheless, it is to Ott's credit that his teachers' formulations are not merely repeated. He remains, as it were, open to the possibility of a more intimate connection between philosophy and theology for the sake of theology itself. This is particularly true in Ott's assessment of both Heidegger and Barth. Ott reminds the Barthians and indeed Barth himself, that Barth permits the eclectic use of philosophy. He shows, in fact, that there is

no basis in Barth's theology for a dismissive approach to Heidegger.

So, too, Ott does a service by raising the possibility that Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology may not be as fixed as some have tended to assume. While we take issue with Ott's interpretation, it serves nonetheless as a cautionary note for those who would claim that Heidegger's position is unequivocally clear.

Finally, in our opinion, Ott himself has not yet adequately distinguished between philosophy and theology. As Jüngel notes, he cannot maintain that philosophy and theology are "independent" and simultaneously hold that their boundaries are "unclear".⁷⁸ This fuels a legitimate concern that the priority of theology vis-à-vis philosophy is insufficiently developed. Nor, it seems, has his subsequent adoption of the analogy of proportionality resolved this basic problem. The unclear boundaries persist, since the standard of theological adequacy now becomes the formal structure of Heidegger's philosophy (i.e., not revelation). Indeed Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality appears to be more a rearguard action designed to avoid unsolved problems than a principle consistent with his original formulation of the relationship between philosophy and theology. This will become clearer in our discussion of God, revelation, and being.

⁷⁸ Eberhard Jüngel, "Der Schritt zurück," 112-13.

4. God, Revelation, and Being

Ott's appropriation of Heidegger's conception of being, not unlike his analysis of the relationship between philosophy and theology, also encountered widespread and stiff resistance. Prior to Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality, it remained unclear how, and to what extent, he intended to align Heidegger's notion of being with that of the biblical God. This, as we shall see, stemmed largely from his failure to distinguish adequately between philosophy and theology.

We, for our part, have chosen to focus on four kinds of responses to Ott's alignment: (i) the immanent character of Heidegger's thought; (ii) the contradictory aspect of Ott's correlation of God and being; (iii) the devaluation of the historicity of revelation; and (iv) the superfluous character of Ott's appropriation. Each response represents a distinctive criticism by one or more theologians and/or philosophers.

(a) The Immanent Character of Heidegger's Thought

The most persistent criticism of Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth is that Ott conflates two distinctive orders: the supernatural and the natural. The critics claim that Heidegger's conception of being is utterly distinct from the event of revelation that comes to humanity from without. To ignore this, they argue, is to ignore the infinite and qualitative difference between God and his creation. Or as Come puts it, the ontological difference is an "intra-worldly"

distinction that admits a continuity between the order of "being and beings".⁷⁹ The assumption here is that the notion of being should not be interpreted as a generic term in view of which God and the world are related. Come obviously suspects that this is what Ott has done. True to Barth, Come believes that the being of God is solely "derivable in terms of his action alone"⁸⁰ (i.e., his revelation).

Similarly, Hans Jonas, Ernst Fuchs, and Rudolf Bultmann argue that the later Heidegger lays the foundation for the kind of theology that repeats all the errors of the older natural theologies. Jonas believes that this achieves its most prominent expression in Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" from which he cites the following well-known passage:

Only from the truth of being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of the deity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of the deity can that be thought and said which the word 'God' should name . . . the holy, which as yet is but the space for the essence of deity, which itself in turn only provides the dimension for the gods and the God. . . .⁸¹

⁷⁹ Arnold Come, "Advocatus Dei - Advocatus Hominis et Mundi," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 123. See also Gerhard Noller, "Ontologische und theologische Versuche zur Überwindung des anthropologischen Denkens," Heidegger und die Theologie, (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), 307.

⁸⁰ Arnold Come, "Advocatus," 124.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit: Mit einem Brief über den Humanismus (Bern, 1947), 102. Quoted by Hans Jonas in "Heidegger and Theology," 220.

What Jonas detects here is the blueprint for a natural theology, a model of which can be found in Plato's Euthyphro. There, he notes, Socrates describes both the "holy" and the "divine" as belonging to being as such. According to Jonas, that both belong to the sphere of being should serve as a warning that an evangelical theology ought to reject any form of natural theology.⁸² In a similar vein, he is equally critical of Ott's proposal to employ the ontology of "the thing". This, he argues, could render revelation superfluous. Jonas reasons as follows: if the "thing" gathers the "fourfold" in its entirety, the "thing" is more revelatory than God, because the "thing" gathers the "fourfold" in toto, whereas God reveals only one aspect of the latter (i.e., the divine).⁸³

⁸² Heidegger's own words would appear to corroborate Jonas's interpretation of this passage from the "Letter on Humanism". At a meeting with the Protestant Academy at Hofgeismar in December, 1953, Hermann Novack suggested to Heidegger that the passage in question seems to imply that theology should follow Heidegger's path of thought (i.e., rid itself of metaphysical thinking and speak more appropriately of the biblical God). Novack reports that while Heidegger did not explicitly reject this suggestion, he made it clear that there was no philosophical means of preparing for the reception of faith. He added, moreover, that his references to a god were only applicable to the god of the poet, and had nothing to do with the God of revelation. "Conversation with Martin Heidegger," 63-64.

All this would seem to coincide with Jonas' remarks that "where the gods are, God cannot be". Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 219-20.

⁸³ Ibid., 222.

Jonas also repudiates Ott's appropriation of Heidegger's notion of fate. This, he argues, is a pagan idea that reduces Christianity "to part of a comprehensive becoming".⁸⁴ According to Jonas, the consequence is that revelation can ultimately be transcended, because it is, in effect, only one instantiation of being amongst others. In short, Jonas believes that Ott's alignment of fate with the Christian revelation is a gross misunderstanding. Christianity, if anything, promises freedom from the powers of this world (i.e., fate).⁸⁵

Bultmann and Fuchs also reject Ott's embrace of the "fourfold". Bultmann argues that the "fourfold" precludes a genuine thinking of transcendence, since the notion of the "divine" is essentially immanent. According to Bultmann, this means, too, that Ott's proposal to interpret teachings like creation and providence in terms of the fourfold must be

⁸⁴ Ibid., 215.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 215-17. See also William Richardson's article, "Heidegger and God and Professor Jonas". Richardson takes issue with Jonas's account of Heidegger's thought as pagan. Jonas's account, he claims, is misdirected, since Heidegger never allows the identification of being with that of the biblical God. Richardson argues that Jonas assumes that he does, as is evident in his criticism of the immanent character of Heidegger's "natural" theology. Nor, he adds, should Heidegger be held responsible for mistaken appropriations of his own philosophy. William Richardson, "Heidegger and God and Professor Jonas," Thought 40, no. 156 (Spring 1965): 30.

rejected from the outset.⁸⁶ Fuchs, for his part, also argues that the fourfold structure is a form of natural theology, since it assumes our knowledge of a "final limit" and existence before the "divine".⁸⁷

In sum, for Jonas, Bultmann, and Fuchs, the later Heidegger has little to do with the Christian revelation. Revelation, by definition, always comes from beyond the sphere of being.

Similarly, Helmut Franz argues that Heidegger's god is a "world-god" and thus belongs within the horizon of being. Franz, moreover, takes Ott to task for assuming that Heidegger's references to the "divine" ultimately refer to the God of Christianity.⁸⁸ Ott, he implies, does not take seriously Heidegger's refusal to speak about matters of faith. He contests, for example, Ott's interpretation of the following passage from Heidegger, arguing that Ott's interpretation of göttlich as wirklich is unjustifiable. Heidegger writes:

⁸⁶ It should be noted, however, that Ott is willing to alter the structures of "the thing" and "the fourfold" so that they correspond to the biblical model of revelation. In other words, he is not as wed to the fourfold schema as Bultmann would seem to suggest. Ott writes:

Es ist freilich auch möglich, daß sich von der Bibel her eine Modifizierung dieses Schemas aufdrängt. Doch das Prinzip, die Methode der Deutung der Dinge würde sich vermutlich gleich bleiben (DS 225).

⁸⁷ See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 62.

⁸⁸ Helmut Franz, "Das Denken Heideggers und die Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 58 (1961): 106.

In this respect, the godless thinking which must relinquish the God of philosophy, God as causa sui, is perhaps closer to the divine (göttlichen) god. This says only here: it is more free for him than onto-theology would like to believe. Through this observation a bit of light may be shed upon the path to which a thinking is proceeding, a thinking which is carrying out the retreat back from metaphysics into the essence of metaphysics.⁸⁹

Contrary to Ott, Franz argues that the divine realm of which Heidegger speaks is actually a "god-world" from which a "world-god" arises.⁹⁰ For Franz, then, the shift toward a godless thinking by no means entails Heidegger's movement towards the God of Christianity. It suggests instead the emergence of the divine from within being itself. To be sure, he argues, Christianity should affirm Heidegger's repudiation of the god of metaphysics, since the god of metaphysics diminishes the biblical God. Nonetheless "the father of Jesus Christ is as little the divine God to whom thinking is underway [i.e., Heidegger], as he is the causa sui of metaphysics".⁹¹ In short, Franz concludes that the biblical revelation calls humanity to turn its back on the "god-world".⁹² This, he argues, accords

⁸⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Identität und Differenz," (Pfullingen: Gunther, Neske, 1957), 70. Quoted by Heinrich Ott in DS 149. Referred to by Helmut Franz in "Das Denken Heideggers und die Theologie," 106.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 104-5.

⁹¹ Ibid., 109.

⁹² Ibid., 116-17.

with the cleavage drawn by Heidegger between matters of faith and thought.⁹³

Despite the legitimate motive behind criticism of this kind (i.e., to ensure the absolute distinction between God and creation), the responses of Come, Jonas, Bultmann, and Fuchs are predicated on a mistaken assumption. All believe that by adopting Heidegger in part, that they must also adopt the immanental character of Heidegger's philosophy.⁹⁴ We noted, however, particularly with reference to Barth, that theology

⁹³ Indeed Franz's remarks would seem to be consistent with Heidegger's remarks in a conversation with R. Scherer. Here Heidegger is reported to have said that philosophy cannot speak about God; when it speaks of God it is actually speaking of a "sublimated worldly concept". See Heinz-Horst Schrey, "Die Bedeutung der Philosophie Martin Heideggers für die Theologie," Martin Heideggers Einfluß auf die Wissenschaften, (Bern: A. Francke A.G. Verlag, 1949), 16. See also Heidegger's remarks concerning waiting upon a god. Martin Heidegger, "Only a God can Save us now," Der Spiegel, 31 May 1976. Of significance here is Heidegger's use of the indefinite article "a". This suggests the possibility of a number of gods revealed to man in succession from out of the backdrop of being.

⁹⁴ See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 42. Note, too, that Jonas, in particular, would do well to reflect upon his own relationship to Heidegger. In his own work, Jonas appeals to specific aspects of Heidegger's thought to interpret the phenomenon of gnosticism. (See Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, 2nd ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970). That is, he also uses Heidegger's philosophy eclectically. It seems somewhat inconsistent, then, he should warn Ott that the adoption of Heidegger in part necessitates his adoption in toto. Presumably the same holds for Jonas. See, for instance, Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 225.

can draw on Heidegger's insights eclectically. Ott, for example, nowhere issues Heidegger a "blank cheque". Indeed his response to Heidegger in Denken und Sein is essentially judicious and eclectic. As we shall see, Ott proves willing to deviate from Heidegger precisely at points where his philosophy diverges from the content of revelation.

Ott, however, stands on less firm ground with regard to the criticism of Helmut Franz. We argued earlier - like Franz himself - that Ott's discovery of a more intimate connection between philosophy and theology failed to take with sufficient seriousness Heidegger's distinction between these disciplines. This contributed to Ott's assumption - in our opinion, unwarranted - that Heidegger's "divine" anticipates the Christian God.⁹⁵ It may, of course, be possible, that particular aspects of the göttlich could illuminate the God

⁹⁵ Ott goes so far, in fact, as to speak of Heidegger's "secularized Christianity" (DS 87). He even states that Heidegger's philosophy has actually encountered the God of revelation. Ott writes the following in his discussion of Heidegger's concept of das Nichts:

Die Erfahrung des Nichts und in ihr die Frage nach dem Sein des Seienden ist ein Moment der Gottesbegegnung des die Welt denkenden, des philosophierenden Menschen. Heißt das, daß hier ein Stück theologia naturalis bei Heidegger sichtbar wird? Kaum. Denn es handelt sich ja nicht um eine Fähigkeit, ein eingeborenes Vermögen des Menschen, Gott zu erkennen. Sondern Heidegger analysiert die faktische Situation des Daseins. Er denkt aus der faktischen Begegnung - im Sinne des Begegnungs-Denkens. Und charakteristischerweise weist er ein sachliches Moment wirklicher Gottesbegegnung auf, ohne doch den Begriff 'Gott' zu Hilfe zu nehmen (DS 87-88).

of the Bible. This, however, is different from assuming that the biblical God is in some sense one with the göttlich.

(b) The Contradictory Aspect of Ott's Correlation of God and Being

A second line of criticism focuses upon the contradictory character of Ott's correlation of God and being. Ott, we recall, proposed two such correlations. The first consisted of aligning the wonder that beings are with the Christian account of creatio ex nihilo. The second consisted of interpreting God as a particular being whose mode of disclosure is interpreted as corresponding to Heidegger's notion of being.

Critics like James Robinson, however, have argued that both correlations, if taken together, are mutually contradictory. If, for instance, one interprets the wondrous experience of being as corresponding to the awareness that beings are created, then the experience of God is coaffirmed in the awareness of a being's being. If, however, the first correlation is thought in unity with the second, namely, that God is interpreted as a particular being, the two correlations break apart. As Robinson argues: "if awe-inspired awareness of a being's being corresponds to sensing a being as a creature, is then God a creature?"⁹⁶ To move, he notes, from the second to the first correlation is equally problematic. If God is

⁹⁶ James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 42.

interpreted as a particular being, and this, in turn, is correlated with the amazement that beings exist at all (i.e., creation), difficulties arise again, since Heidegger rejects any attempt to ground being in a particular being, albeit the highest being imaginable.⁹⁷

The tension between Heidegger's conception of being and the biblical God is also criticized by Jonas. Jonas plays upon the consequences of Ott's correlation of the biblical God with the notion of being as "unveiling". His discussion focuses upon the following passage from Denken und Sein. Ott writes:

The being of God signifies, according to the way we have understood 'being' thus far, an event of unveiling; that God unveils himself to thinking as He who He is: that He himself befalls thought as fate and imposes himself on it as a subject-to-be-thought.⁹⁸

According to Jonas, if one assumes (as does Heidegger) that being (das Sein) rather than beings (die Seienden) unveil, then God interpreted as a specific being presumably does not. In fact, Jonas argues that being could be interpreted as the ultimate horizon that unveils itself through God. In this case, it is not inconceivable that the biblical revelation could compete with the unveiling of being in such a way that

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ DS 148. Quoted by Hans Jonas in "Heidegger and Theology," 221.

the latter would be obstructed. The reverse, he argues, is also a possibility.⁹⁹

It is problems such as these that Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality is intended to avoid. It allows him to ignore the difficult issue of the material relation between Heidegger's conception of being and the being of the biblical God. But this suggests that the analogy of proportionality is a pseudo-solution at best. If Heidegger's conception of being is as significant as Ott suggests, then the response of critics like Robinson and Jonas should at least be entertained. To date, however, Ott has refused to adopt a firm position on the material relation between Heidegger's conception of being and that of the biblical God.¹⁰⁰

(c) The Devaluation of the Historicity of Revelation

A third line of criticism contends that Ott's focus on matters of ontology devalues the historicity of revelation. Carl Michalson, for instance, argues that Barth's objection to the analogia entis cannot be met by Ott's appeal to Heidegger, since Barth's concern is not to deny "either God's power to reveal . . . or humanity's power to intuit God's

⁹⁹ Hans Jonas, "Theology and Heidegger," 221.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, John B. Cobb Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant?," 189; See also Heinrich Ott, "Hermeneutic and Personal Structure," On Heidegger and Language, (Evanston, U.S.A.: Northwestern U. Press, 1972), 192.

nature".¹⁰¹ Barth, he argues, advocates the analogy of faith (analogia fidei) in order to preserve the historicity of Jesus Christ as Mediator. In other words, his real concern is to ensure that every relation to God is also integrally related to the "concrete history" of Jesus.¹⁰² In Michalson's opinion, Ott's preoccupation with ontological issues obscures this basic fact.

It is Michalson's belief that Ott's neglect of history is ultimately traceable to a similar weakness in Heidegger. Heidegger, he notes, interprets history as particular ontic science. This means that the roots of history are only to be found in the fundamental ontology disclosed in Being and Time. For Michalson, however, while Heidegger interprets history as a "derivative of being" (i.e., ontology), he interprets being as a derivative of history.¹⁰³ This, he argues, should also obtain in matters of biblical faith. Michalson writes:

New Testament faith is eschatological and not ontological. That is, it is an answer to the question of the meaning of history where the answer is given within history as history and not at the horizon of history as being. Even if being were identical with God, one would have to say that the New Testament is not oriented to God in his being but in his act of self-revelation, God giving history its end in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Carl Michalson, "Theology as Ontology and as History," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 145.

¹⁰² Ibid., 145.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 147.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Indeed Michalson argues that theologians concerned with ontology and hermeneutic should renounce the pursuit of ontological questions. This, he argues, has been possible since Edmund Husserl first bracketed the Seinsfrage with a view to making matters of meaning primary. In the case of Ott, for example, Michalson believes that his ontological presuppositions impede his interpretation of the biblical texts. Here he focuses on Ott's assumption that the unity of the canon is derived from the unity of God (i.e., his one "unspoken" Gospel). According to Michalson, this neglects the diversity (i.e., the historicity) of the New Testament witness. Ott, we recall, takes the position that the relation of systematic theology to the interpretation of particular biblical texts is analogous to interpreting the one poem of the poet with respect to each of his poems. Just as the one poem of the poet speaks throughout his works, so, too, the one being of Christ speaks through the biblical texts. Michalson, however, fears that systematic theology of the kind envisaged by Ott would control exegesis and hinder hermeneutic (i.e., ignore the diversity of the New Testament witness). Ott, he claims, forsakes the gains of the Reformers and erects a Protestant magisterium.¹⁰⁵

John Cobb is similarly concerned. The claim, he argues, that each text bespeaks the Word of the Gospel is "un-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 148-50.

Heideggerian" and "un-historical".¹⁰⁶ According to Cobb, it predetermines our reading of the Gospel and contradicts the phenomenological maxim that texts be read on their own terms. He questions, moreover, Ott's supposition that the unity of the canon is guaranteed by the unity of God in his self-revelation. This, he argues, is a Barthian assumption for which there is no Heideggerian correlate. Cobb writes:

Heidegger would not say that because the same event inspired both therefore the poem of each of the two poets is the same . . . the identity of the event and the shared experience of the event as illuminating the human situation as a whole does not guarantee a priori an identity of visions.¹⁰⁷

Despite his reservations, Cobb - unlike Michalson - does not dismiss Ott's appeal to the later Heidegger. He proposes instead what he considers to be a more consistent Heideggerian analogy. It is, he believes, more in keeping with Heidegger to interpret each of the biblical witnesses as uttering his own "unspoken" poem. On this basis, it cannot be assumed that the Word of God is identical throughout the biblical texts, just as it cannot be assumed that one poem of the poet is instantiated throughout his poems. For Cobb, however, it by no means follows that those who witness in the Bible do not share the same God in common. What it means is that the identity of their witness (i.e., their one "unspoken" poem)

¹⁰⁶ John B. Cobb Jr., "Is the Later Heidegger Relevant?," The Later Heidegger and Theology, 195.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

cannot be assumed on a priori grounds. According to Cobb, this can be determined only on empirical and exegetical grounds.¹⁰⁸

Ott takes up the arguments of Cobb and Michalson in The Later Heidegger and Theology. In his response to Cobb, Ott acknowledges that he does appeal to the Barthian postulate of God's self-identity. He argues, however, that he is under no obligation to remain consistently Heideggerian since he is, first and foremost, a theologian. Heidegger, then, must be relinquished at those points where his philosophy diverges from the New Testament witness. Ott acknowledges, moreover, that each of the biblical witnesses has his own unspoken poem. Nonetheless, Ott argues that Cobb neglects the constitutive role of the communio sanctorum (i.e., the Church). According to Ott, the Church is a "single subject" with its own unspoken poem.¹⁰⁹ This means that he and Cobb are both correct. That is, the poem of the individual and the poem of the Church must both be acknowledged as constitutive components of biblical hermeneutic.¹¹⁰ This means, too, that the individual's witness - contrary to Michalson and Cobb - cannot be suppressed by the witness of the Church (i.e., by a standard Church theology).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰⁹ Heinrich Ott, "Response to the American Discussion," 206.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 202-6.

Indeed Ott argues that the unity of the Gospel can only be discovered through the "partial contradictoriness" of the various biblical witnesses.¹¹¹ The Word, then, discovered by the exegete is not the product of some artificial standard of harmony. It is discovered instead through the diversity of the biblical texts. Again, however, this is possible only if the exegete's standing in the Church is invoked as a "hermeneutical principle".¹¹²

Ott is appreciably more critical of Michalson than of Cobb. The gist of his response is devoted to deflecting Michalson's claim that he and Heidegger are both concerned with ontological at the expense of historical issues. Ott believes that Michalson is blind to the fact that Heidegger's focus is the transcendental condition of history. It is, he argues, no accident that Heidegger situates the Seinsfrage in

¹¹¹ Ott writes:

It is not a matter of a standard theology that already have the Biblical witnesses in harmony with each other, but rather of a word that manifests itself in a theological answer valid for his day, an answer that he himself gives and must give. For the Word of the witnesses demands an answer from him, standing as he does in the same communio. He gives this answer as his own and hence of necessity as his coherent answer to the calls of the biblical witnesses in their full variety. He hears them all, Paul and James, John and Luke, and so on, and he takes them all seriously as God's witnesses, and hence to this extent he attributes authority to them. But he does not take over Paul or James etc., but, rather, after listening to them all and learning from them what he is able to learn, he formulates responsibly his own answer. Ibid., 204-5.

¹¹² Ibid., 204.

the context of the history of western philosophy. This, he claims, accords with his goal to determine the meaning of occidental history. In a similar vein, he also takes issue with Michalson's claim that Heidegger interprets history as a subspecies of being. Ott's point here is that Heidegger excludes any account of being as an "unhistoric" or "suprahistoric" principle.¹¹³ Ott reminds Michalson, moreover, that Heidegger's more recent thought has tended to focus more upon language and hermeneutic than it has upon being as such.¹¹⁴ And finally, Ott believes that Michalson attaches too much importance to his own discussion of Heidegger's notion of being and the analogia entis. According to Ott, the discussion was intended hypothetically.¹¹⁵

(d) The Superfluous Character of Ott's Alignment of Barth and Heidegger

The fourth, and for the purpose of our discussion, the final criticism of Ott's alignment of God with being is that

¹¹³ Ibid., 206-7.

¹¹⁴ Here Ott cites Heidegger's dialogue with a Japanese professor in which the primary theme is language and hermeneutic. (Martin Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache", Unterwegs zur Sprache, (Pfullingen: Gunther Neske, 1959), 83-155. Ott also points to "Der Weg zur Sprache" in which Heidegger speaks of "the event" (das Ereignis) instead of being as such (Ibid., 239-68). Finally, Ott remarks that Denken und Sein - the title of his book - could have conveyed the wrongful impression that Heidegger's concern is solely the phenomenon of being and that this, by extension, ought to be the only point of discussion in a dialogue between theology and Heidegger. See Heinrich Ott, "Response to the American Discussion," 208.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 209.

proposed by Eberhard Jüngel. It is clear, according to Jüngel, that while Barth rejects the analogia entis, he is still concerned with the ontology of God's being. To make his case, Jüngel cites several references from Barth.¹¹⁶ Indeed Jüngel argues that Barth's theology already contains a Seinsbegriff that is analogous to Heidegger's. Hence Ott, he claims, is mistaken to refer to Barth's "elimination of the Seinsbegriff".¹¹⁷ Jüngel focuses, in particular, upon Barth's reference to a "being in correspondence" (Sein in der Entsprechung) in which Barth, he argues, defines the relation-

¹¹⁶ Jüngel, for example, refers to the following from the Church Dogmatics:

. . . we have already had to resist the threatened absorption of the doctrine of God into a doctrine of being: and we shall have to do this again. Yet we must not yield to a revulsion against the idea of being as such which for some time had a part in modern Protestant theology. . . . God is not swallowed up in the relation and attitude of Himself to the world and (is) as actualised in His revelation . . . we keep this constantly in mind as we take up the concept of being at this point with complete impartiality.

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 2/1 § 28 trans. T. H. L. Parker et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), 260.

¹¹⁷ DS 144. Quoted by Eberhard Jüngel in "Der Schritt zurück," 117. It should be said in Ott's favour, however, and here Jüngel is remiss, that immediately following Ott's reference to Barth's elimination of the Seinsbegriff, Ott writes:

Es geht ja Barth hierbei kaum um den Seinsbegriff als solchen, sondern um die Bewegung der Bemächtigung Gottes durch den Menschen, welche er in der Anwendung des Seinsbegriffs auf Gott bewerkstelligt sieht (DS 144).

In other words, Ott's account of Barth's elimination of the Seinsbegriff is not as simple as Jüngel would have us believe.

ship between God and humanity non-metaphysically.¹¹⁸ Jüngel refers to the following from the Church Dogmatics:

It must be pointed out in conclusion that if the being of man in encounter is a being in correspondence (Entsprechung) to his determination as the covenant partner of God, the statement is unavoidable that it is a being in correspondence to God himself, to the being of his Creator. . . . we need not waste words on the dissimilarity or the similarity of the similitude. Quite obviously we do not have here more than analogy i.e., similarity in dissimilarity. We merely repeat that there can be no question of an analogy of being but only of relationship. God is in his relationship and so too is the man created by him. This is his divine likeness.¹¹⁹

Here, then, it is evident to Jüngel that Barth defines humanity by its "being in correspondence". This, however, is not to be construed as an abstract being, since being, for Barth, is "constituted through historicity".¹²⁰ That is, humanity's correspondence to the truth is mediated entirely through God's Word in Christ. Or as Barth puts it, "knowledge of created existence is wholly . . . an echo and response of the creature to what is said to him by his Creator".¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 117-18.

¹¹⁹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3/2 § 45 trans. J.W. Edwards et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), 323-24. Referred to by Eberhard Jüngel in "Der Schritt zurück," 117.

¹²⁰ Eberhard Jüngel, "Der Schritt zurück," 120. Jüngel also cites Barth's formulation of the covenant as the inner ground of creation and creation as the external ground of the covenant as intending the same thing (i.e., that God's being is constituted through historicity). See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3/2 § 45, 323-29. Referred to by Eberhard Jüngel in "Der Schritt zurück," 120.

¹²¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics vol. 3/1 § 42, 349. Quoted by Eberhard Jüngel in "Der Schritt zurück," 119. Here Jüngel is careful to note that the participation of creation in God is not to be interpreted as the Platonic μέθεξις, It

Barth's words here are particularly reminiscent of Heidegger's account of the poet's response to being. In short, Jüngel concludes that Ott's alignment of God and being must be seen as superfluous, since Barth's theology already contains a "being in correspondence".¹²²

Finally, Jüngel's account of Barth's concern with a Seinsbegriff would seem to cast doubt on Michalson's claim that Barth suppresses ontological for the sake of historical concerns. To be sure, Barth does speak of the being of God in his acts (i.e., his historicity), but this in no way precludes a genuine concern about the being of these acts.

Summary and Remarks

Summing up, the critics reject Ott's alignment of God with Heidegger's Seinsbegriff for a variety of reasons. Ott, they argue, is insufficiently aware that Heidegger's notion of being is utterly dissimilar from that of God; that Heidegger's God is pagan; that his correlation is contradictory; and that his appropriation is superfluous. The first and second responses, in particular, are motivated by the

signifies instead the qualification that comes upon creation through the grace of God himself. Precisely for this reason, Barth opts for the analogia attributionis extrinsica so that the "analogy of the analogatum and therefore of the creature is proper to the creature only externally in the existence and form of its relationship to the analogans, that is to God . . . (See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 2/1 § 27, 237-43. Referred to by Eberhard Jüngel in "Der Schritt zurück," 120.

¹²² Eberhard Jüngel, "Der Schritt zurück," 122.

conviction that the theological value of Heidegger's notion of being ought to be determined exclusively on the basis of the norm of revelation. This, of course, is Ott's intention. The problem, however, is that Ott's failure to clarify the boundaries between philosophy and theology leaves the impression that Heidegger's philosophy determines his (i.e., Ott's) conception of God. Nor does Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality help. This lacks a theological justification and formally determines the structure of God's being. In short, Ott's failure to specify the priority of theology vis-à-vis philosophy undermines the propriety of his alignment of Heidegger and Barth. This criticism, however, should not be exaggerated. There are clear signs that Ott retains the priority of theology. He does not, for instance, simply equate Heidegger's conception of being with that of the biblical God. He invokes instead a Barthian postulate which has no correlate in Heidegger's notion of being. His alignment, moreover, of Barth and Heidegger is described as hypothetical. Facts like these appear to suggest that Ott's appropriation is not as uncritical as some have tended to suggest. This is an important point. That Ott diverges from Heidegger precisely at points that conflict with the God of the Bible suggests that what is required is not a change in his project's execution, but a clarification of the norms that govern its practice. The fear, for example, that Ott's notion of God is determined by Heidegger's philosophy could be

allayed, if Ott were to renounce his view that the boundaries between philosophy and theology are no longer clear. A clarification, moreover, would also require stressing the principle that philosophical concepts can be used in ways that are contrary to their original intention.¹²³ This would assist in quelling the criticism that Heidegger's philosophy is theologically irrelevant, merely because the Seinsbegriff is an inner-worldly concept.

A clarification would also mean dropping the analogy of proportionality. If the primacy of theology were firmly established in its relationship to philosophy, the question of the material relation between the doctrine of God and the Seinsbegriff would no longer have to be avoided. One could proceed step by step incorporating those aspects of the Seinsbegriff that best illuminate the being of the biblical God. It is wrong to assume, then, that if the analogy of proportionality were not invoked, Ott would have to identify Heidegger's conception of being with that of the biblical

¹²³ Here it would be interesting to determine to what extent Barth's principle is also applicable to Heidegger's relationship to theology. It is clear that Heidegger draws on key theological concepts and uses these in his own distinctive way. See also Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 212.

God.¹²⁴ A judicious appropriation need only draw on particular aspects of the Seinsbegriff. It is conceivable, for example, that Ott could adopt Heidegger's conception of "clearing" without affirming the ancillary notion of "fate".

Our proposal, of course, is predicated upon earlier criticism directed at Ott's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology. These criticisms have simply been applied to Ott's alignment of the doctrine of God and the Seinsbegriff.

Finally, even if one grants the theological propriety of Ott's alignment, its theological efficacy is still not assured. That is, it may be that the philosophy of Heidegger tells us little about the being of God that theology itself does not already know. In this regard, Jüngel's claim that Barth's theology already contains a "being in correspondence" is particularly apropos. So, too, Jonas's observation that Heidegger is indebted to Christian thought raises the possibility that Ott appropriates concepts that are already part of the theological tradition.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ James Robinson comes close to this assumption in his discussion of the analogy of proportionality. He writes: Thus theology in its speaking of God is not required to choose whether God is in Heideggerian terms a being, or nothing, or being itself, or that which is implicit in the awesome awareness of the being of beings. See James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 43.

¹²⁵ See Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 213-14.

5. The Problem of Non-Objectifying Thinking

We turn now to an examination of Ott's formulation of non-objectifying thinking. As we shall see, Ott's proposal found few willing sponsors. Indeed Ott stood as the sole advocate of a non-objectifying thinking at a conference devoted to "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology" at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, 1964.¹²⁶ Even Heidegger - who was absent, but still sent a paper - had serious doubts that philosophy could help theology in this regard.

For the purpose of our discussion, we first examine the Bultmannian response. On the whole, the Bultmannians are critical of Ott's proposal. This, of course, is hardly surprising, given that Ott's proposal is designed to remedy Bultmann's split between faith and theological reflection. Second, we examine and assess Heidegger's contribution at Drew. As we shall see, Heidegger reaffirms his customary distinction between matters of faith and thought. He withdraws, in effect, any support for Ott's theology that his oral remarks had conveyed. And third, we take up two other responses, neither of which is distinctively Bultmannian or Heideggerian.

¹²⁶ See Robert W. Funk, "Colloquium on Hermeneutics," Theology Today 21, no. 3 (October, 1964): 298.

(a) The Bultmannian Response

The Bultmannian response to Ott's appropriation of non-objectifying thinking proceeded on several fronts. It claimed (i) that Ott caricatured Bultmann's standpoint; (ii) that he ultimately adopted Bultmann's position; (iii) and that he failed to recognize that theological thinking is necessarily objectifying - albeit objectifying in a distinctive way.

(i) Ott's Caricature of Bultmann

From the outset, some Bultmannians have seriously questioned the claim that Bultmann separates faith and reflection as radically as Ott has suggested. It is true, they note, that at various points Bultmann conveys this impression. Nonetheless, the critics argue that Ott ignores Bultmann's position taken as a whole. He ignores, they argue, significant counter-instances in which the relationship between faith and reflection is described as dialectical. Peter Biehl, for instance, argues that Ott neglects references in which Bultmann speaks of the existential analysis as beginning with the act of existence.¹²⁷ Similarly Schubert Ogden refers to Bultmann's remark that theology is "indirect

¹²⁷ See Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen vol. 1, 312 referred to by Peter Biehl, "Welchen Sinn hat es von 'theologischer Ontologie' zu reden?: Antwort an Heinrich Ott," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 53 (1956): 359.

address".¹²⁸ Ogden's point here is that theology participates in the original experience of faith, if only in a limited manner.

(ii) Ott's Proximity to Bultmann

Ott is also taken to task for inadvertently adopting the very position of which he claims to be critical. For instance, in "What is Systematic Theology?", Ott speaks of faith and reflection as "diverging and converging".¹²⁹ This, according to his critics, is tantamount to Bultmann's account of the dialectical relation between faith and thinking. Ott implies a similar kind of "diverging and converging" in an essay entitled "Language and Understanding". Here he claims that theology's task is to articulate ceaselessly the believer's experience of faith. According to Ott, this task is necessary until the "last day" of judgment.¹³⁰ It is Hendrik Krabbendam's belief that Ott's reference to "endless reflection" is indicative of the fact that faith and reflec-

¹²⁸ See Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen vol. 1, 2nd ed., (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1954), 114-18; see also Kerygma and Mythos vol. 2 (Hamburg: Herbert Reich and Evangelischer Verlag, 1952), 187. Quoted by Schubert Ogden in "The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann," The Later Heidegger and Theology, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 163.

¹²⁹ Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology," 109.

¹³⁰ Heinrich Ott, "Language and Understanding," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 21, no. 3 (March, 1966): 286.

tion are still not entirely coextensive.¹³¹ Krabbendam traces the source of the problem to Heidegger's failure to bridge the gap between thinking and existence. According to Krabbendam, Heidegger's notion of "waiting" upon being is evidence of the fact that thought's response to being still remains "out-standing".¹³² This means, in turn, that Heidegger's voice of being is "pseudo-revelatory" at best.¹³³ In short, Krabbendam argues that Heidegger is plagued by the same kind of cleavage that typifies Bultmann's split between faith and theological reflection.

Schubert Ogden takes a different approach. Ogden argues that Ott deliberately maintains a limited distinction between faith and reflection to avoid the implications that their identification entails. Ott, he notes, denies the proposition that only a believer can understand faith and, that a theologian, by virtue of being a theologian, is always a person of faith. For Ogden, however, Ott cannot maintain these propositions without abandoning his own position and adopting the viewpoint of Bultmann. Ogden writes:

If Ott insists that theology is different from faith, and is different from it precisely as reflection upon it or as its conceptual articulation, he seems all but verbally committed to Bultmann's view that theology is unavoidably

¹³¹ Hendrik Krabbendam, "From Bultmann to Ott: A Critique of Theological Thought in Modern Hermeneutic," (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1969), 172.

¹³² Ibid., 300.

¹³³ Ibid.

reflective. If, on the other hand, Ott presses his point that theological thinking can be nonobjective and therefore non-metaphysical, he seems to deny any basis for distinguishing it from faith and thus is forced against his own intention to accept the consequences that follow from such a denial.¹³⁴

Ogden suspects, moreover, that a limited distinction between faith and reflection cannot be found by appealing to the later Heidegger. This, he argues, is because the later Heidegger fails to distinguish between different levels of primal thinking. According to Ogden, this is especially clear in his failure to distinguish between transcendental or objectifying thinking and the experiential thinking whose transcendental condition (i.e., being) he intends to exhibit and clarify.¹³⁵ It is, he claims, precisely for this reason, that Ott appeals to the early Heidegger to distinguish between faith and reflection. Hence Ott describes faith and theology as being different "levels of understanding" as distinct from primal thinking.¹³⁶

In sum, Ogden doubts that Ott's conception of theological reflection corresponds to Heidegger's account of primal thinking. It seems, in fact, to be more in keeping with Bultmann's dialectic between faith and reflection.

¹³⁴ Schubert Ogden, "The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann," 166.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 171.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 162.

(iii) Theological Thought is Objectifying albeit in a Distinctive Way

The Bultmannians also contest Ott's assumption that a non-objectifying thinking is possible. They assume, in effect, that theological reflection is invariably objectifying. They do not, however, fault Ott's intention to liberate theology from a restrictive brand of positivistic science. While theology, they argue, must always use concepts and abstractions, the intention of theological statements is not the same as statements in philosophy and science. Thus Fritz Buri can say that theology is concerned with "objectifications of a special kind."¹³⁷ Indeed Buri proposes the use of symbols (i.e., a "special kind" of objectification) to articulate faith in its relation to transcendence.

Hans Jonas adopts a similar position. Jonas argues that "the question is not how to devise an adequate language for theology but how to keep its necessary inadequacy [i.e., its objectification] transparent for what is indicated by it."¹³⁸ According to Jonas, demythologization serves this function by translating myth (i.e, objectifying categories) into thought forms relevant to human existence. For Jonas, however, when talking about God, theology must resort to

¹³⁷ Fritz Buri, "Das Problem des ungegenständlichen Denkens und Redens in der heutigen Theologie, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 61 (1964): 365.

¹³⁸ Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 231.

mythic symbols. This preserves his "paradox" and "mystery" and precludes his reduction to our self-understanding.¹³⁹

Ott's response to the Bultmannians is typified in his reply to Schubert Ogden. Ott claims to welcome Ogden's conclusion that his interpretation of the relationship between faith and theology is similar to that of Bultmann. Ott says that he never argued for their "absolute identity" or their "indistinguishability".¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, he does convey the impression that his own position is substantially different from Bultmann's. In this regard, for Ott to welcome Ogden's conclusion that his position is that of Bultmann's is tantamount to a concession (i.e., that thinking in some sense is objectifying).

Ott acknowledges, moreover, that he has not yet adequately explained the different levels of primal thinking, particularly the distinction between preaching and theology. This, he notes, must be done if primal thinking is to be theologically relevant. Despite these concessions, Ott believes that it is premature to dismiss the possibility of a non-objectifying thinking. This, he claims, is especially the case, since Heidegger has shown that objectification is

¹³⁹ Ibid., 231-32.

¹⁴⁰ Heinrich Ott, "Response to the American Discussion," 211.

a dogma of western philosophy (i.e., is historically relative). According to Ott, this dogma ought to be questioned by examining both the event-character of language and the integral relation of language and thought.¹⁴¹

(b) Heidegger's Contribution at Drew

Although Heidegger never explicitly passed judgment on if or how theology should appropriate non-objectifying thinking, he broached this issue in a paper sent to the Drew Consultation of 1964.¹⁴² In his paper, Heidegger outlined key themes with which he believed a conference devoted to "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology" ought to be concerned. Heidegger's remarks, for the most part, are more suggestive than prescriptive in keeping with his concern to open up ways of questioning rather than state positions.

Heidegger begins his paper by suggesting three themes raised by the problem at hand. The first, he writes, concerns the issue of "what theology as a mode of thinking and speaking is to place in discussion".¹⁴³ This, he argues, is crucial, since theologians must first determine the nature of their "object" in order to determine if a non-objectifying thinking

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 211-12.

¹⁴² See Martin Heidegger, "The Theological Discussion of 'The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today's Theology: Some Pointers to its Major Aspects,'" The Piety of Thinking, 22-31.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 22.

and speaking is appropriate to their subject-matter. Second Heidegger argues that a clarification of a non-objectifying thinking and speaking also requires a full clarification of their objectifying counterparts. This, he claims, also means raising the question of whether or not thinking and speaking are objectifying as such. If it is found that they are not, one may then ask whether or not a non-objectifying thinking and speaking is theologically significant.¹⁴⁴ This is the third and final theme. Should theology reach the conclusion that neither, in fact, is relevant, the deliberations would still have been of value. Heidegger writes:

This would - so it seems - be only a negative result of the dialogue: But it only seems that way. For in truth this would necessitate that theology once and for all get clear about the requisite of its major task not to borrow the categories of its thinking and the form of its speech from philosophy or the sciences, but to think and speak out of faith for faith with fidelity to its subject matter. If this faith by the power of its own conviction concerns man as man in his very nature, then genuine theological thinking and speaking have no need of a special accrument to reach people and find a hearing among them.¹⁴⁵

For the purpose of his discussion, Heidegger limits his analysis to the second set of questions. He reserves the first for theologians in accordance with his view that philosophy and theology are radically distinct. He argues that the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 22-23.

third theme embodies the "theological consequences" of a proper analysis of the first two.¹⁴⁶

Heidegger begins his discussion of the second theme with a number of questions. What do objectifying thinking and speaking mean? Can it be said that thinking is inherently a speaking and speaking inherently a thinking? And finally, in what way can thinking and speaking be interpreted as objectifying or non-objectifying?¹⁴⁷

To begin with, Heidegger claims that each of these questions lies at the heart of the contemporary philosophical situation. This situation is characterized by two poles which Heidegger describes as the "speculative-hermeneutical" and the "technical-scientific".¹⁴⁸ The latter, he claims, aims to reduce thinking and speaking to a system of signs for the sake of scientific enquiry. The former, by contrast, aims to think and to speak of being (das Sein) for the sake of being itself. Despite these differences, Heidegger believes that both positions interpret language as the all-encompassing horizon of our thinking and our speaking. Because, moreover, philosophy has interpreted man as he who "has language" (zoon logon echon), Heidegger argues that a clarification of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 24.

language will also assist in clarifying our understanding of humanity.¹⁴⁹

Bearing these points in mind, Heidegger devotes the remainder of his paper to a brief explanation of the questions raised by the second theme. We restrict our discussion to highlights only since much of what he says has been taken up already in the first part of our study.

Characteristically, Heidegger takes the position that the increasing hegemony of the sciences leaves the impression that language, thinking, and speaking are necessarily objectifying. Heidegger, however, proposes to show that objectification is an uncritically accepted dogma. In response to his question, "what does it mean to objectify?", he traces the term "object" from the Middle Ages to Kant. Suffice it to say here, Heidegger's point is that objectification (i.e., the positing of something as an object) is a limited view of reality. He observes that Kant, for example, interprets the term "object" (Gegenstand) as that which is posited over and against the scrutiny of the natural sciences. Nevertheless, Heidegger makes it clear that not all phenomena are reduced by Kant to the status of an object. Heidegger's point is that Kant's account of reality is broader than that of the objectifying scope of the natural sciences. His

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

categorical imperative and notion of duty are cited as cases in point (i.e., as not being objects).

So, too, Heidegger argues that what is true of our moral understanding is also true of our "everyday experience of things".¹⁵⁰ To illustrate his point, Heidegger cites the commonplace experience of being enthralled by a rose. If, he notes, we muse on a rose's redness, we neither think nor speak of it in objectifying terms. Nonetheless, the redness of the rose continues to be thought and spoken. This, he argues, is a clear indication of a kind of thinking and speaking that is not exhausted by the scientific viewpoint.

From here, Heidegger raises the question of a genuine thinking and speaking. If both, he claims, are appropriately understood, then neither can be limited to the thinking and speaking of an object. Art, he argues, is never reducible to an object, because it is always more than our objectifying viewpoint can discover. Like the poet's response to being, the work of art summons our experience of world.¹⁵¹ So, too, speaking, he argues, is always more than objectifiable units of consonants and vowels. Properly understood, it is a "manifold showing" which goes beyond our understanding of language

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 27.

as merely instrumental.¹⁵² Condolences to the sick, for example, never involve the objectification of the person.

Next Heidegger examines the possibility that all thinking is ultimately a speaking and that all speaking is ultimately a thinking. He points to evidence for this in the fact that logos and legein were used originally to mean both talking and thinking. He argues, however, that the significance of this has still not been adequately elucidated. Heidegger locates the source of the problem in the Greek interpretation of grammar, the influence of which is still dominant today. According to Heidegger, the Greek account of grammar tended to focus on statements about things - a tendency that persists in modern metaphysics - since things, he argues, were subsequently interpreted as objects.

In response to his final question, Heidegger concludes that thinking and speaking are only objectifying, if thought in terms of the scientific-technological viewpoint. Consequently, Heidegger suggests that the theme of the Drew Consultation ought to be more clearly expressed as "the problem of a non-technological natural-scientific thinking and speaking in contemporary theology" (italics mine).¹⁵³ For Heidegger, however, if the theme of the conference is thus conceived, the issue of a non-objectifying thinking and

¹⁵² Ibid., 27.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 29-30.

speaking cannot be theological, since theology, if anything, is not a natural science. Nonetheless, Heidegger concludes that the theme of the conference continues to remain instructive because it conceals an important task viz. thinking out theology's theme and the appropriate way of speaking it.

It is clear, then, that Heidegger refuses to give specific directions to theologians. He does, however, advise them to determine the relevance of this issue solely on the basis of an analysis of faith and its object. In effect, he reaffirms his customary cleavage between matters of faith and philosophy. This, in turn, also helps to clarify his own ambivalence towards Ott. Ott, we recall, had taken the position that non-objectifying thinking remained exempt from Heidegger's cleavage between philosophy and theology, because primal thinking was not philosophical (i.e., metaphysical). Judging, however, from Heidegger's paper at Drew, it appears that Heidegger would still interpret non-objectifying thinking as exclusively philosophical. The fact, moreover, that he makes no mention of the analogy of proportionality also suggests his unwillingness to establish a formal relationship between philosophy and theology of the kind envisaged by Ott, and which he himself had once proposed, if only hypothetically. Perhaps he concluded that the analogy of proportionality violated his own conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology. His silence, then, concerning this principle could then be interpreted as

confirming the claim that Heidegger's proposal was a temporary lapse from a lifelong distinction between matters of faith and philosophy.

(c) Other Responses

Before concluding, we briefly discuss two other responses to Ott's appropriation of non-objectifying thinking.

(i) Non-Objectifying Thinking as Potentially Irrational

Heidegger, we recall, argues that the thinking appropriate to being does not give rise to useful or specific results. Nor is it a function of the scientific method. It moves instead in the orbit of being and responds to that which being gives to be thought. Similarly, Ott has argued that the thinking appropriate to theology moves within the sphere of faith and responds to that which revelation grants. It, too, eschews results and is more a witness to the presence of God than a means of proving theological statements. For Ott's critics, however, his lack of concern for theological results is indicative of the fact that primal thought is an "experiential but not self-legitimizing thinking".¹⁵⁴ Paul van Buren, for example, argues that, on the one hand, Ott's movement toward the identification of faith and theology would seem to eliminate critical reflection in theology. On the other, van Buren observes that Ott's reflections on the nature of systematic theology appear to exhibit the kind of thinking

¹⁵⁴ Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Das Verhältnis, 164.

that his theology of prayer would suppress.¹⁵⁵ In short, van Buren believes that Ott acknowledges, if only implicitly, an objectifying thinking over and above his own theology of prayer.

Hans Jonas is equally critical arguing that primal thought encourages both arbitrary and anarchical thinking.¹⁵⁶ According to Jonas, the theologian must always pursue "theoretical discourse" in order to preserve "objective thought and language".¹⁵⁷ Or as Fritz Buri puts it:

. . . if the theologian does not wish to become a poet or a prophet, an ecstatic or a magician, he must subordinate his thinking and appeal to the reason of his fellow men. The Apostle Paul did this when he explained over and against the Corinthian glossolalia - with the highest regard for this gift - that he, for the sake of instruction, would rather speak five words with his understanding in the congregation than ten thousand in tongues (I Cor. 14: 19f) and in the Epistles to the Romans he admonished his readers to reasonable service.¹⁵⁸

Ogden argues that Ott falls prey to a widespread but mistaken view that existentialism is an irrational mode of thought. The existentialists, he argues, do not abandon objectifying thinking altogether. They propose instead a specific kind of objectifying analysis that is more

¹⁵⁵ Paul van Buren, "On Doing Theology," Theological Explorations, (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 95. See also James Robinson, "The German Discussion," 48.

¹⁵⁶ Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 227.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 230-31.

¹⁵⁸ Fritz Buri, "The Problem of Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology," 138.

appropriate to their theme.¹⁵⁹

In the wake of such criticism, Ott made what Robert Funk calls a "major terminological concession" at the Drew Consultation of 1964.¹⁶⁰ According to Funk, Ott proposed a notion of objectivity that would permit a "kind of rational verification".¹⁶¹ Ott made it clear, however, that the kind of thinking to which he referred was not susceptible to proof. Nor, he claimed, was it merely a function of logic. In a word, it had little to do with Heidegger's understanding of "scientific-technological thinking".¹⁶² It seems to us that what Ott means here is a form of thinking, the validity of which is dependent upon its power to illuminate experience. In this respect, Ott's understanding of "rational verification" would seem to be analogous to the phenomenological rigour of primal thinking.

Despite his "terminological concession", it remained unclear to what extent Ott met the objections of his critics. On the one hand, his concession appears to be more a clarification of what he is already doing than a modification of his original interpretation of non-objectifying thinking. In this

¹⁵⁹ Schubert Ogden, "The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann," 169.

¹⁶⁰ Robert W. Funk, "Colloquium on Hermeneutics," 298.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 299.

regard, his concession would only be terminological. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as a shift toward the Bultmannian view that theological thinking is objectifying as such; or better perhaps, an acknowledgment that his position has been that of Bultmann's from the outset.

(ii) A Moral Objection: Objectification is Proper to the God-World Relationship

For our purpose, the final criticism of Ott's appropriation of primal thinking focuses upon his assumption that the objectifying pattern of the subject-object schema ought to be overcome. Jonas takes the position that Ott's assumption is a contravention of the ontological and moral orders. According to Jonas, the subject-object relation is "not a lapse" but the "privilege, burden, and duty" of humankind.¹⁶³ The Bible, moreover, specifies man's role as subject over and against the objectivity of creation. For Jonas, then, "the origin of the rift, whether deplored or hailed, is in Moses no less than in Plato".¹⁶⁴

It is Jonas's belief, moreover, that theologians should not be fooled by the "false humility" of the response-character of primal thinking.¹⁶⁵ According to Jonas, primal thinking is the greatest instance of human pride in the history of western philosophy. Here, it seems, Jonas is

¹⁶³ Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 230.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 228.

arguing that even if primal thinking were capable of providing unparalleled access to being (i.e., because it is non-objectifying), "no philosopher should ever assume that the truth of being comes to pass through his thought".¹⁶⁶

Despite the prima facie power of Jonas's criticism, it rests on the assumption that Heidegger's thought - if, adopted at all - must be taken in toto. This, however, is questionable, since it excludes the possibility of an eclectic appropriation. Moreover, even if one conceded that primal thinking were prideful, this by no means necessitates a corresponding weakness in Ott. Nowhere, for instance, does Ott deny the contingency of revelation or the necessity of grace. His aim, moreover, to overcome the subject-object schema need not deny our "privilege, burden, and duty". It may be, in fact, that the objectivity of the other - in this case, God - is best articulated in the context of encounter (i.e., a context to which non-objectifying thinking is preeminently suited). This would ensure, in turn, that our "privilege", "burden", and "duty" are existentially visible.

Summary and Remarks

In sum, Ott's appropriation of primal thinking has been roundly criticized on several grounds. Ott, it seems, takes it for granted that non-objectifying thinking is a fait accompli. The success, in fact, of Ott's formulation

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

is contingent upon the cogency of Heidegger's proposal. It is precisely the latter, however, that some of Ott's critics are unwilling to accept. Krabbendam, we recall, takes the position that Heidegger's philosophy continues to be plagued by a rift between thought and being. Here, too, the Bultmannian argument that thinking is inherently objectifying also appears to be relevant. For sponsors of these objections, Heidegger's position that objectifying thinking is an historically relative dogma is clearly not convincing.

For some, moreover, Ott's "terminological concession" constitutes an admission that a non-objectifying thinking does not exist in the strictest sense of this word. His remarks, in fact, may assist in appeasing critics who fear the "chaos" of primal thinking. Nonetheless, it should be said in Ott's favour, that his critics seriously devalue the exactitude required by a non-objectifying thinking (i.e., fidelity to the phenomenon). They rashly assume that primal thinking is capricious and irrational primarily because it is not susceptible to objective formulation as they understand it. Despite their caricature of primal thinking, Ogden - as Ott himself admits - is correct to call for a more differentiated analysis of primal thought. As is clear, moreover, from Ogden, in particular, Ott's distinction between faith and reflection cannot be held without (i) adopting the position of Bultmann (ii) appealing to the early Heidegger or (iii) accepting the undesirable consequences of the identification of faith and

reflection.

Finally, Ott has never argued for the complete identification of faith, preaching, and theology.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he has failed to specify how each of these is distinguishable within primal thinking. This, of course, need not mean that a differentiated analysis of primal thought could not be developed. It is conceivable, for example, that Heidegger's analysis of the levels of understanding could be combined with his later account of non-objectifying thinking. This would allow Ott to distinguish between faith, preaching, and theology within primal thought.

6. Theological Hermeneutic: Ott, Barth, and the Later Heidegger

Finally, given our conviction that the underlying theme of Ott's development is to cross the hermeneutical arch, we now assess Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth keeping this goal in mind.

In a word, our argument here is that if Ott's ontology overcomes the subjectivist tendencies of Bultmann, it does so at too high a cost. In our opinion, Ott falls prey to an abstract objectivism that fails to relate theological statement to the sphere of human experience (i.e., he fails to cross the hermeneutical arch). It has been, of course, Ott's intention to cross this arch from the outset of his programme.

¹⁶⁷ See Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 2, 86-89.

This remained a crucial consideration in his appropriation of non-objectifying thinking. For Ott, in fact, primal thinking is the transcendental condition of the hermeneutical transfer. Nonetheless, it is our contention that he continues to fall short of his own established goals. This, we believe, is because Karl Barth and the later Heidegger both lack the kind of conceptuality for developing a hermeneutic that is truly contemporary. Both, it seems, have been so concerned with warding off an anthropological subjectivism that each has overreacted. The consequence is that Barth and Heidegger fail to show how God and being, respectively, are disclosed in human experience.¹⁶⁸ Given, moreover, Ott's dependence upon both, it is hardly surprising that a similar problem should reemerge in Ott. Bultmann, in fact, alluded to this in his defense of the relevance of the early Heidegger. Bultmann had argued that the later Heidegger was of lesser relevance than the early, because he failed to discuss the structures of

¹⁶⁸ To some extent, both Barth and Heidegger have admitted to this weakness. As noted in our Introduction, Barth speaks of a need to re-think the neo-orthodox emphasis upon the primacy of God in a direction consistent with human experience. In a conversation with Ott, Heidegger made a similar admission. Ott writes:

Heidegger is aware of this inadequacy . . . he once told me that there are three equiprimordial dimensions of thought: the relation of man to himself, the relation of man to his fellow men, and the relationship of man to the world. He added, 'my own thought moves along the third road'.

See Heinrich Ott, "Hermeneutic and Personal Structure of Language," On Heidegger and Language, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 190.

human existence (see pp. 127-28). In other words, he failed to provide the kind of analysis for articulating the connection between human experience and the revelatory event.

Langdon Gilkey and Robert Funk take Bultmann's criticism even further. They propose that Ott's hermeneutic continues to be deficient, because it fails to acknowledge the fact of secularity.¹⁶⁹ According to Gilkey, this is nowhere as evident as in Ott's assumption that theology take the existence of God for granted. This, he argues, ignores the fact that belief in God has become a questionable matter. Indeed Gilkey believes that the same kind of problem also applies to Christians, since the Church itself is part of the secular world. For Gilkey, then, the solution is to develop the sort of theology that can articulate God in our secular experience. This, he argues, is not a possibility for Ott so long as he is tied to the theological categories of the "continental tradition".¹⁷⁰ In Gilkey's opinion, the continental tradition drives a wedge between two distinct spheres: the religious world of the Church and the world of secular life. While the former assumes the reality of God and the meaningfulness of theological discourse, the latter is equated with unbelief and

¹⁶⁹ See also Harvey Cox, The Secular City, (New York: The Macmillan Co.), 217-25.

¹⁷⁰ Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God Language, (New York: The Bobb-Merril Co., 1969), 194.

excludes all talk about God.¹⁷¹ Or as Gilkey puts it, God's Word in the secular world is deemed neither "possible" nor "present".¹⁷²

For Gilkey, then, because Ott's theology is based on this cleavage, it fails to accept that the existence of God is a doubtful matter even for those in the Church. From here, it follows that Ott's hermeneutic is seriously crippled from the start, since it fails to acknowledge the current situation. Nor, he argues, is Ott's appeal to philosophy of much assistance either, since it, too, continues to take the existence of God for granted. Gilkey writes:

Faith and Word are presupposed as the starting points even for this use of philosophy, setting the limits of all theological reflection. Philosophy helps us within that circle of faith by making comprehensible what has happened to us in the hearing of the Word; but the assumption that we have heard the Word is made before theological reflection begins. Theology and its use of philosophy in the new hermeneutic thus presupposes our 'credo'; their job is to add intelligibility to this assumed faith that is given as already present and active in the life of the Church community. Neither philosophical nor theological reflection seeks to provide a defense of the meaningfulness in secular terms of the language game within which theological discourse functions, or to help us to locate the sense of the reality of God. In other words, more ordinary forms of experience than that of being in a pew and there hearing the Word.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 194-5.

¹⁷² Ibid., 195.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 198.

Robert Funk makes a similar point: Whether and to what extent modern man is open to the 'experience' of faith can only be taken as a question relevant to the mode of address of both preaching and theology; the reality of God and the possibility of faith are simply assumed.

Robert Funk traces the same problem to Ott's analysis of God's proseity and its implications for his understanding of language. Here, we recall, Ott rejects the complete identification of God's Act with his Word. Indeed God's Act in the past is interpreted as determinative for all subsequent history. For Funk, however, by stressing God's proseity, Ott impedes the hermeneutical transfer. This, he argues, is particularly evident in Ott's discussion of language. Ott, he notes, interprets faith as bound to the canonical Sprachraum. The consequence here, according to Funk, is that the "proseity of God is secured historically by the witness of scripture".¹⁷⁴ In this regard, Ott remains true to his Barthian heritage. At the same time, however, Funk observes that Ott's "Heideggerian side" adopts the position that faith is thoroughly linguistic.¹⁷⁵ This suggests that the language of faith is "imposed" on humanity "by the language fund available . . .".¹⁷⁶ In other words, Ott appears open to articulating faith in current language and thought forms. For Funk, however, this stands in considerable tension to Ott's stress on God's proseity which is tied to the language of the canon

Robert Funk, "The Language of Theology: Van Buren, Ogden, Ott," Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God, (New York: Harper and Row Pu., 1966), 114.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Funk, "The Language of Theology," 116.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

(i.e., traditional forms of speaking). Indeed Funk concludes that Ott's theology cannot acknowledge the current situation so long as it grants the proseity of God an "absolute priority".¹⁷⁷ It will remain, as it were, locked in the past excluded from the language of the present.

Summary and Remarks

It should be clear from the foregoing that Ott's hermeneutic has been the subject of serious criticism. For our purpose, the response to his hermeneutic is particularly significant, since the hermeneutical task is the overarching horizon of Ott's entire programme. This means, too, that other features of Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth should also be assessed in this context.

As the critics have argued, Ott's stress on God's proseity, his taking of God for granted, and his split between secular reality and the Church, seriously devalue his hermeneutical programme. Because, moreover, Heidegger is appropriated in a Barthian context, the hermeneutical value of Heidegger's ontology is restricted from the outset. This was made particularly clear in Funk's analysis of the linguistic Sprachraum of the Church. Ott's Barthianism also raises questions about the hermeneutical value of other aspects of his programme. If, for instance, one grants that Heidegger enables Barth to preserve God's sovereignty while

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 112.

retaining a conception of being, the question can still be put: is this contribution of hermeneutical value? In our judgment, taken by itself it is not. So long as Barth continues to take the reality of God for granted, simply articulating the being of revelation (à la Ott) will still fall short of the hermeneutical task. What Ott must do - and here we agree with Gilkey and Funk - is to show how God is integrally related to our personal and secular experience. This, moreover, has to be accomplished in such a way that belief in God is never taken for granted.

The question of the hermeneutical value of Ott's alignment of God and being can also be put to non-objectifying thinking. Again our judgment is critical. Ott, we recall, makes much of the fact that non-objectifying thinking is rooted in experience. The fact, however, that primal thinking is thought in unity with God's presence and that this, in turn, is tied to the language of the canon (i.e., traditional forms of speaking), can only mean that primal thinking fails to respond to our secular experience of reality.

Indeed Ott realized by the early nineteen-sixties that he would have to alter his programme. This would be necessary, if he intended to meet his two-fold test of theological adequacy with a greater degree of precision. His willingness to change was clearly indicated at the Second Consultation on Hermeneutics held at Drew University in 1964. Here he proposed that theology be prepared to articulate the

Gospel "without assuming . . . faith as a presupposition . . ."¹⁷⁸ As Funk observes, this would appear to necessitate Ott's renunciation of his "Barthian premise".¹⁷⁹ To what extent this is true, is a question we shall return to later.

Conclusion - Part Two

Thus far, then, it is evident that Ott's programme enjoys little, if any support among his three principle respondents. He is taken to task by Barthians, Bultmannians, and Heidegger, for confusing the boundaries between philosophy and theology. His failure, moreover, to establish these boundaries has encouraged the criticism that matters of faith are conflated with matters of being (i.e., ontology). This concern was particularly prominent in the responses of Diem, Noller, Jonas, and Michalson, all of whom questioned the relevance of the later Heidegger. Ott's adoption of the analogy of proportionality proved to be of little assistance either, since it left the impression that Heidegger's philosophy formally determined the structure of Ott's theology.

Despite these problems, we proposed a clarification of Ott's project that would legitimate its theological propriety. Our assumption here was that Ott's appropriation - while theologically consistent - failed to specify in sufficient detail the boundaries between philosophy and theol-

¹⁷⁸ Robert Funk, "Colloquium on Hermeneutics," 304.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Funk, "The Language of Theology," 119.

ogy. Once specified, there was, it seemed, nothing to prevent an eclectic appropriation of Heidegger. But even this in no way assured the theological efficacy of Ott's project. This became particularly clear in our discussion of the hermeneutical implications of (i) Ott's emphasis on God's proseity and (ii) his taking for granted the existence of God. We concluded that these features of Barth's theology suppressed the development of a revelational ontology that speaks to secular experience.

PART THREE

TOWARD AN INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE

Our third and final section marks a significant shift in Ott's development. Thus far our study has traced Ott's execution of his programme largely in a Barthian context. In sections one and two, we discussed his Barthian evaluation of Bultmann, his alignment of Heidegger and Barth, and the subsequent response to his programme. Since the early sixties, however, Ott has become increasingly convinced that Barth's method obstructs the hermeneutical task. This has been accompanied by a corresponding shift in Ott's theology toward a kind of thinking that is more in keeping with Bultmann's notion of existential interpretation. A number of factors have contributed to this shift. First and foremost, is Ott's acknowledgment that contemporary humanity does not take the reality of God for granted. Precisely for this reason, the third part of our study is devoted to Ott's attempt to develop a theology that seriously accepts this fact. It is divided into two major parts. The first examines Ott's attempt to develop a universal Christological ontology. The second focuses on Ott's attempt to demonstrate the personal reality of God. Both tasks ultimately coincide, since Jesus Christ, the God-man, is invariably encountered as

person. As we shall see, Ott draws heavily on Dietrich Bonhoeffer to develop his Christological ontology. In a similar vein, he also turns to the personalist ontologies of Martin Buber and the early Heidegger to develop his doctrine of God as person. Before turning, however, to Ott's discussion of Bonhoeffer's Christology, we shall briefly examine (i) significant factors that have contributed to Ott's reassessment of his programme; (ii) his evaluation of positive but inadequate alternatives; and (iii) the methodological implications of his theological shift. Some of these themes have been anticipated already in our discussion thusfar.

1. The Questionability of God in our Time

The decisive factor that contributes to the reformulation of Ott's programme is what Ott calls the current "questionability" of God (G 9). It is clear, he argues, that the reality of God is no longer a generally credited fact (G 151). In other words, for believers and non-believers it has become increasingly difficult to believe in the traditional portrait of God. Ott proposes a number of reasons as to why this is so. He does so with a view toward rethinking the hermeneutical task.

(a) The Failure of the Salvation-Historical Schema

To begin with, Ott suggests that our current doubts about God are encouraged by an inappropriate kind of theological thinking. This, he argues, interprets revelation as if it belonged to a separate sphere of reality. That is, it

interprets this sphere as if it existed entirely independent of our ordinary experience of the world. This kind of thinking - or what Ott calls the "salvation-historical" schema - is also characterized by an ongoing effort to reduce biblical history to a series of objective facts.¹ These, in turn, are then reduced to a specific common denominator.² Ott writes:

Concretely put, the 'salvation-historical category' means the following: There is God and there is man. Between the two there is a commercium. Moreover, a history concerning both can be narrated which really has taken place, which takes place, and which will take place. Within this framework so constructed, then, the doctrines of creation and sin, Christology and soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology - in short, all the traditional parts of the Christian dogmatics - are fitted in. Within this framework, for instance, the traditional theory of the crucifixion and atonement could be developed. Where this category dominated, the theology of revelation concretely saw its task to be literally to recapitulate the history and thereby to summarize the multiplicity of the Biblical sayings and to bring them to a simple, and the clearest possible denominator.³

Ott implies that this kind of thinking is also evident in Karl Barth's dogmatics, despite his intentions to the contrary. There, he observes, Barth deduces theological statement from a "Christological systematic principle" (DB 129). For example, in matters of theological anthropology, Barth derives the reality of human existence exclusively from Jesus Christ.

¹ Heinrich Ott, "Philosophical Theology as Confrontation," The Future of Philosophical Theology, ed. Robert Evans (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 146

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 146.

Indeed Barth argues that all statements are to be founded upon this principle. According to Ott, this contributes to the systematic sense of "completion" typical of Barth's theology (DB 129). Nonetheless, Ott remains critical of Barth. Barth, he argues, tends to deduce Christological principles with insufficient reference to humanity's actual experience. This, he claims, is particularly evident in the Barthian style of preaching. The tendency here is to summarize the fact of God's deed in Christ and then to assert it as efficacious for humanity. For Ott, however, this leaves the impression that a "self-enclosed spiritual picture is added to reality . . . by means of a firm assertion" (DB 140). In other words, the tendency to deduce theological statement prior to, and independent of human reality, means that revelation is insufficiently related to our ordinary experience as humans. Ott believes that this failure is particularly crucial today, since the reality of God is no longer held as a generally credited fact. As we shall see, it is precisely for this reason that Ott turns to the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Because Bonhoeffer's goal is to show that Christ is the basis of reality in toto, he points the way to the kind of theology that does not take belief in God for granted. According to Ott, this has decisive implications for the hermeneutical task. What it means is that hermeneutics is not to be conceived as a systematic account of God's deeds in the past and the subsequent assertion of how these deeds are

significant for human beings. It entails, rather, an "exegesis" of how Christ is already present in every aspect of experience. As we shall see, this is tantamount to an existential interpretation of Christology (DB 435-45).

(b) The Hegemony of the Scientific and Technological Model of the World

Ott cites the hegemony of scientific and technological thinking as another factor contributing to doubts about the current reality of God. It is Ott's belief that the scientific-technological viewpoint interprets the world as analogous to a machine. Consequently, the world for many is interpreted as a place that is devoid of purpose and meaning. It is expected, moreover, like most machines, to eventually come to a halt (G 1). Given this, Ott believes that it is extraordinarily difficult to acknowledge the reality of a purposeful and personal God. The enlightened man of today, he notes, no longer accepts the power of fate or the inscrutable wisdom of the sacred. In an age of "total planning", he alters molecular structures and indeed his very nature (RU 99).

Despite what appears to be its extraordinary capacity to control, Ott believes that humanity today is still afflicted by a notable sense of impotence. Ott writes:

He plans himself and his world. But according to which imperative values? For planning is not possible without imperative values on which the mature solitary man is based.... Today with all his powers, he is thrown back upon himself in a peculiar form of powerlessness, thrown upon the question about himself; indeed he experiences this question with greater intensity and fatefulness than

ever before in an era of his history (RU 100). As we shall see, Ott believes that our sense of impotence is a crucial clue to the ultimate nature of reality. According to Ott, our sense of impotence suggests that humanity is not at its own disposal. This, in turn, suggests that reality is appreciably more than the calculative viewpoint of science. Indeed Ott proposes a dialogical viewpoint that interprets positivism as a secondary and derivative abstraction. As we shall see, his goal is to show that reality is constituted by an infinite and personal God.

(c) God Renders Himself Questionable: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, A Case in Point

Finally, Ott suggests that current doubts about God may be a function of God himself. That is, the contemporary experience of the absence of God may not be a consequence of the hegemony of science or a failure to relinquish the salvation-historical schema. It may also indicate the positive event of how God intends to encounter humanity today. Ott cites a number of interpretations as to what this experience could mean.⁴ We restrict our discussion to Ott's account of Bonhoeffer, since this sets the tone of Ott's subsequent programme. Ott focuses, in particular, on the following passage taken from his Letters and Papers from Prison. Bonhoeffer writes:

⁴ See, for example, Ott's discussion of Martin Buber and Karl Rahner on the "eclipse" and "silence" of God (G 15; and 20 resp.).

And we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur* (as though there were no God). And this is just what we do recognize - before God. God himself compels us to recognize it. God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34). The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God (G 17).

Here, then, Bonhoeffer speaks of the experience of God's absence so typical of our time. Bonhoeffer's point is that in some respects God would have us live as if he did not exist. That is, he would have us live without being used as a "stop-gap" (i.e., a solution to questions for which scientific answers have yet to be found or discovered). Ott is particularly attentive to what he believes is the dialectical character of Bonhoeffer's remark that "the God who forsakes us . . . is the God before whom we stand . . ." According to Ott, Bonhoeffer's remark should not be interpreted as that of a Christian atheist. Ott believes that those who see Bonhoeffer as a Christian atheist wrongly assume that the notion of theism has lost its credibility and must, therefore, be discarded. These interpreters propose an atheism in which God is interpreted as the depth of being or as a cipher to express the essence of human relations. For Ott, however, Bonhoeffer never denies the theistic conception of God. Hence he insists that the God "who forsakes us" is the God "before whom we stand" (italics mine). According to Ott, what Bonhoeffer means here is that God encounters humanity in the

midst of its human relations and not on the boundary of its limited human knowledge. In other words, the God of the stopgaps forsakes us so that the God in our midst might be thought.

In sum, then, for Bonhoeffer and Ott, the absence of God need not be seen as a merely privative occasion.⁵ It suggests, in fact, that the God who is absent is profoundly present at the heart of our human experience.

2. Positive but Inadequate Theological Alternatives: The Validity of an Existentially Interpreted Theism

We turn now to a short discussion of Ott's contention that two trends have characterized Protestant theology since the end of the Second World War. Our objective is to show what Ott takes to be worthy of saving and discarding in both. We also show how and why he proposes to think the unity of these trends in a programme devoted to an existential interpretation of theism. The latter forms the basis of Ott's response to the current questionability of God.

⁵ Indeed Ott writes:

It immediately raises the question whether with disappearance of these self-evident premises the Christian community has lost something, or whether in fact it may well have gained something . . . (G 15).

Here, too, it is interesting to note that Bonhoeffer's understanding of God's historicity and our understanding of God's historicity and our appropriation of it, corresponds with Heidegger's contention that the various historical changes in human self-understanding reflect changes in being's own changing self-revelations.

In his study of Bonhoeffer, Ott remarks that the contemporary situation in Protestant Christianity is marked by "an objectivism oriented towards tradition . . . [and] a subjectivism oriented towards the present" (DB 23). According to Ott, neither pole does justice to the dual-pronged norm of theology. On the one hand, the reality of God is threatened by a subjectivist tendency to reduce the divine to an expression of human life. Here he notes that the idea of God as person is no longer interpreted as a necessary doctrine of the Christian faith. Ott believes that representatives of this trend have violated the norm of scripture. On the other hand, Ott observes that the objectivist trend, for its part, has reaffirmed the customary doctrine of God's transcendence and person. For Ott, however, this has been done in such a way that God's relation to creaturely reality has remained unshown and unthought. In short, Ott argues that if the objectivist trend meets the norm of scripture, it nonetheless fails to articulate God in the midst of human experience.

Ott cites the debate between Herbert Braun and Helmut Gollwitzer to illustrate, respectively, the subjectivist and objectivist trends. Ott begins with the subjectivist tendencies of Herbert Braun.

Braun believes that the indispensable kernal of the New Testament kerygma is comprised of two concepts: "I ought" and "I can" (DB 34). According to Braun, neither implies a "deus per se . . . [or] another world breaking into this" (DB

34). Still, Braun insists that love and community ought to be interpreted as gifts bestowed by God. Braun makes it clear, moreover, that talk about God as giver by no means entails talk about God as person or any kind of theism. His assumption here is that our conception of God underwent a significant transformation from the Old to the New Testament. According to Braun, the New Testament began to speak less of God as an objective person and more of God as a spiritual reality. Hence Braun refers to an "interpretive correction" occurring in the Bible in which the emphasis is placed increasingly on the Word rather than God as person (DB 37). Indeed Braun concludes that the notion of God as person can ultimately be relinquished, since it belongs to the form but not to the substance of the New Testament Word.

Given Ott's belief that God as person is an integral part of the kerygma, it is hardly surprising that he attacks Braun's assumptions. To begin with, Ott argues that the only reason that there are infrequent references to God as person is the fact that his person is assumed throughout the kerygma. For Ott, moreover, it is easy to read Braun's idea of an "interpretive correction" in a significantly different way. In Ott's opinion, one could argue that the movement from an anthropomorphic to a more spiritual conception of God is a sign of a growing consciousness that God's encounter with humanity is a universal phenomenon that concerns all persons in their very soul and being. In other words, it could be

interpreted as an existential interpretation of the biblical image of God as person. This would mean that Braun's "interpretive correction" has nothing to do with abandoning the postulate of the personal God of theism. Indeed Ott is particularly critical of those who see in Braun's "interpretive correction" the necessary outcome of Bultmann's programme of demythologization (DB 37). Bultmann, he argues, has consistently affirmed that God confronts man as a person and is not reducible to the sphere of human relations (DB 37).

Resuming his discussion of Braun, Ott argues that the fact that theology has not yet adequately articulated the relation between the kerygma and the personhood of God, precludes neither the possibility nor the necessity of a solution. Ott is also critical of Braun's assumption that the New Testament's vision of reality is predicated upon an "unbroken immanence" (DB 44). This, he notes, lies at the basis of Braun's assumption of an "interpretive correction". Assuming an "unbroken immanence", Braun can then argue that theism is an objective and mythological thought form. It is Ott's belief, however, that Braun draws too rigid a distinction between an "unbroken immanence" and the theistic notion of transcendence. According to Ott, the consequence is that he overlooks significant biblical references, particularly references to a Christocentric universalism in the Deutero-Pauline literature. Here Christ, he observes, is described as dwelling in every aspect of reality, and all things,

conversely, are described as dwelling in Christ (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1.2). But Braun, he argues, excludes these passages because they contradict "his bringing together under the heading of 'theism' God's personal nature . . . and God's objective transcendence (DB 48).

Gollwitzer takes up his side of the argument by affirming both the personal reality and transcendence of God. As Ott observes, it is Gollwitzer's goal to ensure that God is not reduced to the sphere of human relations. He rejects, in effect, what he takes to be Braun's Christian atheism. According to Gollwitzer, it is better to affirm the reality of God over and against the created order than to interpret God as a cipher for human relations. In short, God's presence is an indispensable dimension of the Christian faith.

For Gollwitzer, moreover, the presence of God by no means entails an objectivist or outmoded image. He argues, in fact, that Braun establishes a false dichotomy between "objective reality" and the "experience of significance" (DB 55). In this respect, theology, he argues, would do better to develop a doctrine of the Holy Spirit than to follow Braun's subjectivism. This would preserve both God's transcendence and the reality of his person precisely in connection with lived and ordinary experience (DB 55).

On the whole, Ott is clearly more in sympathy with Gollwitzer. Nonetheless, Ott believes that his theological agenda still remains unexecuted. That is, he fails to show

how it is that God as person is constitutive of human experience. To this extent, Ott implies that he still remains caught in a theological objectivism. To escape this problem, Ott believes that what is required is a demonstration that God's transcendence is not the source of a "bad outerness" but serves instead as the basis of "immanent reality" (DB 52).⁶ Or better still, what is required is a way of showing that an understanding of human experience necessitates the postulate of a personal God. Ott writes:

. . . if we renounce the understanding of God as personal, then not only do certain quite definite possibilities and dimensions of human existence disappear, they can no longer be studied with the the same lucid and binding power. What about forgiveness, for example; the setting free of the guilty? What would this be without a God who pronounces acquittal? Nevertheless, life in the freedom of forgiveness is a possibility for man - and it is also a reality in human life! And even if the reality of a personal God is accepted only as a postulate (and on the level of thought and theory, apart from its practical verification in the life of the individual, it can in fact never be more than a postulate), it is nevertheless a postulate with more power to illuminate our lives than any other interpretation of human existence, and it is of course part of the business of the theologian to show that this is the case (G 6-7).

Ott, then, is unwilling to abandon the theism of the tradition. He argues, in fact, that Christians who subscribe to the post-theistic and atheistic viewpoints have abandoned theism rashly. Ott argues that the latter group, in particular, has caricatured the biblical image of God by conceiving of it in terms so human as to make it impossible

⁶ See also Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 2, 53.

to accept (G 4). Similarly, Ott finds the post-theistic viewpoint, particularly that of Paul Tillich, equally unsatisfactory. Ott argues that Tillich's view of God's person as one symbol among others, and his view of God as the "ultimate whence of my being", both imply an indeterminate and impersonal conception of God. Neither, he says, has much to do with the practice of Christianity or the traditional God of scripture (G 4-6).⁷

In sum, then, Ott believes that what is required is an existential interpretation of theism. This would avoid both the reduction of God to a cipher (e.g. Braun) and the depiction of God in objectivist terms (e.g., Gollwitzer). It would conform, moreover, to the norm of scripture and speak to contemporary experience. Indeed it is Ott's response to the current questionability of God.

3. The Incarnational Agenda: Its Methodological Implications

Our discussion thus far leaves little doubt as to the direction Ott will take. It should be clear by now that he intends to show that the God of theism is both personal and radically incarnate (i.e., constitutive of human experience). It is, therefore, hardly surprising that his theological

⁷ Ott writes:

Paul Tillich's notion of 'absolute faith' as the 'accepting of the acceptance without somebody or something that accepts' leads us into complete obscurity. It is meaningless to speak of 'acceptance' apart from someone who accepts . . . it would be better to follow Ludwig Wittgenstein's principle that: 'Whereof I cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' (G 110).

method is geared to express these concerns. We turn now to a brief analysis of its key characteristics.

(a) The Necessity of Existential Interpretation: The Unity of Relevance and Truth

As we have already noted, Ott acknowledges that the existence of God is no longer a generally credited premise. It follows, then, that the mere assertion that God has dealings with humanity is no longer sufficient. In fact, Ott believes that assertions like this will appear no more than empty speculation, like "pictures painted upon water".⁸

What Ott proposes instead is a theology of "showing and pointing", or alternatively put, an existential interpretation of theological statement (G 15). This, he argues, is crucial, since the question of relevance and the question of truth are ultimately identical (RU 100).⁹ Here he reaffirms his view - so evident in primal thinking - that theological discourse makes contact with human experience. What has changed, however, is the degree to which human experience is now the place in which theological statement be verified as true. To be sure, Ott has always argued that theological discourse make contact with human experience. This was evident in his earliest alignment of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Then, however, Ott insisted that speaking

⁸ Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, 12.

⁹ See also Heinrich Ott, "Was ist Wirklichkeit?," Deutsches Pfarrerblatt, 64 (1964): 369-70.

about God directly was both a possible and necessary enterprise (i.e., making metaphysical statements about God's pro-seity).¹⁰ Now, however, Ott's position is that talk about God can only proceed indirectly.¹¹ He has become, in effect, significantly more Bultmannian. Indeed Ott writes:

Today without taking back the methodological and ontological criticism which I then expressed, I incline rather in my general judgment to regard the lack of breadth in subject matter, which at first sight, seems to be a mark of Bultmann as at least virtually made up for by implication in his thought (DB 59).¹²

Finally, it is worth noting that Ott's emphasis upon existential interpretation is intimately related to his understanding of faith. By appealing to existential verification (i.e., a theology of "showing and pointing"), he clearly intends to avoid the charge that belief in God is subjectivistic and blind. He argues, in fact, that faith is a kind of seeing that integrates reality in toto.¹³

¹⁰ See Heinrich Ott, (GH 162); see also Robert Funk, "The Language of Theology," 113.

¹¹ See PG 56-7; 335.

¹² In this respect, it is interesting to note that Ott takes issue with the objection that talk about God ought not to be restricted to the range of human experience. This, he claims, misses the point, since God encounters humanity only within this sphere. Ott writes:

Even if God's Word bids us believe against all experience, this very 'against' is again an experience. The purpose is to take the Incarnation seriously (DB 64).

¹³ See PG 43-44; 144-47; 242.

(c) Theology as Philosophical Theology: Taking Atheism Seriously

A second consequence of his incarnational agenda is to be found in the proposition that theology henceforth be practised as philosophical theology. For Ott, in fact, all theology, including Barth's dogmatics, must now be expressed in contemporary thought forms and categories.¹⁴ This means, too, that theology would no longer employ a private theological discourse. It would strive, instead, for a constructive "confrontation" between the contents of revelation and current modes of thinking.¹⁵ Nor would it deny a dialogue between those who believed and those who did not. According to Ott, such a dialogue is possible because non-believers and believers have "essentially the same experiences" (G 38). Where they differ is in how these experiences are interpreted (PG 285-96). Here his assumption has decisive implications for the theological task. Because it is assumed that both communities share in common certain basic experiences, this means, too, that "some agreement" should, "in principle", be

¹⁴ Heinrich Ott, "Philosophical Theology as Confrontation," The Future of Philosophical Theology, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 146.

¹⁵ Ott makes it clear, however, that a "confrontation" between reason and revelation by no means entails a natural theology. He rejects - like Barth - all attempts to derive knowledge of God apart from his revelation. *Ibid.*, 145-46.

possible (G 38). In other words, Ott believes that certain basic experiences can serve as points of contact between the believing and non-believing communities. It follows, then, that once these points are established, theology can show both how and why it articulates certain experiences as those of the biblical God. Ott writes:

Believers and non-believers are neighbours in the world. . . . Therefore some agreement between them . . . should not in principle be impossible. However, in order to promote such understanding, the believer must address everyone else in terms of this common experience, for example, on the basis of the varied 'basic' metaphysical experience which everyone can share. The believer must address the non-believer in terms of what he experiences in life, so that with the help of this experience he may show him how God intervenes in his life. Then he may say to him: 'This is what we call God' (G 38).

Here, then, Ott makes it clear that the task of an incarnational ontology is not a matter of belittling the atheist's experience. Nor does it bring something radically new to the atheist's experience of reality. It brings, rather, to a greater level of awareness the religious depth that is already present in the atheist's own life. To be sure, Ott begins this task with the assumption that God is already present in the atheist's experience of reality. For Ott, however, this assumption is not to be postulated uncritically. It must be demonstrated and shown. This means that theology must take the atheist's experiences seriously, even to the point of employing his language and thought forms. We return to this point in greater detail later, particularly in the context of Ott's account of the personal reality of God.

Finally, it should be noted that Ott's search for the kind of theology that can speak to the non-believer coincides with his search for a theology of "showing and pointing". It amounts, in effect, to another way of describing existential interpretation. Or as Ott puts it, "existential interpretation is the consistent articulation of the theology of revelation as philosophical theology . . ."¹⁶

(c) The 'Reality of the Real': Theology's Metaphysical Slant

A third consequence of Ott's agenda might be described as a concern for the "metaphysical", or the "reality of the real" (DB 45).¹⁷ Since the time of his proposal that theology reject metaphysical thinking in a manner analogous to the later Heidegger, Ott's thoughts on this matter have changed. On the whole, Ott's attitude toward metaphysics is now more positive, if qualified. A clue to this shift can be found in Ott's re-evaluation of Heidegger's conception of metaphysics. Now he argues, contrary to Denken und Sein, that

¹⁶ Heinrich Ott, "Philosophical Theology as Confrontation", 149-50.

¹⁷ In recent work, Ott has stated a preference for the term "reality" (Wirklichkeit) as opposed to the term "being" (das Sein). Ott believes - like Heidegger - that the terminology of being has been pre-ordained by the Greek and Christian viewpoints. The consequence, he argues, is that any attempt to re-evaluate the nature of reality is prejudiced from the start. By contrast, Ott believes that by using the term "reality", he can avoid this kind of problem. Here, too, it is interesting to compare the title of Ott's more recent work Reality and Faith with the earlier Thinking and Being (Denken und Sein). See Heinrich Ott, "Was ist Wirklichkeit?," 371.

Heidegger's goal is not so much to "overcome" (überwinden) as to "redirect" (verwinden) the history of metaphysics (DB 45). It is significant, moreover, that Ott speaks of the "unprejudiced" attitude toward metaphysics typical of American Protestant theology, citing Ogden as a case in point (DB 45). That Ott cites Ogden is noteworthy since it was Ogden who had earlier criticized Ott's denial that Heidegger's thought was systematic and metaphysical, if only in "outline".¹⁸ The reason for Ott's change of attitude is brought to particular prominence in Ott's statement that:

The label metaphysics need not encumber us! Many great problems are just unsolved, and we cannot satisfy ourselves with wordgames or grand historical constructions (secularization and others) but we must simply ask: how does the subject-matter stand? Let one tell me what plausible excuse one wants to find in order to evade such questions, or let one tell me how one ought to confront them, if not precisely in a naively metaphysical manner (whereby 'metaphysics' need not be necessarily the onto-theological grounding of all beings in a highest being). For example, and this example in a certain sense spans the whole: a 'Theology of the Word', be it post-Barthian or post-Bultmannian, cannot be absolutely non-metaphysical. It cannot dispense with 'metaphysics' absolutely. If it really wants to be 'theology of the Word', then it can in no way repress the question: How does the word happen? How can the kerygma affect man and how does it happen in man himself? But this question is 'metaphysical' in the widest sense, for it is taken up with the being-conception of beings, with the reality-structure of the real. If it were suppressed, theology would slip into irrationalism. This could also be bad for preaching (PG 6-7).

Ott's reappraisal of metaphysics, if thought in concert with his goal to rethink theology as philosophical

¹⁸ Schubert Ogden, "The Understanding of Theology in Ott and Bultmann," 172.

theology, leaves the impression that he is looking for a more systematic mode of thinking than that offered by the later Heidegger.¹⁹ Precisely for this reason, Ott, in his recent work, has relied more extensively upon the phenomenological rigour of Heidegger's earlier thought (i.e, Being and Time). What has changed is Ott's growing conviction that revelation be shown as structurally connected to creaturely reality in such a way that it can also convince those outside the boundaries of the Church.²⁰ Indeed in what amounts to a

¹⁹ Here, however, it should be noted that Ott remains open to the possibility that the more oracular style of the later Heidegger could be transposed into the phenomenological rigour of his earlier thought. Ott writes:

I should like to refrain from any attempt to blend the early Heidegger with the later by means of some theory or other. However, it seems to me they are not so far apart. It seems to me, also, that the later Heidegger's ways of thought should be translatable into the terminology of Being and Time, if not completely, at least into its diction and strict phenomenological method.

Heinrich Ott, "Hermeneutic and Personal Structure of Language," On Heidegger and Language, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 19.

In our judgment, Ott's assessment seems quite naive considering the fact that Heidegger purposefully abandoned the language of his earlier period. In effect, Ott begs the question of the latter's adequacy.

²⁰ Ott's search for a systematic, publicly accountable discourse has significant implications for non-objectifying thinking. He admits, in effect, that the need to be publicly accountable opens the door to a certain degree of objectifying, or what Ott calls thinking at a "distance" in theology. Ott writes:

Der Weg des theologischen Denkens zeigt sich so als die Bewahrung der Glaubenserfahrung und -erkenntnis im Denken. So erwachst das theologische Denken, obgleich ihm der distanzierende Charakter der theoria eigen ist, doch aus den unmittelbaren Akten pers6nlicher, existentieller Glaubensbegegnung. . . . Die Distanz entsteht einzig dadurch, daB der theologisch Denkende nicht mehr von der

qualified retraction, Ott now implies that Heidegger's significance for theology has more to do with the exemplary character of his method (i.e., his phenomenological rigour), than the material content of his philosophy.²¹ Ott writes:

What theology studies and learns from Heidegger with profit is method. To this also belongs that one or another concept of Heideggers may prove a useful instrument in order to express his own point. . . . Heidegger has no system to offer that could be taken over completely or partly by philosophy and applied there per analogiam. In this regard, much that is useless has been said or written both in a rash reception of Heidegger and in a thoughtless criticism of that reception (PG 129).²²

Ott, moreover, now speaks of metaphysics in broader and less polemical terms than Heidegger. He uses the term to refer to theology's focus upon the "reality of the real" in general as distinct from its restricted sense of an onto-

Jemeinigkeit seines eigenen Glaubens redet, sondern von dem, was 'Glaube' und 'Offenbarung' überhaupt sind: für die Kirche und für die Menschheit.

Heinrich Ott, "Theologie als Denk-Akt und als Glaubens-Akt," Begegnung: Beiträge zu einer Hermeneutik des theologischen Gesprächs, ed. Max Seckler et al. (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1972), 63; See also Ott's remarks concerning an "unavoidable abstractness" in preaching (DB 441). See, too, Ott's article "Überlegungen zum theologischen Argumentationsstil Rudolf Bultmanns," 253-54.

²¹ See, too, Alfred Jäger who also characterizes Ott's shift as tantamount to a retraction. Alfred Jäger, Gott: Nochmals, 120.

²² See also Heinrich Ott, "Die Bedeutung von Martin Heideggers Denken für die Methode der Theologie," Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80 Geburtstag, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970), 30-38.

theological thinking.²³

Finally, it should be noted that Ott's positive reappraisal of metaphysics is qualified by his suggestion that theology abandon the search for a system. This, he suggests, is particularly true with regard to the structures of human experience. In lieu of a comprehensive theological metaphysic, Ott suggests that theology draw upon philosophy eclectically in order to show that the various structures of human existence are integrally connected to the contents of revelation. Characteristically, however, Ott makes it clear that he does not intend his abandonment of system to be unconditional or systematic. He suggests, in fact, that some day a "comprehensive theological philosophical anthropology" may actually be constructed.²⁴

In short, it would appear that Ott's ambivalent attitude toward system is grounded in a two-fold concern. On the one hand, Ott requires a formal, and to this extent, systematic analysis of human existence in order to establish a public and communicable format for theological discourse.

²³ Or as Ott writes:
. . . one would surely do better to refrain from imposing taboos, lay the basis of a differentiated concept of 'metaphysics' and consciously embark upon the 'metaphysical', as we must admit, consideration of the reality of the real, so necessary today even for theologians (DB 45).

²⁴ Heinrich Ott, "Philosophical Theology as Confrontation," 165.

On the other, he intends to avoid a reification of theological dogma that would (i) violate the historicity of revelation and (ii) risk losing touch with the contemporary situation. Indeed Ott has consistently maintained that theological reflection is more akin to a way than to a systematic survey of the whole.²⁵

Summing up, the basis and gist of Ott's incarnational agenda could be expressed as follows: Today humanity has serious doubts about the reality of God. Given the hegemony of scientific and technological thinking, it is increasingly difficult to understand how it is that God could have dealings with humanity, or what it could mean to say that he does. Assuming this, Ott opts for a thoroughgoing programme of existential interpretation that does not take belief in God for granted. As we have seen, this entails the rejection of the salvation-historical schema, the articulation of revelation as philosophical theology, and the acknowledgment that some sort of metaphysics cannot, in principle, be avoided.

²⁵ Ott is persistently critical of Barth's theology for precisely this reason. Ott writes:

In Barth theology is understood as a system and not as a method. This is the explanation of his refusal of all the methodological considerations of present day theology. The symbol of his theology is not the journey, the discovery step by step, but the survey, the seeking to comprehend the whole within the system (DB 443).

4. The Significance of Bonhoeffer

During the middle and late nineteen-sixties, Ott continued his hermeneutical and ontological enquiry. He wrote the first two parts of a proposed three volume work entitled Reality and Faith. At first glance, the first of these volumes is devoted to a study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The first volume, however, is considerably more than this. True to his dialogical method, Ott proposes to think further along the lines of Bonhoeffer's own enquiry.

It is Ott's belief that Bonhoeffer - more than any theologian of this century - has recognized that the question of reality coincides with the question of God (DB 315). According to Ott, this is nowhere as evident as in Bonhoeffer's attempt to articulate the Gospel concretely (i.e., as reality). While Ott acknowledges that Bonhoeffer never explicitly formulates the hermeneutical-ontological question, it is, he argues, nonetheless present throughout his entire theology (DB 63). This is because, according to Ott, Bonhoeffer's goal is to articulate Christ as reality. It is here, in fact, Ott believes, that his own enquiry converges with that of Bonhoeffer. By attempting to show that Christ is the basis of reality, Ott believes that Bonhoeffer takes the first few steps toward solving the hermeneutical problem. If Christ, he argues, can be shown as the basis of reality, it can also be shown that a particular deed in the past is constitutive of reality today (i.e., the hermeneutical arch

can be crossed). For Ott, moreover, Bonhoeffer offers significant resources for developing a theology that does not take the assumption of faith for granted. If this were not enough, he also reconciles key emphases in Barth and Bultmann which Ott had been unable to do. Ott writes:

What in these two teachers seemed to be normative, without the possibility of really bringing the two together, I found united in Bonhoeffer (DB 12).

It is hardly surprising, then, that Ott discovers promising directives in Bonhoeffer's theology for advancing his own programme. Our analysis of Ott's assessment of Bonhoeffer is restricted to those aspects of Bonhoeffer's legacy that are instrumental in furthering Ott's project. We begin with Ott's analysis of non-religious interpretation.

(a) Non-Religious Interpretation

From the outset, it is important to note that Ott distinguishes his own account of non-religious interpretation from that of other scholars. To begin with, Ott argues that Bonhoeffer's account of non-religious interpretation is not to be confused with the secularization of theology. In this respect, Ott rejects the conclusion of so-called Christian atheists who claim that Bonhoeffer is their inspiration and basis.²⁶

²⁶ Here Ott takes particular exception to John Robinson's interpretation in Honest to God, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963). See DB 29-31.

Ott argues, for his part, that Bonhoeffer maintains the traditional postulate of theism, albeit in a non-religious way. As we noted earlier, this relates to interpreting God in such a way that he is not reduced to the status of a stop-gap hypothesis. Here, we recall, it became increasingly clear to Bonhoeffer that the God of the stopgaps was no longer necessary for interpreting the workings of nature. It was better, he claimed, for the sake of "honesty" that the God of the stopgaps be dropped.²⁷ For Bonhoeffer, moreover, the God of the stopgaps is not the God of the Bible, since the latter is encountered, not on the boundary, but in the midst of our human experience. This, he believed, had important implications for the current task of theology. It suggested, above all, that what was required was a new kind of thinking and speaking that could articulate God in both a worldly and credible way. Indeed Bonhoeffer believed that what was needed was the non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts. Precisely what Bonhoeffer meant by this has been a vexing problem for scholars. The source of the problem is that Bonhoeffer's remarks are restricted to fragmentary comments in his Letters and Papers from Prison. Nevertheless, Ott believes that the key to the concept is to be found in the problem of language. Ott writes:

Non-religious interpretation is a problem of language which in the encounter with concrete humanity of our day,

²⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge, (London: S.C.M. Press, 1971), 360.

aims at a new orientation of the language of the Church, in which the existential behaviour of the Church in the world is involved, and which reaches its final close definition of its subject in the question of Christology (DB 101).

For Bonhoeffer, non-religious interpretation is intimately related to Christology, because the worldliness of God is only given in Christ. We shall return to a discussion of Bonhoeffer's Christology in greater detail later. Here, however, our primary concern is Ott's analysis of non-religious interpretation.

To further his discussion, Ott situates Bonhoeffer in the context of Barth and Bultmann. Beginning with Bultmann, Ott observes that he and Bonhoeffer both agree that the Bible be interpreted. Bonhoeffer, however, is highly critical of the manner and extent of Bultmann's interpretation. He is particularly critical of Bultmann's restricted ontology and his failure to interpret the Gospel in a non-religious way. Here it should be noted that Bonhoeffer distinguishes non-religious from religious interpretation on two basic grounds: first, religious interpretation is characterized by a pietistic individualism; and second, religious interpretation tends to interpret God exclusively beyond this world. Bonhoeffer argues that neither trait is biblical since God has taken on human flesh and is concerned with our collective salvation. It is Ott's belief that Bonhoeffer's criticism of Bultmann is restricted to his individualism. Bonhoeffer, he argues, is fully aware that Bultmann nowhere interprets God

exclusively beyond this world. That is, he is fully aware that the purpose of existential interpretation is to interpret God as eschatologically present "in the history of this world" (DB 154).

Of particular importance to us is that - despite Bonhoeffer's criticism of Bultmann - Ott believes that non-religious interpretation coincides with Bultmann's method of existential verification. Ott writes:

If I may sum up by pointing to the positive agreement between Bonhoeffer and Bultmann, this lies in the concept of 'interpretation'. Both theologians demand as indispensable an interpretation of both biblical and theological concepts. Bultmann names as the necessary interpretation the existential, but Bonhoeffer rejects as reductive what in effect is Bultmann's way. It must be said then that what Bonhoeffer holds as necessary and seeks to do is fundamentally an existential interpretation, but that in him it wears an essentially different appearance (italics mine). Or can perhaps the expression 'existential interpretation' be meaningfully applied only to Bultmann's way with its individualistic stamp? This is a terminological question. Personally I would deny it (DB 120).

What Ott appears to be saying here is that Bultmann's method of existential interpretation accords with Bonhoeffer's intention. Or conversely, that Bonhoeffer's notion of non-religious interpretation coincides with Bultmann's. We, for our part, believe that Ott interprets Bonhoeffer more with reference to Bultmann than the other way around. In this respect, one can discern the increasingly Bultmannian slant of Ott's own theology. Suffice it to say here, what Ott discovers in Bonhoeffer is a way to overcome Bultmann's

Christological exclusivism, or better perhaps, his tendency to restrict Christ to the preached Word of the Church.

Ott's discussion of Bonhoeffer's relationship to Barth is similarly complex. To begin with, Ott observes that Bonhoeffer and Barth both share a Christocentric emphasis. That is, both believe that theological statement ought to be interpreted with exclusive reference to Christ. Despite this agreement, Ott notes that Bonhoeffer is critical of the way in which Barth's theology is formulated. According to Bonhoeffer, Barth falls prey to a "revelational positivism" (i.e., he fails to relate theological discourse to human experience). The consequence is that Barth devalues the incarnational fact. Ott makes it clear, however, that Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth is restricted to his methodology. In other words, it is not a criticism of Barth's interpretation of the "facts" (DB 129). Ott writes:

Certainly in Bonhoeffer's eyes revelational positivism did assert God's becoming man, and further, relying on the premises it established, it showed zeal and diligence in building that fact up into a comprehensive system, but none the less it did not methodologically treat the incarnation seriously (DB 126).

To some extent, Ott agrees with Bonhoeffer. Ott, as noted, has become increasingly critical of Barth's methodology. Still, Ott believes that significant features in Barth's own theology point the way to a more worldly Christology. Here he points to Barth's Doctrine of the Lights (die Lichtelehre).

Simply put, in the Lichterlehre Barth speaks of Christ as the definitive Light and Word. Significantly, however, he acknowledges the existence of other lights in the Bible, the Church, and the world. He claims, in fact, that these lights may on occasion recall the Church to its witness. Nonetheless, Barth insists that none of these lights compete with Jesus Christ, because they are ultimately grounded in Jesus Christ himself. According to Ott, the implication here is that Christ is present wherever there is truth or light. In other words, Barth rejects any form of Christological exclusivism that would limit Christ to the Bible, the kerygma, or the Church. By extrapolation, Ott claims that Barth affirms Christ as the ontological basis of every other religion as well as the natural order.²⁸ Christ, in effect, is interpreted by Barth as the ultimate basis of reality (i.e., as radically incarnational) (DB 130-35).

Despite Barth's intention, Ott argues - much like Bonhoeffer - that Barth lacks the kind of methodology for showing Christ as the ontological basis of reality. The result, he claims, is a Christological exclusivism that restricts Christ's presence to those in contact with the explicitly proclaimed Word. Here again Ott believes that Bonhoeffer's attempt to articulate Christ as reality points

²⁸ See, too, Heinrich Ott et al., Dogmatik im Dialog vol. 3 Schöpfung und Erlösung, 64-66.

the way to a universal Christology that can speak to those beyond the boundaries of the Church.

Finally, we should observe a key methodological point. Given Ott's assumption that non-religious is a form of existential interpretation, Ott believes that Bultmann's method advances Barth's project as well. As we have already suggested, Ott's theology has taken a Bultmannian turn. In our opinion, what this means is that Ott assesses Barth and Bonhoeffer essentially in terms of Bultmann. For example, in the case of Barth, Ott believes that Bultmann's method can deepen and extend his incarnational emphasis.²⁹ In no way,

²⁹ Indeed at one point in "The Humanity of God," Barth, if qualifiedly, appears open to the possibility that Bultmann's "existentialism" can assist in the development of a genuinely incarnational theology (Karl Barth, "The Humanity of God," 56.). What makes Barth's position so ambiguous, however, is his tendency to deny the hermeneutical implications that accompany such a task (which Bultmann and Ott do not). Barth writes:

The question of language about which one must speak in reference to so-called 'outsiders', is not so burning today as is asserted in various quarters. This is true in the first place because again, thinking in terms of the humanity of God, we cannot at all reckon with in a serious way with real 'outsiders' with a 'world come of age', but only with a world which regards itself as of age (and proves daily that it is precisely not that). Thus the so-called 'outsiders' are really only 'insiders' who have not yet understood and apprehended themselves as such. On the other hand, even the most persuaded Christian in the final analysis, must and will recognize himself ever and again as an 'outsider'. So there must be no particular language for insiders and outsiders. Both are contemporary men-of-the-world -all of us are. A little 'non-religious' religious language from the street, the newspaper, literature, and, if one is ambitious, from the philosopher may thus, for the sake of communication, occasionally indeed be in order. However, we should not become particularly concerned about this. A little of the language of Canaan, a little 'revelational positivism',

however, does this mean that Ott assumes an uncritical attitude towards Bultmann. As suggested earlier, it is Ott's intention to overcome his Christological exclusivism. As we shall see, this means widening the scope of existential interpretation to include those persons who stand outside the explicit community of faith (i.e., non-believers). Precisely for this reason, Ott turns to Bonhoeffer.

(b) Jesus Christ as the Ontological Basis of Reality

As noted, it is Ott's belief that the key to Bonhoeffer's theology is his attempt to show that Christ is the basis of reality. Ott argues that Bonhoeffer's unity of purpose becomes most explicit in his lectures on Christology (1933) and in his work on Ethics (1939-43). Ott focuses, in particular, on a passage from the latter, the gist of which is that God's becoming man, or his taking on human flesh, rules out any form of thinking that would interpret God exclusively beyond this world (i.e., religiously). From here, Ott concludes that the basic goal of Bonhoeffer's theology is an incarnational ontology.

In Ott's opinion, Bonhoeffer's goal reaches its climax in his discussion of ethical existence. It is here, he

can also be a good thing in addressing us all and, according to my experience, in which I am certainly not alone, will often, though not always, be still better understood even by the oddest strangers.

Karl Barth, "The Humanity of God," The Humanity of God, trans. John Newton Thomas (Richmond, Va.: Collins and John Knox Press, 1961), 58-9.

argues, that Christ is encountered as the ultimate basis of reality. Ott writes:

It is the question of ethics, in responsible existence, in the realm of the existentialist question, 'What am I to do', that understanding thus dawns upon Bonhoeffer that God is the true and final reality in all realities, that all created things are in Christ and he in them all. My duty as one who exists responsibly is not to ask myself how I can effect something in the world and on the world and on myself, but to surrender myself to the fact that God is already there as an unsurpassable reality, already present in the very things which are the subject and sphere of my responsible decisions and my ethical existence in a given situation, that God is already there in the ethical situation in which a claim is made upon my responsibility, and in a sense is waiting there for me (DB 172-3).

As Ott observes, Bonhoeffer is not content merely to assert this as a fact. He intends to show how it is that Christ is actually encountered. To illustrate his point, Ott takes as his focus a section of the Ethics in which moral action is described as "conformation" (Gleichgestaltung).³⁰

By "conformation", Bonhoeffer means conformation to Christ, or better perhaps, conformation to reality. Conformation is further described as being constituted by Christological structures, each of which, in turn, is intimately intertwined with its anthropological counterpart. The Christological structures are described by Bonhoeffer as follows: Christ the incarnate; Christ the crucified; and Christ the resurrected (DB 179). According to Bonhoeffer, each of these structures is experienced as real when a

³⁰ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics, trans. Horton Smith (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955), 18.

person's actions conform to the reality of Christ. Christ, for example, is experienced as the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected when human beings, respectively are open to their neighbour, willing to accept judgment, and cling to a hope that transcends every possibility (DB 186-7). According to Ott, this is tantamount to an existential interpretation of Christology.³¹

For Bonhoeffer, moreover, the Christological structures are always and everywhere before us even when these structures remain unacknowledged or hidden. Here, in fact, Ott believes that Bonhoeffer anticipates much of the debate about "anonymous Christianity". Once again, Ott turns to the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, a prominent exponent of this teaching. According to Ott, it is Rahner's belief that the offer of salvation contained in the Bible implies Christ's presence beyond the scope of the kerygma. If Christ, he argues, were restricted to the kerygma, the offer of salvation would not be universal. It would exclude those persons from encountering Christ who had never heard his Word. But as Rahner notes, this would be contrary to the witness of scripture, since scripture speaks of an omni-benevolent God. To remain, therefore, truthful to scripture, Rahner assumes, much like Bonhoeffer, that Christ is present to each human being

³¹ For more concerning Ott's existential interpretation of the cross and resurrection, see Die Antwort des Glaubens: Systematische Theologie in 50 Artikeln, (Berlin: Kreuz Verlag, 1972), 225-35: 235-48, respectively.

in every situation and epoch (i.e., that the offer of salvation is truly universal).³² But as Ott observes, to show that Christ is actually present beyond the scope of the kerygma will require the development of an existential Christology that does not begin by taking belief for granted. In other words, what is needed is an existential interpretation of the Christological structures that can also illumine the deepest levels of the non-believer's experience. This would show how the "hidden Christ" (incognito Christi) is already present in the non-believer's life (DB 190-91). Ott writes:

Probably it does not suffice to speak of anonymous Christians, but first and foremost the talk should be of 'anonymous Christ'. 'There is no salvation in no other' (i.e., Christ may not be replaced by just any other dimension). The sense which is enclosed in the name and story of Jesus Christ cannot be exchanged for just any other content. But this sense can also unfold its effect outside the institution of the Church. That would be to say: becoming human, cross and resurrection are structures which are also to be found outside the Church and its explicit profession, in human life experience. They 'find themselves' there not as static dimensions, but rather as characteristics of the penetration of the deepest mystery upon which a human may come in his life, which is the mystery of the merciful God Himself. Even the atheist can experience it in his life that Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter happen for him - even if he gives these events (unspeakable encounters of trust, of solidarity, of hope) other names or no names. In this way salvation is on the one side exclusively related to Christ and on the other

³² Heinrich Ott, "Existentielle Interpretation und anonyme Christlichkeit," Zeit und Geschichte, Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum achtzigsten Geburtstag, ed. Erich Dinkler, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), 372.

side also universal and not tied to the historical and cultural dimension called the 'Church'.³³

Of significance for us is Ott's belief that a conceptual basis for articulating Christ beyond the scope of the kerygma already exists in Bultmann's theology. Here he points to a buried exigence in Bultmann's theology that can assist in overcoming his Christological exclusivism. According to Ott, this can be found in Bultmann's distinction between faith as "mere assent" (ein Fürwahrhalten) and faith as a "movement of existence" (eine Bewegung der Existenz). Ott believes that Bultmann's distinction leaves room open for articulating faith in the lives of those persons who have never heard the explicit proclamation of the Word.³⁴ In other words, it is Ott's conviction that his concept of faith is significantly broader than the explicit act of confession (i.e., "mere assent"). This means, in turn, that it offers a way of affirming Christ's presence (i.e., faith) in the deepest reaches of the non-believer's experience (i.e., as a "movement of existence").

(i) Christ as Mediator: Overcoming Subjectivism and Objectivism

As noted, Ott's primary concern is not the reproduction of Bonhoeffer's thought. His real goal is to broaden the scope of his own enquiry. To meet this objective, Ott takes

³³ Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 3, 303.

³⁴ Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, 233.

up where Bonhoeffer leaves off by examining the teaching of the Mediator.

To begin with, Ott believes that to understand the title of the Mediator is to understand the whole of Christology (DB 388).³⁵ Indeed Ott claims that an existential interpretation of the doctrine of the Mediator can show Christ as the ultimate basis of reality. To clarify his own account, Ott distinguishes it from two traditional interpretations: the moral-juridical and the relational (DB 390).

Ott observes that the juridical interpretation starts with the assumption that humankind is separated from God by sin. The role of the Mediator is to restore this relation by paying our debt to God. According to Ott, this interpretation is insufficient for two specific reasons. First, the juridical interpretation assumes that God is the highest source of the law. This, he argues, has become problematic, since the notion of God as highest judge has become a questionable fact. Second, Ott believes that the juridical interpretation fails to exhibit Christ as the ontological basis of reality. In this regard, Ott observes that the juridical interpretation is a product of western Christianity and would prove unfruitful for mediating Christ to non-western cultures (i.e., showing his universality). Ott acknowledges, of course, that any account of the Mediator must always include moral

³⁵ See, too, Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, 233.

categories. Still, Ott believes that what is required are categories which include, but are nonetheless broader than those of the moral life. In other words, Ott believes that categories such as guilt and responsibility fail to capture the full significance of the Mediator (DB 390-92).

Ott is also critical of the "relational" interpretation. According to Ott, this denies the inherent significance of the Mediator by interpreting his role purely as a function of his relation between God and humanity. For Ott, moreover, the relational interpretation is also weak, because it assumes both the existence of God and a relation of opposition between the divine and human orders. But as Ott observes, neither of these assumptions is taken any longer for granted. For this reason, Ott proposes an existential interpretation of the Mediator. This, he argues, is necessary, because it is only in terms of the Mediator that God and man, and the manner of the relation, can first be properly established (DB 392-4). An existential interpretation will also show that the role of the Mediator is inherently significant. Ott writes:

The reality which is Christ himself is the reality of the world reconciled with God, the reality of God who encounters in the world and is reconciled with the world. Christ the Mediator is not merely a 'functionary' in a predetermined system of relations. He is something in himself, as a person. He himself creates through himself a universal reality, the reality of God and man, the reality of the world reconciled by God, accepted by God and indwelt by God, the reality of grace before the face of God in which man and world always already stand. This reality is a sphere of encounter. In it, and it alone God encounters. It is only at first glance that it can appear as if the being of Christ the Mediator can in its new definition still nevertheless be explained with the help

of an already given relation between God and man. The truth is given by John 14:6, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me'. This is the being of the Mediator, he is truth itself and life itself So understood, the Mediator is not merely someone who takes his part in a play, even if it were the most important of all. One might say that he himself is the stage in which we all play the parts of our life before the face of God (DB 393).

Typically, Ott observes that his own search for a universal Christological ontology is striking parallel to work being done in Catholic theology. Ott points again to Karl Rahner, particularly his understanding of the "supernatural existential". It is Rahner's belief that the "supernatural existential" is a structural moment of existence. According to Rahner, the "supernatural existential" encompasses, or is implied in, every aspect of human experience. This is a consequence of God's becoming flesh (i.e. the incarnation). Rahner makes it clear, however, that the supernatural existential does not belong to human existence as such. It is, he argues, always a function of grace.

In view of his search for a universalist Christology, Ott appropriates the "supernatural existential" in a Christological context. This, he argues, is a legitimate extension of Rahner's assumption that God is revealed in Christ. For Ott, then, the supernatural existential, is to be interpreted as the "Christological existential". Indeed Ott concludes that if Bonhoeffer's notion that Christ is reality is interpreted in conjunction with the Christological

existential, the Mediator should not "be understood relationally, but as constituting reality" (DB 395).

(iii) The Threefold Office of Christ

Having described the proper understanding of the Mediator, Ott turns his sights to an existential interpretation of this teaching. Ott appeals for assistance to the traditional doctrine of the Threefold Office of Christ. He turns specifically to the Genevan Catechism of 1545 in which Jean Calvin articulates this teaching for the first time.

Calvin argues that knowledge of the Threefold Office is deducible from the contents of scripture. As Ott observes, Calvin reasons as follows: Scripture reserves anointing for prophets, priests, and kings; it also speaks of Jesus as he who is 'the anointed'; it follows, then, that Jesus holds these offices (DB 415). However, according to Ott, Calvin's account of this teaching was subsequently deemed inadequate because it failed to show how Christ is the definitive occupant of these offices. That is, it failed to show that Christ is the definitive prophet, the definitive priest, and the definitive king. This led to the teaching being reformulated by the Swiss theologian, Johannes H. Heidegger.

What Ott finds significant in Heidegger's interpretation is that he derives the Office from "the threefold miseria of man" (DB 416). In effect, he carries out an existential interpretation of the Threefold Office in which Christ is depicted as prophet, because humanity has fallen

from the truth; in which Christ is depicted as priest, because humanity is estranged from God; and in which Christ is depicted as king, because humanity is incapable of its own consummation (DB 417). Indeed Ott implies that Heidegger's goal is to overcome Calvin's "revelational positivism" (DB 416).

While Ott agrees with Heidegger's intention, he is nonetheless critical of Heidegger's attempt to interpret this teaching from the "natural standpoint" of humanity (i.e., sin) (DB 417). Ott's criticism stems from his conviction that it is only by starting with the Mediator that one can achieve a proper understanding of God and humanity. In short, it is insufficient to begin like Calvin with an account of revelation divorced from human experience; nor is it sufficient to begin like Heidegger with an account of man divorced from revelation. Hence Ott proposes an existential interpretation of the Mediator that thinks from within the integral unity of God and humankind (i.e., the incarnational fact). Ott believes that this approach will avoid the problems raised by Calvin and Heidegger. By implication, it can also avoid the anthropological restrictions of Bultmann and the revelational positivism of Barth. This, for Ott, then, is the underlying consequence of Bonhoeffer's attempt to articulate Christ as reality. Anything, we recall, that is independent of Christ must be deemed an abstraction. Ott writes:

Both starting points, both foundations, seem to be insufficient. We cannot begin from the reality of man

isolated in the first instance from the event of Christ and explained anthropologically, if we are to understand what has taken place in the *Christus pro nobis*; we cannot do so for the reason that the event of Christ itself demands so to be understood that only from it there becomes intelligible in all its depths what man is in reality. Barth's placing of Christology before all other aspects of the doctrine of Reconciliation, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Pisteology, here finds its foundation and justification. But on the other side neither can we begin by setting down a merely Christological 'that', unrelated in the first place such as that proclaimed in the title 'Christ', or 'that' which serves as an axiom and from which any existential relation is subsequently established. And finally, it is also not sufficient to say that the two foundations, that in the title 'Christ' and that in the threefold need of man, the 'revelational positivist' and the 'anthropological' bases must be mutually complementary, that they must converge upon one another. For they cannot come together at all unless they are thought of from the beginning in their original correlation. The mere setting down together of different aspects is a frequently practised method in theology, but never a satisfactory one, because the subject-matter of theology is always a single one and there must therefore always be shown in its different aspects their inner, structural relation (DB 417).

Ott's proposal can be further clarified by examining his account of Christ's priestly office. Ott observes that Christ's role as priest has traditionally involved two basic aspects: his satisfaction for humankind's sins and his role as intercessor on behalf of human beings. Ott notes that in some quarters - particularly the Bultmannian - the idea of Christ's satisfaction has been interpreted as mythological (i.e., as existentially irrelevant). Nonetheless, Ott believes that an existential interpretation of Christ's satisfaction can still be carried out.

To begin with, Ott argues that Christ's role as priest is best understood in the context of his solidarity with the

human condition. According to Ott, the structure of solidarity grounds and unites the two basic structures of Christ's priestly role (i.e., his intercession and satisfaction). In each of these roles, Christ is at one with the human condition. Consequently, Ott proposes that the structure of solidarity offers the most comprehensive means for interpreting his priestly role. Here his analysis is essentially phenomenological. That is, his aim is to show the interconnectedness and unity of various structures of meaning.

From here, Ott proceeds to argue that the structure of solidarity provides the basis for an existential interpretation of Christ's role as priest. Ott's argument hinges on the assumption that human beings are essentially social creatures. According to Ott, persons are ontological participants in their fellow human beings. The same, he argues, is also true of Christ's participation in the human condition, since Christ, too, is a person. For Ott, then, the sociality of existence is the ontological basis for illustrating the connection (i.e, the solidarity) between Christ's satisfaction and humankind's experience. That is, it allows for an existential interpretation of his priestly satisfaction.

Despite the fact that Ott's proposal is provisional, his intention is nonetheless clear. By widening the scope of existential interpretation, he aims to interpret contents of the Gospel that Bultmann excludes as being mytho-

logical. (DB 413). Here this is done by breaking through the individualist restriction in Bultmann's concept of self-understanding.

Finally, in keeping with his search for a universal Christological ontology, Ott proposes that the Threefold Office be interpreted in such a way that it speaks to those outside the explicit Church. Hence Ott proposes an existential interpretation of the kind anticipated by Bonhoeffer and enacted, in part, by Rahner. Ott writes:

I should prefer to expound the Threefold Office of Christ in terms of the Christological existential rather than in terms of the self-understanding of the Christian faith. Christ is the Mediator between God and man, and it is the whole of human reality, and not merely the self-understanding of the Christian faith within the community with the stamp of a certain tradition, which is determined before God through his Mediatorship. Hence it is not just in my opinion sufficient to describe the reality of Jesus Christ by describing the structure of self-understanding within the community. Very much, and much that is essential, can be said in the description of this understanding, but we are not entitled to begin by limiting our theological horizon of thought in such a way (DB 413).³⁶

³⁶ Ott's attempt to clarify the Christological structures of reality also has significant implications for the preaching office of the Church. Indeed Ott claims that the "existential interpretation of Christology is implicitly contained" in the effective proclamation of the Gospel (DB 438). In other words, theology is of crucial importance for the preacher, since it articulates the Christological structures (e.g. The Threefold Office) that illuminate Christ as a "structural moment of existence" (DB 427). This means, in turn, that the preacher's task does not consist in bringing in Christ from without (i.e., revelational positivism), but of showing how Christ is already present in the depths of our own experience. In this respect, theology serves the preaching office of the Church.

5. The Personal God

In the second volume of Reality and Faith, Ott takes his programme a step further. Having set his sights on a universal Christological ontology, he must now show that the "all-embracing horizon" is the personal God of the Bible (DB 360). This objective accords with his search for an incarnational ontology, since the personal God is Jesus Christ himself.

Ott begins from within the theological circle. That is, he starts with the assumption that a personal God exists. He does not, however, start with this assumption uncritically.³⁷ He proposes to show that God as person is an indispensable condition for a comprehensive account of our experience as human beings.

To begin with, Ott proposes that talk of God as person only proceed by analogy to human existence. For Ott, however, the idea of person must first be clarified before it is properly used. Consequently, Ott proposes a phenomenological and ontological investigation of the idea of person. His goal, he claims, is to elucidate the "interconnectedness" and "unity" of the various personalist structures as well as to

³⁷ In this regard, Ott writes:

. . . what this means is that [theology] 'proves' the reality of God from the world understood beforehand in a certain way, not that it does so against the evidence of the phenomena (DB 359).

In other words, theology assumes the existence of God, but it then shows how this assumption is evidenced in lived experience.

clarify their particular kind of being (Seinsart).³⁸ From here he can take the first few steps toward articulating God by analogy to human existence. For Ott, however, this step taken by itself is insufficient because God's person while similar to humanity's, is also radically different. Hence Ott proposes that the idea of analogy be thought in conjunction with the idea of God as humanity's "structural limit" (strukturellen Begrenzung) (PG 21). Ott clarifies his point as follows:

If we talk of God as a person, if, for example, we speak of God's love, then first we must demonstrate in the model of interpersonal relations what 'love' can mean in order that our talk can become at all comprehensible. Thereafter, however, because the talk is to be about the

³⁸ Ott's search for the "interconnectedness" and "unity" of the various personalist structures is integral to his understanding of a truly phenomenological theology. Simply put, Ott intends to expose the structures of reality as these are revealed in the light of revelation. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Ott rejects both the method of distinction and the additiven Definitionen.

According to Ott, the method of distinction defines a phenomenon by excluding what it is not. Ott observes, for example, that to say of the resurrection that it is not an historical fact, but that it is not a myth either, fails to illuminate the essence of the resurrection. Ott acknowledges that the method of distinction may have played a legitimate role in early Christianity for the purpose of excluding heresy (i.e., by defining what Christianity was not). Nonetheless, Ott implies that the primary task of theology today is to describe as positively as possible the structural contents of faith. This is because the basic problem today is the credibility of faith, not heresy.

Ott also rejects the additiven Definitionen. According to Ott, the additiven Definitionen merely lists a phenomenon's characteristics without exposing the essence of the phenomenon itself. Or as Ott puts it, its characteristics remain unrelated as if they were "pearls on a string" (RU 28).

For these reasons, Ott turns to the phenomenological method (i.e., to think phenomena in their inter-connectedness and unity). See RU 27-28 and DS 36 & 26-28.

love of God, we must, beyond every analogy between God and human beings, demonstrate to what extent the love of God sustains, limits, and determines human life differently than the love of any human for a fellow human being has yet ever been able to do. Here, too, the personhood of the human being remains in sight. But now the personhood of God is no longer thought as an analogy but is thought rather as the grounding of human personhood or as a fundamental situation-altering encounter for this human personhood (PG 22).

Despite Ott's use of the term 'analogy', it is important to note that he appeals to this term reluctantly. Analogy has traditionally meant that when a word is used of both God and humanity, it is not intended in precisely the same way "in both cases" (G 101). Here, of course, we cannot go into the intricacies of analogy. Our point is simply that Ott's reluctance to use this term is to avoid the impression that analogy is an abstract principle. To avoid this problem, (i.e., to avoid an abstract speaking about God and man), Ott locates a basis in human experience from which the principle of analogy can be phenomenologically derived. He finds this basis in the everyday experience of human communication. Ott writes:

We should not conclude only from the fact of similarity between different things.... We do not conclude that the other man perhaps also has experiences similar to ours; but we communicate quite genuinely. That is why here in personal communication, and not in the observation of comparable things, lies the foundation of a phenomenologically based concept of analogy (PG 24).

We turn, now, to the first step in Ott's clarification of the idea of person. This, he argues, is necessary, for if God is to be thought by analogy to human existence, we must

first be clear about the meaning of being a person.

(a) The Need for a Personalist Ontology

Ott begins his enquiry by entering into dialogue with Martin Buber and the early Heidegger. Both, he argues, have taken significant steps toward developing personalist ontologies that overcome the categories of traditional metaphysics. To avoid these categories himself, Ott draws a sharp distinction between the spheres of the "what" and the "who". The sphere of the "what" is reserved for sub-personal, or better perhaps, non-existing entities. The sphere of the "who", by contrast, is reserved for existing entities or persons. For Ott, as for Heidegger and Buber, the two modes of being are radically different. To interpret the "who" in terms of the "what" is to ignore some crucial distinctions. Ott believes that this has been the case with traditional metaphysics (PG 68.). This, he argues, has tended to interpret persons in the categories of substance and essence. Ott cites Aristotle's distinction between possibility and actuality as an excellent case in point. This assumes that the reality of an object is pre-determined by the "law of its inner development" (PG 73). A plant, for example, can be no more than its seed's inevitable outcome (i.e., the seed's potentiality). For Ott, however, the distinction drawn by Aristotle ignores some basic facts that belong to human reality. It ignores, above all, that human beings are free and historical agents. That is, by ruling out the genuinely novel, and by assuming that

objects are pre-determined from the start, it fails to express the deepest levels of what it means to be a person (PG 72-75). From here, Ott proceeds to develop a more adequate conceptuality for articulating the structures of personal experience. Given the complexity of Ott's analysis, we examine the highlights only.

To begin with, it is Ott's conviction that by virtue of being human, we have some understanding, if only implicit, of what it means to be a person. Still, Ott believes that the fundamental trait of personal existence has yet to be adequately articulated. In search of this trait, Ott excludes several traditional alternatives. First, he rejects the view that our most basic trait is the experience of responsibility. He does so on the basis that this would exclude infants and the mentally ill from being considered as human beings. Ott claims that while neither group may experience responsibility, we still assume that each of these groups is constituted by persons. So, too, he rejects the view that our most basic trait is to be found in human dignity. Here he argues that many societies have shown little respect for the rights and dignity of man. They seem, in fact, to know very little about them. Finally, he rejects the view that our most basic trait is to be found in individuality. According to Ott, individual interests in many societies are subordinated to the larger group (PG 75).

Excluding these options, Ott proposes his own alternative. In a word, Ott argues that humanity's most fundamental trait is its capacity for mutuality, or what Ott calls "the between" (das Zwischen). Here Ott is profoundly indebted to the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, for whom this concept is decisive. According to Ott, our experiences of responsibility, dignity, and individuality, would not be possible were it not for our capacity to relate. Responsibility, for example, assumes a capacity for mutuality as the basis of obligation. So, too, the claim that humanity has rights is only possible if human beings are capable of reciprocity. Finally, even individuality implies a more fundamental relation, since it is only in terms of others that being different makes sense (G 41). The "between", then, is the transcendental condition of each of these experiences.

Ott further clarifies "the between" by distinguishing it from its non-personalist counterpart. Here he argues that our capacity for mutuality is strikingly different from the phenomenon of mere reaction. If change, he notes, is inserted into a machine, it gives the customer whatever he chooses or wants. It reacts to the insertion of the money. But, according to Ott, what the machine lacks is both the capacity to intend the customer, and the corresponding awareness that the customer intends it. By contrast, in relationships typical of persons, each participant always intends the other (G 42). The other, of course, may be the object of hate,

love, or indifference, but that he is intended is always assumed from the start.

For Ott, moreover, something always occurs between both persons in a genuinely reciprocal relation. In a dialogue, for example, solutions arise to problems that cannot be attributed to either of the discussion's participants. They arise, as it were, from the ontological space between both parties. Similarly Ott rejects the idea that love and friendship can be properly understood by analysing the attitudes of two or more "isolated subjects" (G 47). As Buber puts it, love and friendship can only be understood as an "I - Thou" relation. Of importance here, too, is Ott's attempt to overcome an individualistic thinking of the kind that plagued Bultmann. By arguing that persons are invariably related to others, he clears the way for a genuinely social ontology (G 45).

In short, Ott describes "the between" as the fundamental thought-form of personal reality. As we shall see, this proves particularly helpful in articulating God's mode of disclosure.³⁹

³⁹ In the second volume of Reality and Faith, Ott develops the personalist structures at considerably greater length. He describes the four most important as the Perichorese, "nearness" (die Nähe), "being-with" (Mitsein), and authenticity. Each, he argues, presupposes the reality of "the between" (das Zwischen).

By the Perichorese, Ott refers to the traditional teaching of the Trinity that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each participate in one divine essence. This, he argues, can also be of assistance in articulating human reality, since human beings, like the three modes of the Trinity, are in-

tegrally connected from the start. According to Ott, the connectedness of persons can be revealed phenomenologically through our everyday experience of moods. Much like Heidegger in Being and Time, Ott believes that human beings are always under the influence of some kind of mood. Of significance for us, however, is Ott's contention that because moods are disclosed through the phenomenon of "the between", they also disclose that other persons are integral "parts" of our being. In other words, they disclose the fact that human beings are integrally related in a manner analogous to the triune modes.

As for the personalist structure of "nearness" (die Nähe), Ott distinguishes it from the quantitative conception of proximity that is usually applied to things. One, he notes, can often feel closer to a friend who lives in another country than to a person with whom one works. This, however, is only possible if one acknowledges that proximity is not determined simply by a quantitative measurement but by a qualitative meaning as well. Indeed Ott argues that the objective conception of measurement is ultimately rooted in its personalist-existential counterpart.

In his discussion of "being with" and "authenticity", Ott's indebtedness to the early Heidegger is evident once again. Here, however, Ott pushes Heidegger's analysis in a significantly more social direction. Ott begins his account by observing that authentic existence in Being and Time is described as essentially solitary. The individual's plight, according to Heidegger, is that of being lost in the crowd (das Man). Here he loses his authentic self in his relations with other persons. For Heidegger, however, the individual's awareness of his own mortality can restore his authentic selfhood. By acknowledging the fact that dying is something that he must do alone, his sense of self can be reawakened and freed from the norms of the crowd. In short, Ott's point is that Heidegger links authenticity to the solitary state of the individual. Ott, however, questions this linkage by appealing to "the between". It is Ott's belief that authenticity need not be as solitary an experience as Heidegger would appear to suggest. In the case, he argues, of a friend who is dying, it is not uncommon to undergo the experience that a "piece of our being is lost . . ." (PG 101). This, he claims, is only possible if one assumes "a genuine solidarity" between human beings that is significantly different from Heidegger's notion of the crowd (das Man). In sum, Ott argues that a genuine solidarity is only possible if one assumes the reality of "the between" and the reality of the Perichorese.

This, then, is an interesting example of the way in which Ott uses the social ontology of Buber to broaden Heidegger's individualism, and by implication, Bultmann's, whose philosophical anthropology is derived from the early Heidegger (PG 83-102).

(b) The Priority of the Personal: The Relativization of the Scientific-Technological Viewpoint

Ott's clarification of the personalist structures of reality has important ontological implications. His goal, we recall, is not to substitute one set of thought-forms with another. He intends to show that the being typical of persons holds for reality in toto. By showing this, he can then establish an ontological horizon for articulating God as person. For Ott, moreover, the current task is urgent due to the hegemony of the scientific-technological viewpoint. While Ott acknowledges that the positivist viewpoint is valuable, he denies its claims to exhaust the whole of reality. Indeed Ott proposes that the calculative viewpoint of positivism is ultimately rooted in a personalist view of the world and that the latter comprehends reality in a way that the former cannot. Ott writes:

It . . . looks as though personal and historical reality constitutes only a very small part in a vast cosmos. But this impression is lost when we remember that our personal experience, our being persons, is the mirror in which the whole of reality is reflected for us, the microcosm in and through which alone the macrocosm of the whole creation is accessible to us. Even the work of the scientist, who investigates the world in an exact, experimental, and un-historical way, is also rooted in his personal life history. Without his personal commitment and his passionate quest for knowledge, such research, and this picture of nature which we have, would not be possible . . . A philosophical personalism which concerns itself with the special character of personal and historical existence as something to be contrasted with the scientific-technological attitude and approach to reality should not from the outset limit itself to and be determined by such a narrow basis as this. Nor should it regard this one segment of the whole of reality as its sole concern. For it could also be the case that the scientific-technological understanding of the world (the view which

prevails today), does not in any sense deal with reality itself, that is, with reality as a whole, but merely with the world as it is open to partial investigation. Although at this level it arrives at correct and successful results (that is at results which are successful and effective in manipulating nature), it nevertheless cannot grasp the inner reality of individual natural phenomena. On the other hand, it may well be that 'personhood' as the microcosm in which the world is reflected to us as a whole is the means through which we are granted basic insights into the way in which the world in its essential nature can and must be understood (G 48-9).

The comprehensive character of Ott's personalist ontology is particularly evident in his discussion of meaning and time. Of importance here is Ott's conviction that meaning and time constitute the horizon through which the whole of reality is mediated (PG 103). To illustrate his point, Ott distinguishes between the scientific and personalist conceptions of both.

To begin with, Ott argues that the scientific or positivistic viewpoint reduces meaning to the status of a function. Ott's point here is that the meaning of an object is reduced to its role in a particular mechanical process. The meaning of a gear, for example, is interpreted as its function in the working of a clock. To understand the gear is to see it as determined by every part of the mechanism. According to Ott, this is possible because science works with statistically probable laws. For Ott, however, the positivist approach ignores the way in which meaning is actually experienced. Here he points to two facts in particular: first, that reality is experienced as a succession of unique events; and second, that these events are always experienced as demanding

our personal response. Ott observes, for example, that we have no experience of the "average man" as such (PG 107). This, he argues, is an ideal construction, the reality of which is based on statistical laws. According to Ott, our experience of persons always occurs as a unique and singular event (PG 103-12). In a similar vein, Ott argues that our scientific drive to control suppresses the experience of being challenged to respond to reality. Ott writes:

If what is indeed real for us, is the absolutely concrete, the non-systematic (das Uneinreihbare), then we have to respond to it. The absolutely concrete 'intends' us. Therefore it asks for an answer. In its peculiar sense, it means something to us. Significance, however, means just this: that something is said to me - that I am addressed and have to respond. When we are pushed to the ultimate concretion of reality, we must go back to categories of question and answer in order to correspond to the non-systematical. What the death of a loved one means to me, cannot be understood through any practical and tested rules, but, if at all, only that I find myself questioned and having to answer (PG 109-10).

Ott's drive to relativize the scientific-technological viewpoint is particularly evident in his dialogue with Gerhard Ebeling. Ott's dialogue with Ebeling is the sequel to a prior discussion in which Ebeling had been critical of Hans Albert's defense of critical rationalism. According to Ebeling, the latter's argument simply defends the "primary trend . . . [of] the scientific-technological age".⁴⁰ The consequence is that the calculative approach to reality is granted complete hegemony. Ebeling, by contrast, draws a qualitative distinc-

⁴⁰ Heinrich Ott, "Heiliger Geist und Säkulare Realität," Theologische Zeitschrift, 5 (Sept.- Oct. 1977): 342.

tion between machbaren and verantwortbaren existence arguing that the Verantwortbare is also constitutive of existence. While Ott believes that Ebeling is essentially correct, he is nevertheless critical. Ott's criticism focuses on the fact that Ebeling restricts the sphere of the Verantwortbare by placing it alongside the sphere of calculative reality. Ott argues, by contrast, that the kind of knowing appropriate to the calculable (i.e., the explanatory model of science), is originally grounded in the personalist-hermeneutical viewpoint (i.e., the Verantwortbare).⁴¹ To illustrate his point, Ott cites the following example:

Let us assume that an intelligent person who does not play chess is watching a chess player, but cannot ask any questions while doing so. Through a synthesizing observing of the individual moves, he will by and by be able to find out the general rules of the game. In doing so, he acts in a scientific-explanatory manner: out of the regularly recurring similarities of the individual moves he develops general hypothesis, theories, which then again should explain new particularities. Through such specific observations the theories are then verified or falsified. But an observer can proceed in this manner only if he has previously understood what this is: a game, a competition between two partners. He must be capable of interpreting the whole complex which he is watching as a game situation. This interpretation cannot be explained to him yet again by going back to more general laws. One can try this to be sure (for example, by assuming a human 'play instinct' as a general law or something like that), but such generally reductive explanations will hardly be substantive. They will offer no substitute for the fact that the observer understands the game situation as such, that he sees the situation interpretively, that he sees it as a possibility, one in which he himself could

⁴¹ Ibid., 342.

Here Ott's criticism of Ebeling is reminiscent of his earlier criticism of Bultmann. Ott, we recall, had been critical of Bultmann for drawing the same kind of wedge between the objective and existential orders.

participate. And only through such an interpretation, through such understanding, does the explanatory analyzing of connections have any initial framework at all, a basis upon which analyzing can begin. It is in this sense that the thesis was intended: that the interpreting cognition is more original than the explaining cognition and that this latter has its ground, its basis, in the former... [in] the cognition of everyday life-experience.⁴²

⁴²Ibid., 342.

Ott's conviction that the personalist-hermeneutical viewpoint surpasses that of the scientific-technological is nicely illustrated in his dialogue with Karl-Otto-Apel. Apel's position had been formulated earlier in his response to Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas. Here he struck a mediating position between Gadamer's defense of the hermeneutical standpoint and Habermas's claim that a comprehensive analysis of humanity also requires the objective viewpoint of science (RU 77). Assuming merit in both approaches, Apel takes the position that the hermeneutical approach is appropriate for the sphere of history whereas that of science is appropriate for the sphere of Naturgeschichte. However, for those aspects of history that fall in the category of what Apel calls the "non-intended" or the "non-intelligible", he recommends a "quasi-objective explanatory science" (RU 78).

To illustrate his point, Apel takes the example of psychoanalysis. Apel argues that in psychoanalysis it sometimes becomes necessary to use a quasi-scientific approach, because the reasons for a patient's behavior may not be clear even to the patient himself. In such cases, Apel believes that it is legitimate to suspend, if only temporarily, the hermeneutical standpoint. According to Apel, during this time the doctor may discover that his patient's behavior is ultimately grounded in a suppressed neurosis that is no longer accessible to the patient's conscious life. Having discovered this, however, Apel argues that the doctor must then bring his scientific analysis to the subjective awareness of his patient. That is, his scientific account must then be pushed in a personalist-hermeneutical direction (RU 79). Ott's position, in turn, is developed in view of Apel's.

To begin with, Ott questions Apel's assumption that the "non-intelligible" lies outside the personalistic-hermeneutical standpoint (i.e., that it can only be understood in a quasi-scientific way). Ott's point here is that Apel restricts the scope of the hermeneutical to that which is explicitly understood. For Ott, however, the sphere of the "non-intended" or the apparently "non-intelligible" is also accessible to the hermeneutical standpoint. Ott cites several examples to illustrate his point:

In sum, the gist of Ott's argument is that our "everyday" (alltägliche) experience of meaning - or what Ott calls "interpretive knowledge" (deutendes Erkennen) - is the ontological basis of our calculative approach to reality.⁴³ This means, in turn, that the mode of knowing appropriate to persons would seem to offer the most comprehensive way of

a) Thought, he argues, is constituted by the not yet intended, or better perhaps, by a surplus of meaning that breaks into conscious thought. While the latter is not explicitly intelligible, it serves nonetheless as the basis of conscious thinking (i.e., it is meaningful). Or as Ott puts it, it serves as the "schöpferischen Hohlräume" from which all thinking ultimately originates (RU 82). We shall discuss this point in greater detail shortly.

b) So, too, Ott argues that the meaning of a text always transcends the intention of its author. Ott's point again is that the phenomenon of meaning cannot be restricted to the explicitly understood, since the meaning of a text is capable of growth and expansion (see pp. 8-10).

c) And finally, Ott cites our everyday experience of questioning. Here his point is that when we ask questions, we do this without an explicit knowledge of what we are asking about. Otherwise, we would not ask questions at all, since we would already have the answers. Nonetheless, as Ott observes, we continue to assume that the questions we ask are meaningful.

In sum, Ott argues that what he calls the "dunkle Einschlag des Nichtintendierten" does not belong to "Naturgeschichte" but to the sphere of "Geistesverstehens". In other words, what Apel consigns to the sphere of objective analysis (i.e., science) can be adequately understood in the personalist-hermeneutical context. Again, Ott argues for a comprehensive understanding of the personalist-hermeneutical standpoint and for the relativization of its scientific-technological counterpart. See, too, Heinrich Ott, "L'Expérience de L'Ouvert' comme Expérience Fondamentale D'Une Anthropologie Chrétienne," Démythisation et Idéologie ed. Enrico Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1973), esp. 72-81.

⁴³ Heinrich Ott, "Heiliger Geist und Säkulare Realität," 345.

interpreting reality in toto. In short, then, this is a crucial step in Ott's attempt to show that our ultimate horizon is not some impersonal "it" (i.e., positivism), but the personal God of the Bible.

As suggested earlier, it is Ott's belief that human experience is not only constituted by meaning; it is also constituted by time. Ott believes, much as he did about meaning, that science or the positivist viewpoint, ignores our human experience. Positivism, he argues, interprets time as a series of punctiliar nows when in actual fact we experience time as the meaningful unity of the past, present, and future. Characteristically, he also argues that the positivist account is a secondary and derivative abstraction that is ontologically grounded in its more original personalist counterpart (PG 125-31).

Having discussed meaning and time in a personalistic context, Ott proceeds with a phenomenological demonstration of their interconnectedness and unity. This is an important task, since Ott has claimed that each is constitutive of the other. To illustrate their unity, Ott points to the common experience that meaning grows and develops. First, he draws a significant distinction between that which is consciously experienced (die Erlebnissphäre) and that which is actually meaningful (die Sinn-sphäre). Ott argues that while both overlap, the latter is larger than the former. That is, a surplus of meaning always exists over and above that which we

consciously experience. He observes, for example, that our appreciation of a work of art often develops over time. We see things about it that we had not seen before. For this to be possible, Ott argues that the sphere of the not yet explicit (i.e., the Sinn-sphäre), must be interpreted as the constitutive basis of conscious or explicit experience. That is, it must be seen as the reservoir of meaning that prompts and enables our deepening experience of art. Indeed Ott speaks of an "entelechy" of meaning in which meaning and time are integrally united (PG 134). Just as our growing awareness of the work of art presupposes an unthought dimension of meaning, so, too, it presupposes our standing into the future of its yet to be explicated meaning (PG 174).

Elsewhere, Ott refers to the Sinn-Sphäre as the sphere of the "not-intended" (RU 79). Here, too, it is also described as constitutive of human thought. According to Ott, its constitutive role in thinking is particularly evident in the common experience that thoughts come and go "as if out of nothing" (i.e., out of the "non-intended") (RU 78). Ott's point here is that thoughts break in on our conscious world from without and exhibit the character of gift.

Thus far, then, we have examined Ott's attempt to show that the whole of reality is mediated through our experience as persons. Indeed Ott proposes that our self-understanding as persons may offer the most appropriate way of interpreting reality in toto. To argue this, however, is not yet to have

shown that God as person embraces reality as such. To show this, Ott must first address a number of other questions, not the least of which is how to speak of God as person, if the reality of God is infinitely different from humanity.

6. God as Supra-Personal

While Ott insists that God is no less than a person, he also insists that God as person is radically different from humanity. Or as Ott puts it, God is "supra-personal" (PG 165).

(a) The "More" (das Mehr) of God's Person

Not surprisingly, Ott proposes that the "more" of God's person be demonstrated and shown within the scope of human experience. This, he argues, must be done in such a way that the uniqueness of God's person does not outstrip our human experience entirely. As we noted earlier, Ott's approach to talk of God consists of two basic features: the idea of analogy and structural limit (see pp. 257-59). Ott, we recall, took the position that by itself analogy is insufficient because it fails to clarify how God's person is infinitely different from our own. Here, too, it is worthy of note that he also rejects the via negativa and the via eminentiae. The via negativa speaks of God's person in negative terms only. For Ott, however, it is not enough merely to assert that if humanity is finite, God is infinite and so on. This, he argues, does little to show the uniqueness of God's person in the sphere of human relations. For

similar reasons, he also rejects the via eminentiae. This ascribes attributes to God that are infinitely greater than humanity. God's superlative love, for example, is clearly distinguished from that typical of humans. Again, however, Ott claims that the via eminentiae fails to show "in what sense" the personhood of God is unique (G 101). It merely asserts this as a fact.

Ott insists, then, that the ineffability of God's person (i.e., his "more") be clarified in the context of human experience (PG 174). That is, it must be shown as positively limiting human reality. Appealing to metaphor, Ott offers several clues as to what this might entail. He suggests, for example, that God as person is constitutive of humanity like a third dimension is constitutive of a second. While the third dimension is constitutive of the latter, it also surpasses the second dimension completely. Similarly, just as a child's capacity to think and reason is related to, but radically surpassed by an adult's, so, too, God as person constitutes and transcends the wisdom of humankind (PG 180-81).

For Ott, moreover, faith by its very nature is aware of the fact that God is constitutive of human experience in a way not possible for humans. This, he argues, is especially evident in the everyday phenomenon of prayer. Here, he observes, the believer addresses God with his fragmentary thoughts and wishes (PG 174). He waits, as it were, for both

to be brought to fulfillment. For Ott, however, he waits in such way that God is allowed to answer these prayers in his own distinctive way. This, he argues, is indicative of the fact that faith is aware that the personhood of God is radically different from its own. Of significance here, too, is Ott's contention that in bringing these prayers to fulfillment, God remains present "at the tip" of human experience. (PG 174). In other words, while the personhood of God surpasses our humanity completely, it can still be articulated in the scope of human experience.

(b) The Problem of Anthropomorphism

Having argued that the personhood of God can only be conceived by analogy to human existence, Ott proceeds to deflect the charge that belief in God is an instance of anthropomorphism.

Ott begins his discussion by conceding that the language of faith is frequently anthropomorphic. He notes, for example, that it is common to speak of the eye and the hand of God. Nonetheless faith, he argues, is aware from the start that images like these are to be understood symbolically. That is, they are not to be taken in their human sense but are to be seen instead as referring to a person of a distinctly "higher order" (G 57). Indeed Ott argues that the reason faith occasionally uses non-personal symbols such as sea, abyss, and light, is evidence of its awareness that the personhood of God is radically different from its own.

For Ott, moreover, to conceive of God as impersonal is to become the victim of a true anthropomorphism. This, he claims, especially applies to those conceptions of God that affirm his reality as infinite while excluding his reality as personal. The consequence is that God becomes an idol that cannot feel or hear (G 53). He is reduced, as it were, to an object of human calculation. Ott writes:

Whenever man thinks of God as an impersonal (subpersonal) 'It', he thinks Him in truth anthropomorphically. Anthropomorphism, the forcing into human boundaries, is the most pronounced where man accords God a name, whose contents he cannot represent (the infinite), while at the same time denying to God what he himself has: 'hearing' and 'seeing', the consciousness of the partner, personal being. Precisely here, God - thought as an apersonal-infinite - becomes a speechless idol manufactured according to the measure of the human power of comprehension. That non-representable name 'the infinite', which a religious intimation of its own limits, reveals to man, remains within the limits of human capacity for it simply marks negatively the boundary itself. Man says with the name 'infinite' not only the 'not', the negative, which he himself does not yet have the capacity to understand: namely, that he himself, man and his capacity to comprehend are limited. By that he nevertheless presupposes that the 'not' is not 'nothing'. He simply decides no longer to say that the 'positive' that corresponds to this 'negative' - the positive contents of that which limits him. Despite the fact that he calls the ineffable reality of God 'infinite' and thereby 'indescribable', he makes it disposable in his thinking, precisely by conceiving of it as boundary and limiting it to that. The most that he can expect for himself, and what he can expect and desire on earth only from a human partner, namely, recognition, security, love, fidelity; that he cannot expect from God because he thinks God in a structure that can never provide this. (PG 170-1)

Given Ott's claim that the reality of God cannot be described in finite or human terms, and given his denial that God is an infinite "It", the question arises as to how to avoid both

alternatives and still speak of God as personal. According to Ott, the answer lies in coming to understand that when faith speaks of God, it speaks of God symbolically.

(c) Talk of God as Symbolic and Non-Objectifying

As we just suggested, it is Ott's conviction that the symbol offers the most appropriate means of articulating our experience before God. Ott's position hinges on the point that the positivist conception of language fails to express the full depth and meaning of human experience. This, he claims, is a significant problem, since God encounters humanity in the depths of human experience.

Characteristically, Ott takes the position that the positivist conception of language reduces reality to a series of calculable conventions. This means, too, that human beings are reduced to entities whose meaning is univocally defined. For Ott, however, the positivist account of language ignores, in principle, a significant dimension of reality. This, he calls the sphere of "the unspeakable" which is also described as constitutive of human experience.⁴⁴ The question arises, however, as to how "the unspeakable" can be articulated at all, if it is not a determinate thing, that is, if it lies outside the positivist conception of language. Ott writes:

How then can the unspeakable concern the human being, while it is not a determinate specifiable being which can be useful or important for humans within a specified scale of values? Here we must have recourse to the concept of

⁴⁴ Heinrich Ott, "Symbol und Wirklichkeit," Theologische Literaturzeitung 8 (August 1974): 562.

the 'fundamental situation'. The unspeakable can affect the human being in that it concerns him in his fundamental situation, therefore in the depths of his existence which is at the basis of his scales and all his caring environment with specifiably beings. . . . Why and in what respect is the unspeakable completely unspeakable anyway? It is unspeakable because, and to the extent that it concerns the human being on that deep level of his reality, which is always constitutively at the basis of all his involvement with the unspeakable (RU 58-59).

By implication, Ott's argument is that because "the unspeakable" encloses our existence completely, it is inaccessible to positivism whose scope is particular things. Precisely for this reason, Ott speaks of "the unspeakable" as encountered by humanity in the totality of its experience (i.e., its "fundamental situation"). The "unspeakable", then, is not to be understood as a particular item of experience; it is to be seen instead as the constitutive horizon of human experience in general.

To illustrate his point, Ott cites the phenomenon of moods. Moods, he argues, are an integral dimension of every human experience. They belong, as it were, to the deepest levels of our self-understanding. In this respect, moods are distinguishable from encounters with things in the world. Ott writes:

The things with which I am involved I can identify unequivocally in coming to understanding with other human beings. The moods, however, in which I am involved with things, these primary experiences and the realities which I experience in them, I cannot identify unequivocally. In the hope, the love, the joy, the pain which I feel, there is something of reality, of experience, which is overarching, which cannot be conveyed in the sentence 'Such and such is the case' (RU 47-48).

The question arises that if experiences like these cannot be articulated by positivism, how are they to be articulated at all? This, for Ott, is the primary role of the symbol. According to Ott, the symbol lets "the unspeakable" speak because human beings are constituted by the language of positivism and the reality of "the unspeakable".⁴⁵ This means that when man experiences a symbol, his everyday reality is penetrated. What is disclosed are the deepest levels of his own experience of reality (i.e., "the unsayable").⁴⁶ Ott observes, for example, that the symbolic speaking of a poem can often articulate a mood in a way not possible for the conventional language of positivism.⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, Ott argues that religious symbols share the same kind of structure as those of symbols in general. That is, their primary goal is to bring to speech an unspeakable dimension of experience. Here, of course, Ott means the unspeakable experience of being constituted and embraced by the personal God of the Bible.

More specifically, Ott argues that talk of God as symbolic rules out two forms of thinking: (i) the positivist

⁴⁵ Heinrich Ott, "Symbol und Wirklichkeit," 562.

⁴⁶ In this regard, Ott's account of miracles is particularly interesting. Ott describes miracles as the symbolic illumination of a deeper level of reality as opposed to a break in the natural or causal order. Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog vol. 3, 134-35.

⁴⁷ Heinrich Ott, "Symbol und Wirklichkeit," 570-71.

conception of sacred history (Heilsgeschichte) and (ii) the idea of language as merely symbolic.⁴⁸ What Ott rejects by the former is any reduction of theological statement to a fixed and univocal meaning. While this, he argues, may be appropriate for the positivist analysis of things (i.e., particular items of experience), it fails to express God's encounter with the whole of our self-understanding. To illustrate his point, Ott cites the example of the crucifixion. Here, he observes, positivism can establish that a person named Jesus was crucified. It can show, in effect, that such and such happened and objectively reconstruct the details of this event. For Ott, however, this ignores the true significance of the Cross, since the Cross, above all, is a current challenge to our entire way of existing. The Cross, then, is most appropriately interpreted as a symbol, since only a symbol can evoke God's presence in the whole of human experience (i.e., evoke "the unsayable" in the depths of human reality) (RU 60-62).

If Ott rejects a positivistic speaking about God, he is equally emphatic in rejecting the idea that symbols are merely symbolic. Ott argues that for those who assume this, symbols are reducible to the contents of human consciousness. For Ott, however, this is to ignore their most basic characteristic viz. that symbols always participate in the

⁴⁸ Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 3, 209.

reality of their intended objects. It follows, then, that symbols like Lord and Father always participate in the lordship and fatherhood of God.

So, too, Ott makes it clear that symbols cannot be unequivocally identified with their object. Thus the lordship of God is qualitatively different from its human equivalent. Here it is noteworthy that Ott's interpretation of symbol reinforces his doctrine of analogy. Moreover, it deflects the view that talk about God is merely anthropomorphic.

Ott's appeal to the symbol must also be seen in tandem with his ongoing commitment to the possibility of a non-objectifying thinking and speaking in theology. Now, however, Ott situates his argument in an explicitly personalist context. Ott's point of departure is Buber's assertion that "although we cannot talk about God, we can nevertheless speak to him" (G 102). Ott's assumption here is that the dialogical relation established by God with humanity is all-inclusive. In other words, it is impossible to adopt an objective attitude toward God outside of the dialogue itself. In short, talk of God can only proceed as prayer.

Ott believes that this holds, too, for discussions "about" God with the non-believer. The most, he argues, "that a believer can do is to bring the other . . . into the dialogical relationship" (G 102). It appears that what Ott means

here is a theology of "showing" and "pointing" in which God is revealed as dialogically present in the non-believer's life (G 15). Significantly, however, Ott concedes that on occasion it may appear as if God is being spoken of objectively. This, he claims, is particularly true in theological discussion. Nevertheless, this, too, if properly understood, is ultimately rooted in the dialogical relation between God and humankind. Ott writes:

. . . when there is any discussion about God among believers, or between believers and non-believers, then in this case also the 'he' which refers to God must remain, as in the Psalms, a disguised 'thou', and whatever the believer says must retain its basis in prayer. When I say, for example, 'God is omnipotent', or, 'God is omniscient', it only seems that I am making an objective statement about God. What I really mean is: 'Thou God, canst do all things', and 'Thou God, knowest all things' (G 104).

It would appear to us, however, that the idea of a "disguised thou" (italics mine) seems to imply some degree of objectification. If it does, then Ott's position is essentially that of Bultmann viz., that objectification is unavoidable in theological statement. As we suggested earlier, however, some forms of thinking are probably less objectifying than others and thus more appropriate for the subject-matter of theology. Ott's appeal to Buber is an excellent case in point.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See, for example, David Mason's review of Ott's book God. Mason writes:

. . . the argument that we can only speak to God but not about him, fails to show how one could preclude the other.
 . . . the legitimate criticism of certain types of objective language (e.g. myth) is illegitimately applied to objectifying as such. Metaphysics, in fact, uses objective language about God without reducing its 'object'

7. God's Mode of Disclosure

In talking of God as person, we referred to the fact that Ott insists that the structural difference between God and humanity be illustrated in human experience. This is necessary if God is to be shown as the infinite person who constitutes our existence entirely. What we propose now is to examine in greater detail, Ott's analysis of God's self-disclosure or the point of contact established by God with humanity. As we shall see, this occurs in a variety of ways in accordance with the manifold nature of what it means to be a person.

(a) The Locus: Humanity as Questioner of the Whole

To begin with, Ott focuses on humanity's capacity to question. It is Ott's belief that our ordinary experience of questioning points by its very nature to the question of ultimate reality. This, he argues, serves as the point of contact (i.e., pre-understanding) that is presupposed by the revelatory answer (i.e., the Gospel). Ott's assumption here is that the answer to the question of ultimate reality (i.e., the Gospel) would not make sense were humanity not the kind of being capable of asking this question.

Ott develops his argument by citing an everyday example. He observes, for instance, that one might ask about

to an innerworldly object.
David Mason review of God by Heinrich Ott in The Anglican Theological Review 58, no. 2 (April 1976): 242.

the purpose of a hammer. To this, he notes, one might say that it's used for hammering nails. But this, in turn, could give rise to a question about the purpose of the nails. To this, he notes, one might say that the nails are being used in the building of a house. But this, in turn, could provoke the question: for whom is the house being built? Here, if one were to say that the house is being built for people, one could raise the question of the purpose of human existence. Ott's point is clear: the question of ultimate meaning is coaffirmed in every question that humankind asks (PG 278).

Given this, Ott argues that the issue of whether an answer exists to this question is essentially a problem of faith. Ott writes:

Is it then, however, permitted to enquire beyond the meaning founded in human community to an ultimate meaning of the whole? This question as such is unavoidable in any case for it builds the horizon for all questions of meaning and experiences of meaning in particular. Yet whether an answer will be granted to it, constitutes the problem of faith: the problem of an interpersonality beyond all human interpersonality (PG 114).

Of significance here, is Ott's belief that the question of ultimate meaning is the appropriate horizon for articulating the reality of God. As Ott puts it, "God becomes relevant" precisely at points where questions are asked of "the whole".⁵⁰ Ott makes it clear, however, that by posing such questions, the hand of God is no way forced. Answers to such questions

⁵⁰ Heinrich Ott et al., Dogmatik im Dialog vol. 2, 18. Indeed Ott speaks of human beings as metaphysical by nature in a way reminiscent of the early Heidegger (ibid., 17).

are always a function of grace. For Ott, then, it is not simply a question of "who does what to whom first".⁵¹ It is a question of determining the appropriate horizon in which talk of God should occur.

For Ott, moreover, this horizon should encompass our being completely. Otherwise theological discourse cannot address the totality of our existence. Theology, then, is required to raise the metaphysical question, since this alone speaks to our being as a whole. Again, the assumption here is that if the Word of God is man's definitive answer, it must respond to every question that humankind is and has. Anything less cannot be the answer in the strictest sense of this word.

As we shall see, Ott interprets the Trinity as a summary of who God is precisely in connection with humanity's question of ultimacy. He speaks, in fact, of the triune God as the definitive embodiment of meaning (PG 369).

(b) The Experience of God as Transcendental

While God encounters humanity in its "radical questionability" (PG 360), Ott must also show how man can encounter a God who is not only invisible God but not reducible to a particular item of experience (i.e., never experienced as one item among others). According to Ott, this raises a difficult question: "how can I relate myself . . . to a person, who is not directly experiencable?" (PG 147). In the

⁵¹ Ibid., 18.

person, who is not directly experiencable?" (PG 147). In the course of his analysis, Ott excludes several alternatives.

To begin with, Ott rejects the view that God is disclosed through particular mental states (e.g. mysticism). Ott believes that the problem here is that states like these can be directly experienced and quantified in a way that God cannot. For Ott, moreover, states like mysticism are only experienced by particular human beings. This means that states like this can never provide a basis for articulating God as a universal experience. So, too, Ott rejects any attempt to restrict God's disclosure to the experience of reading the Bible. Because the Bible is one scripture among others, Ott believes - apropos of mysticism - that it cannot show how God is encountered by all.⁵² To avoid these problems, Ott proposes a model of God's self-disclosure that is rooted in experience but not an experience that is limited or specific in character.

Ott, for his part, takes the position that our experience of God is transcendentally mediated. By this, he means that humanity encounters God "in, with, and under" its manifold experience of reality (PG 145). Our encounter with God, then, is not to be interpreted as one experience among others; it is given throughout our entire range of activities. This means, too, that talk of God need not be idle or empty,

⁵² See also Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, 36-44.

since God's self-disclosure is always given through concrete and experiencable phenomena (i.e., human activities).

As we shall see, Ott's analysis of transcendental experience is intimately related to the postulate that human beings are constituted by a non-disposable reality. According to Ott, "the non-disposable" is disclosed throughout our human experience in phenomena as varied as our thought, moods, and freedom. This, for Ott, is another way of formulating God's self-disclosure as a transcendental experience. We return to this point in greater detail shortly.

(c) The Significance of "the Between" (das Zwischen)

It is Ott's conviction that the experience of faith is also invariably reciprocal. By this, he means that faith is always to be understood as a personal relation between God and humankind. This is crucial, for if "reciprocity is the essence of personhood", it must also be an essential characteristic of the relation between God and humanity (G 51). Assuming this, Ott claims that the phenomenon of faith necessarily entails the reality of "the between" (das Zwischen). Indeed Ott believes that any attempt to interpret God as merely a human projection ignores this basic structure (PG 155).

Not surprisingly, "the between" plays a crucial role in Ott's account of God's self-disclosure. For Ott, in fact, the experience of faith is coming to know that "the between" of human experience - or what Ott calls das kleine Zwischen -

is ultimately grounded in das grosse Zwischen that exists between God and humanity. Ott makes it clear, however, that this kind of knowledge is usually disclosed gradually.⁵³ This means that the common experience of growing in faith is best interpreted as the gradual experience of interpreting reality in the context of das grosse Zwischen. Interpreted thus, Ott believes that human experience takes on a significantly new meaning.

Ott cites the experience of responsibility as a particular case in point. According to Ott, the experience of responsibility presupposes the reality of the other person. To this extent, it also assumes the reality of das kleine Zwischen. For Ott, however, when the phenomenon of responsibility is placed in das grosse Zwischen, das kleine Zwischen and the significance of responsibility are both radically transformed. Ott writes:

In as much as we discover and experience God's Word in faith, we become aware in the same act that in the last analysis all our responsibility is before God. God is the transcendental condition of the possibility of our responsibility, the medium and the element, as it were, in which . . . we exist as responsible human beings. . . The knowledge of das grosse Zwischen modifies the knowledge of das kleine Zwischen and verifies itself in this modification. Who in faith sees that human beings exist as person before the personal God is thereby also able to see and interpret the personal reality of man in a new way (PG 163).

Of importance here, too, is Ott's contention that the experience of responsibility is a universal phenomenon (G 39).

⁵³ See Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, 309-22.

In other words, it is a basic human experience that believers share in common with their non-believing counterparts. For Ott, however, what distinguishes the believer's experience from that of the non-believer is the believer's willingness to interpret responsibility in the context of das grosse Zwischen.

(d) The Significance of "the Non-Disposable" (das Unverfügbare)

We noted earlier that Ott's analysis of God's self-disclosure is integrally related to the postulate that human beings are grounded in a non-disposable reality. Not surprisingly, this provides Ott with an excellent means of articulating God as constitutive of human experience. By beginning, moreover, with what Ott believes is a universal phenomenon, he can also show how God is disclosed in the depths of the atheist's experience.

Characteristically, Ott takes the position that human experience cannot be understood in a positivistic framework. In this regard, we have already seen how Ott has relativized the positivistic conceptions of meaning and time. Now he argues that the objectifying attitude of positivism excludes, in principle, the reality of "the non-disposable". According to Ott, this is crucial, since "the non-disposable" is constitutive of human experience. To ignore, therefore, the phenomenon of "the non-disposable" is to risk ignoring a significant dimension of reality.

It is Ott's belief, moreover, that the phenomenon of "the non-disposable" is evidence of the fact that human beings are not at their own disposal. Here, of course, Ott assumes that they are ultimately at the disposal of the personal God of the Bible. Before, however, Ott can show that this is so, and do so in a way that is convincing to the non-believer, he must point to evidence that human beings do, in fact, experience themselves this way. To make his case, Ott cites a number of specific examples. We restrict ourselves to the phenomena of thinking and questioning. Ott writes:

In the basic human phenomenon of thinking and in particular the questioning which is constitutive for all thinking the fragmentary quality reveals itself yet again. To all essential thought there belongs an essential incompleteness which manifests itself in the 'resonating forth' of the thought in a question (or also in several questions). Thoughts are also non-disposable in another notable sense: 'It is not we who come to thoughts - they come to us' (Martin Heidegger). Something unthought, which has not yet entered into thinking, steers my associations and questions in the process of thinking and thereby first makes this process possible, and gives it its subterranean dynamic. The unthought, which I have not yet been able to grasp in an articulable thought, beckons me, to some extent, fascinates me, draws me on as does a blue hill on the horizon (RU 111-12).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ott also speaks of "the non-disposable" as the constitutive basis of knowledge and human freedom. He argues, for example, that "the non-disposable" is the same reality to which scholasticism referred as the "light of being" (PG 280-84). Scholasticism, he notes, spoke of this horizon (i.e., being) as the ultimately intelligible whole within which particular items could be recognized and known. In this regard, being, or what Ott calls the non-disposable mystery, is the transcendental condition of human knowledge.

The same, he argues, also holds true of freedom. According to Ott, the fact that human beings are constituted by "the non-disposable" means that they can never be reduced to a number of constituent parts. Nor are they reducible to a series of prior causes. We are, he says, always more than

Here Ott cites phenomenological evidence for the experience of non-disposability. This, he argues, is a critical step in opening the non-believer to the possibility of faith. If Ott, for example, were now to make the Christian claim that our souls are not at our disposal, he could strike, as it were, an intelligible chord in the atheist's own experience (i.e., his experience of thinking and questioning). He could say, in effect, that this is what Christians mean by experiencing the sovereignty of God.

Ott's approach can be clarified even more upon closer inspection of his analysis of thought. Ott, we recall, has already argued that the phenomenon of thinking exhibits the character of gift (see p. 270). Now, however, he explicitly grounds both thought and meaning in the reality of "the non-disposable". Ott, in fact, refers to the latter as the sphere of "the divine" (das Göttliche). Ott writes:

the objectifying viewpoint of positivism. For this reason, Ott rejects the positivist viewpoint that interprets freedom, or better perhaps, decision, as the sum total of motives that push man over the threshold. According to Ott, this ignores the unitary experience of decision viz. that this experience presupposes an "I" who speaks of this act as his own and for which he feels responsible (PG 112-13). Karl Rahner makes a similar point:

Precisely this consciousness of himself, this confrontation with the totality of all his conditions, and this very being conditioned show him to be more than the sum of his factors. For a finite system of individual distinguishable elements cannot have the kind of relationship to itself which man has to himself in the experience of his multiple conditioning and reducibility. A finite system cannot confront itself in its totality.
 . . .It is not a subject.

Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 29-30.

Because this non-disposable plays out to the human being in a new, superior meaning, one not controllable by the human, this non-disposable can hardly be anything 'beneath the human', can be nothing purely 'natural', nothing which in principle could be dominated by human beings. The non-disposable instead is a 'supra-human', superior to human beings, coming over them, overwhelming them. And just in the act of overwhelming them, it constitutes them as human beings, that is, as sense-understanding, sense-experiencing, feeling beings. So I would like to call the non-disposable, with all due caution, 'the divine' - and not in the sense of a Biblical God, but rather in the sense of the gods of all peoples (RU 116).

From here, moreover, Ott proceeds to argue that because the 'divine' is constitutive of human meaning, "the non-disposable" is capable of speaking and hearing:

Since this non-disposable (divine) is both removed from human beings and yet close to them, constitutively close, given that a sense arises for human beings out of the non-disposable, it must be said: the non-disposable is not speechless, but rather talks. And similarly: it is not without hearing. Whereas sense arises to them from thence, humans can speak themselves out before the non-disposable, the divine, with a human sense-yearning, without thereby speaking into a void. They will not talk into a hole, where senselessness breeds, where there is no ear for them who yearn for sense, who experience sense. Thus the divine has the character of reciprocity (RU 116).⁵⁵

Ott's point here, then, is that if one examines the human experience of meaning (i.e., thought), it cannot be understood from the positivistic viewpoint (at least, not adequately). Thought, he argues, is always more than a human phenomenon subject to calculable laws. Indeed one discovers that it is

⁵⁵ It is Ott's belief that a move from the "divine" to the biblical God requires a "leap" (ein Sprung) with ethical consequences. Otherwise one could conclude that the "divine" is polytheistic (RU 118-19).

actually experienced as a gift, and that this, in turn, is grounded in a reality that is personal and non-disposable. Again, this, for Ott, is the kind of experience - also shared by the atheist - that can assist in showing that human beings are embraced by a personal God.⁵⁶

Ott observes, however, that evidence like this does not amount to a closed or rigorous proof (Beweis). It consists, instead, of a phenomenological showing (Aufweis) that appeals directly to our self-understanding as persons (G 39).

8. The Certainty of Faith: An Illustration of God as Person

Perhaps the best way to focus our discussion is to take a concrete example of Ott's analysis of God as person. In this regard, Ott's account of the certainty of faith proves to be especially fruitful.

(a) Certainty as Total

Ott begins his analysis of the certainty of faith by excluding what it is not. Faith, he argues, does not consist of belief in particular facts. Nor, he claims, is it mere assent to a number of propositions. It consists, instead, of a transcendental experience that integrates reality in toto. For Ott, then, the problem is to formulate a notion of certainty that is neither solely intellectual nor grounded in specific facts. Accordingly, Ott proposes that the certainty of faith is not unlike the kind of certainty that accompanies

⁵⁶ See also Heinrich Ott, Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 2, 56.

the horizon of human experience. His assumption here is twofold: (i) that our personal horizon is not a specific fact, and (ii) that the certainty of this horizon encompasses our existence entirely. Appealing to Heidegger, Ott cites three such certainties in particular: humanity's experience of being in the world; our experience of other persons; and the certainty of our own death. It is Ott's belief that none of these certainties can be correctly understood as an "inner-worldly" fact (PG 210). They belong instead to the horizon of personal experience. That is, each of these certainties is a transcendental condition of human experience in general. This means, too, that they must belong to a higher order of certainty than "innerworldly" facts (PG 205-20).

Ott believes that the same holds true for the certainty of faith. According to Ott, faith, too, is grounded in a certainty that surpasses that of "innerworldly" facts, since faith concerns the deepest levels of our self-understanding. Ott makes it clear, however, that the certainty of faith - unlike those mentioned - does not belong to human existence as such. It is granted, rather, solely as a function of grace. For Ott, then, the basic question is how this certainty - a gift from God - is mediated in human experience. Here he turns to our everyday experience of moods.

It is Ott's contention that moods belong to a deeper level of existence than that of opinions or convictions. Moods, he argues, cannot be understood as particular or

dispensable phenomena. According to Ott, they are not particular because they determine our existence as a whole. Nor are they dispensable, because in varying forms moods are always present (PG 212). This being assumed, Ott proposes that if the certainty of faith is not to be interpreted as a dispensable or particular conviction, it must "reside" at a level of existence proper to human moods (PG 216). This brings us to our second point. Because moods vary in a way that the certainty of faith does not, Ott looks for a phenomenological structure that is constantly given through our varying experience of moods. It is Ott's conviction that what remains constant is the fact that moods are always given in relation to other persons (see pp. 262-63). Ott's point here is that the certainty that persons are structurally related to others, is - if analogically interpreted - the same kind of certainty that faith encounters in its experience before God as person. In this respect, das grosse Zwischen between God and humanity is not unlike the horizontal certainty of being with other humans.

(b) Certainty as Expectation

Having argued that the certainty of faith determines our existence as a whole, Ott proceeds to describe this certainty in relation to God as person. In accordance with his method, Ott begins with the kind of certainty that is experienced between humans. Here he argues that the kind of certainty is not a certainty that is given "once and for all"

(e.g., a mathematical certainty) (PG 224). It is, he claims, marked instead by an openness and trust directed towards the future. It is also marked by the ongoing hope that the basis of its trust will be constantly justified and renewed (G 58). The same, he argues, also obtains for the certainty of faith in God. Here he means that faith is experienced as certainty in God as the "coming One", or better perhaps, a faith that God will constantly be revealed at different points in the future (G 58). This, he claims, is integrally related to the character of God as person. Ott writes:

The notion of the 'future' has meaning only in the realm of 'the between', in the reciprocity between persons. In that persons have to do with one another and give themselves to one another, they are there for one another. It is only in this being with and for another that there can be any such thing as a future at all; something which comes toward man; which is not yet there but which already intimates its presence (G 59).

For Ott, then, the transcendental condition of the certainty of faith is the reality of God as person. In other words, if God were not a person and lacked his own future, waiting upon God would not, in principle, be possible.

Ott realizes, of course, that while certainty in God is analogous to human trust, it is also completely different. This comes to particularly clear expression in Ott's account of how God's Word is communicated. Typically Ott takes the position that the Word of God transforms our human horizon. Ott cites the 'horizontal' certainties of self and death to illustrate his point. According to Ott, the Word of God

transforms these certainties into the greater certainty of standing before a God who disposes over man completely. Our certainty of self, for instance, is now accompanied by the greater certainty that every act occurs before God. So, too, our certainty of death now entails the greater certainty that God disposes even over our own mortality (PG 233-37).

Finally, it is important to note that while humanity waits with certainty upon God, God waits with certainty upon humanity. He becomes, as it were, the ultimate horizon in terms of which the believer's experience is integrated. For Ott, this is particularly true of those experiences the significance of which is not yet clear to the believer (e.g. pain). In cases like these, the "coming" God waits upon the believer and illuminates gradually the truth of his situation (PG 153).⁵⁷

9. The Trinity: A Theological Anthropology

We conclude our discussion of Ott's analysis of the personal God with a brief account of the Trinity. In a word, Ott believes that the doctrine of the Trinity sums up the experience of who God is. For Ott, in fact, the "truth or falsity" of the Trinity can only be decided at "anthropological level" (G 51). Once again, this is in keeping with Ott's conviction that theological statement be existentially interpreted.

⁵⁷ See also Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, 318-22.

(a) The Intention of the Trinity

To begin with, Ott claims that a trinitarian anthropology will show that man is "finite", "dependent", and "incomplete" (G 61). Before showing this, however, Ott cites several reasons as to why the Trinity has been misunderstood. First, Ott believes that the traditional statement of God being three in one is by no means clear; second, that the Trinity's formulation in the categories of substance has obscured its real intention; and third, that the Trinity has been misunderstood as stating something about God in himself. According to Ott, the common thread throughout is a failure to recognize, or to bring to adequate expression, the particular anthropology that underlies the Trinity (PG 332-35). Simply put, Ott believes that its real intention is to articulate humankind's experience of the supra-personal God. Interpreted thus, the traditional formulation of God being "three in one" is intended to mean that God is one person but not in the sense of a "limited individuality" or consciousness (G 60).

(b) God as "Urgestalt des Zwischen"

According to Ott, the Trinity is also interpreted as articulating the answer to humanity's question about ultimate reality. Ott believes that this is possible, because the triune God is the complete embodiment of personal meaning (PG

369).⁵⁸ Indeed as das Urgestalt des Zwischen, it is Ott's conviction that God as person has embodied this meaning since before the beginning of the world. It belongs, in fact, to his very nature as person. Ott writes:

Because God is a person, he is not a substance; instead he himself dwells in 'the between'. And indeed as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, already has 'the between' in himself before the basis of the world is laid. This [the Trinity] in a manner of speaking is the archetype of 'the between' (PG 90).

According to Ott, the idea of God as Urgestalt des Zwischen is also the basis of the teaching that humanity is created in God's own image (imago dei).⁵⁹ Existentially interpreted, this means that human beings are intimately involved in the triune life. They become, as it were, a "structural moment" in God's own being (DB 427). According to Ott, this is made possible by virtue of the Perichorese. This, we recall, is the transcendental condition of the co-penetration of individual persons (see p. 262). Ott makes it clear, however, that he

⁵⁸ By referring to the Trinity as the ultimate embodiment of meaning (i.e., the answer), Ott is by no means suggesting that human questioning is somehow eradicated by appropriating the significance of the Trinity. Ott rejects the view that God is the sort of answer that stills our questioning completely. Here, we recall Ott's criticism of Heidegger (see pp. 68-70). For Ott, the capacity to question belongs to our historicity. It is an integral part of the journey with, and waiting upon God. In this regard, the Psalms provide a particularly rich example of human questioning in tandem with an authentic experience of faith.

⁵⁹ See Heinrich Ott et al., Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 3, 70-74; See also Ott's discussion of covenant as a "relational communication" in the context of his analysis of the imago dei. Ibid., vol. 2, 43-44.

in no way espouses a doctrine of pantheism. He argues, in fact, that man's participation in the triune life is best described in the personalist categories of dialogue, because dialogue is marked by a "co-penetration" as well as a certain "tension" (DB 427). Here, of course, the latter is crucial, since Ott insists that God remains a person who continues to confront us personally (DB 50).

By beginning, moreover, with God and man in dialogue, Ott avoids starting with either in isolation. His reasoning here is identical to that in his existential interpretation of Christology. There he argued that one must start from the incarnational fact in order to avoid both a subjectivism and an objectivism. Now he claims that one must start with the "trinitarian situation" in order to do the same (PG 359). In other words, one must show the integral unity of God and man in terms of the triune God (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). This amounts to an existential interpretation of the Trinity.

(c) Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Ott's claim that the real purpose of the Trinity is to articulate a specific anthropology is particularly evident in his existential interpretation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here, we recall, it is Ott's intention to develop an anthropology that is "finite", "dependent", and "incomplete" (G 61).

Typically Ott interprets each mode of the Trinity as effecting a corresponding change in a particular dimension of human experience. This accords with his ongoing assumption that belief in God must make a difference (G 106). In keeping, moreover, with his view of God as supra-personal, God is described in each of these modes as constitutive of experience in a way not possible for any finite person. According to Ott, God the Father is experienced as the unqualified command of the Creator; God the Son as he who stands in complete solidarity with humanity; and God the Spirit as he who renews our self-understanding entirely.

In the case of the Father, Ott argues that there is no equivalent to his absolute claim. While human rulers may make such claims, claims like these inevitably fall short of their goal. The same, he argues, also obtains for the absolute claims of marriage and friendship. In other words, marriage and friendship can always be terminated just as loyalty to a particular state can always be renounced. Ott's point here is that the individual person is perpetually in suspension, since his freedom is constituted by an unknown future. This means that neither the individual himself, nor any other person can claim his existence entirely. He is, in effect, always more than he already is (G 122). From here, Ott proceeds to argue that only God the Father can claim our existence in toto, since he alone is constitutive of freedom,

and can dispose, therefore, of our future existence entirely.

Ott writes:

Thus a person cannot be completely or totally claimed, except by the person of God. For it is God (as unique) from whose claim one cannot escape into any future because he himself works for us even in the remotest future. Here it becomes clear that, and to what extent, God is called the Last (Eschatos), the Remotest One (PG 357).

Here, then, Ott interprets the qualitative difference between God and humanity in the context of the Trinity. By showing this, he can also reveal the particular anthropology expressed in this dogma. In this case, God is described as the "structural limit" (strukturelle Begrenzung) of humankind's freedom. The corollary of this is that humanity is depicted as finite and incomplete.

The qualitative difference between God and humanity is also discussed in the context of God's Sonship. Ott, as noted, interprets God's Sonship in terms of his solidarity with the human condition (see pp. 253-55). Ott believes that the meaning of this can be phenomenologically shown in the common experience of receiving one's self as a gift. By way of example, Ott cites those occasions in which human beings are entirely excluded from relations with other persons (i.e., relations necessary for the subsistence of the self). Here he points to the "final loneliness" of facing our own death and our sense of isolation when all relationships fail (DB 424). Ott argues that in cases like these, we experience the fact that others are incapable of sustaining our self as a

whole. Nevertheless Ott observes that the self persists despite the fact that it is no longer grounded in any human relation. According to Ott, this is possible, because Christ continues to ground the self even when ties with the rest of humanity have been broken. The "emptiness", then, left by the self is not to be interpreted as simply being "nothing" (PG 363). It serves instead as the ontological home of the Christological existential. From here, Ott draws a qualitative distinction between the kind of nearness (die Nähe) that distinguishes God from humanity. The former is described as constitutive of the self in a way not possible for its human counterpart. Ott's point here is that Christ's solidarity (i.e., his nearness to humanity) is complete and unconditional. In short, Ott interprets the Christology of the Trinity as revealing an anthropology in which humankind is finite and radically dependent.⁶⁰

Finally, Ott clarifies the structural difference between God and humanity in terms of the Holy Spirit. This, he argues, comes to its clearest expression in the everyday experience of dialogue. In a word, it is Ott's belief that the Holy Spirit is the non-disposable power that keeps the dialogue open. It grants, as it were, new ideas and options that point us toward the future. The assumption here is that thoughts are not reducible to human constructs but are gifts

⁶⁰ See also Ott's discussion of the Doctrine of the Two Natures (DB 420-28).

bestowed from without. In effect, Ott theologizes Heidegger's insight that thinking is ultimately a "thanking" (see p. 74). For Ott, moreover, because the Spirit is radically different from humanity, it modifies our horizon in a way not possible for finite human beings. This, he argues, lies at the basis of the Christian demand to persist in dialogue even when every option appears to be exhausted (RU 136-41;G 112). Again, then, the anthropology expressed in the Trinity articulates man as finite and incomplete. He must wait upon the Spirit to reveal those options which he by himself cannot.

In conclusion, it is important to return to Ott's basic point: that the truth or falsity of the Trinity must be determined at the level of anthropology. This, however, is only possible if one accepts that reality is non-disposable. Precisely for this reason, Ott relativizes the scientific-technological viewpoint and speaks of man as an "anthropological fragment" (RU 108). By showing this (i.e., that humankind is not at its own disposal), he can then show that human existence is best understood as grounded in the triune God.

CONCLUSION

Ott's theology is dominated by one theme: his attempt to show that encounter with God is unavoidable and that our relationship to God makes a decisive difference. Throughout our study, we have studied this theme in the context of his hermeneutical and ontological programme. We have shown, moreover, that his hermeneutical and ontological concerns are explicitly tied to his twofold norm of theological adequacy (i.e., fidelity to scripture and the contemporary situation).

By way of conclusion, we wish to reflect upon three basic features of Ott's theology. First, we intend to apply Ott's test of theological adequacy to his own work. Our assumption here is that Ott's test is not only appropriate for his own theology, but also for the assessment of theology in general. This means, in turn, that lessons to be drawn from Ott's theology are applicable to theology as such. Second, we discuss the significance of Ott's hermeneutic for the establishment of a proper relationship between philosophy and theology; and thirdly, we examine the hermeneutical legitimacy of Ott's notion of legacy.

1. Ott's Test of Theological Adequacy

It is our belief that while Ott's theology is essentially worthy of scripture, it continues to fall short of the

theological requirements of the contemporary situation. By this we mean that it continues to operate with Christian assumptions that have not yet been adequately demonstrated or shown. Thus while Ott has taken a significant step toward the kind of theology that does not take belief in God for granted, he still falls short of his goal. Before examining this, however, we shall briefly discuss Ott's more successful attempt in meeting the norm of scripture.

Ott's concern for the norm of scripture has been evident from the start. It was especially clear in his earliest attempt to push the theology of Rudolf Bultmann in the direction of Karl Barth. Ott, we recall, was particularly critical of Bultmann's cleavage between significance and corporeality, his split view of history, and his individualist leanings. In every case, Ott argued that Bultmann's conceptuality forced the exclusion of significant dimensions of scripture. Here we noted that Ott appealed to Barth and Heidegger to overcome restrictions in Bultmann's theological ontology. For Ott, we recall, Barth offered a "broadened existentialism" that securely anchored the benefits of Christ in God's own presence (i.e., restored scripture's emphasis on the sovereignty of God). In a similar vein, Ott appealed to the later Heidegger to overcome the gap between significance and corporeality, and existential and objective history. By doing this, he could then affirm scripture's witness to both the bodily resurrection and the unity of history. We noted,

however, that Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth ultimately gave way to a more Bultmannian kind of thinking. Here we observed that Ott, more than ever, tried to avoid Bultmann's restrictions by broadening the scope of existential interpretation. That he tried to avoid Bultmann's cleavage between significance and corporeality was especially clear in his search for a universal personalist ontology. While Ott had once thought that Heidegger's ontology of "the thing" (das Ding) might be the solution, he has since turned to personalism as a means of bridging this gap. Indeed he has gone some way in this direction already by proposing the basis for a universal personalist ontology that could relativize the positivistic viewpoint. By so doing, he has raised the possibility of a more comprehensive way of uniting the sphere of nature with the sphere of "personality and history" (i.e., corporeality and significance) (G 50). This means that he has also pointed the way to overcoming the split between the cosmological and soteriological spheres in Bultmann's theology. In a similar vein, he has widened the scope of existential interpretation to include the notion of the Church. By appealing to Buber (i.e., his social ontology), he has overcome Bultmann's individualism and shown that the Church is a constitutive part of the believer's self-understanding.

Finally, if he has sought to show that the corporeal order is of existential significance, and that the reception

of revelation always implies the Church, he has also sought to exhibit the claim that the offer of salvation is extended to every person. Here, we recall, Ott's attempt to overcome a Christological exclusivism in his dialogue with Bonhoeffer. In the main, then, Ott has demonstrated a remarkable, if eclectic, capacity to conform to the contents of scripture.

We are, however, considerably more reserved in our assessment of Ott's success in meeting the demands of the current situation. In recent works it has been Ott's intention not to take belief in God for granted. Nevertheless, it seems to us, that he continues to rely far too heavily on Christian presuppositions. Our criticism here is not intended to mean that Ott should abandon the theological circle. It is that he has not yet sufficiently shown how Christian assumptions are also operative in the life of the non-believer. In short, we doubt the power of Ott's theology to convince the non-believer that the Gospel offers the most comprehensive account of human experience possible.

Our point can best be illustrated by examining some specific examples. Ott, we recall, argues that human experience is constituted by a non-disposable reality. He argues, moreover, that this reality encompasses all persons, including the non-believer. This reality is also described as the transcendental condition of humankind's openness to the world, and by implication, its freedom. Ott, however, takes the additional step and argues that this mystery is actually the

God of the Bible. But this raises a question: is there any compelling reason as to why the non-believer should interpret "the non-disposable" (das Unverfügbare) as evidence of a personal God? Could he not interpret it as being (das Sein) or a mystery and leave it intelligently at that? Ott himself concedes this lack of convincingness when he raises the possibility that "the non-disposable" could be interpreted as polytheistic (see p. 290).

Ott's account of the gift-character of thought also raises similar kinds of questions. Ott, we recall, takes the position that thought comes from without, and that this implies the existence of a giver (i.e., God). It is conceivable, however, that a non-believer might respond that an honest scrutiny of the facts does not support this conclusion. The non-believer, for example, could take the position that thought is a surd, not a gift.¹ For sponsors of this position, to speak of thought as a surd is all that the facts will permit. But in response to this, the believer could respond that to interpret thought as a surd is ultimately non-intelligible. That is, it violates the principle of sufficient reason viz., that for everything that is, there must be a reason for its being (e.g. Leibniz). Thought, then, could never be a surd, since something, in

¹ See, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel Barnes, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1965), 12-48 and 71-83.

principle, can never arise out of nothing. Here, however, one might object that the principle of sufficient reason is not, as it were, given phenomenologically. Indeed one could argue that it is already conditioned by what Heidegger calls the onto-theology of western metaphysics. In other words, it already contains a theological postulate that prejudices from the start any account of experience. Our question, then, is this: could it be that this principle is also operative in Ott's analysis? If so, it could be that Ott invokes a principle that is either not inherent in the facts themselves or, if it is, has not yet been adequately shown (i.e., shown phenomenologically).²

In brief, Ott's theology would still appear to be too heavily weighted in the direction of assuming God's existence. The consequence is that he undermines his own attempt to develop a theology that does not take belief in God for granted. Indeed one could ask if Ott's theology does not

² A colleague, Hilbert Vanderplaat, launches a similar criticism against Wolfhart Pannenberg whose goals are similar to Ott's. Vanderplaat writes:

Even if the freedom of man which manifests itself in his openness to the world, is acceptable as an undeniable fact, there is still no absolutely compelling reason why it should be considered as a gift which presupposes the notion of a giver. One wonders if it is not possible that Pannenberg can make use of the terms 'gift' and 'giver' in such a facile way because he has already recognized God as the giver of human freedom. Should that be the case, then he adds meaning to anthropological data which is not necessarily inherent in them . . . Hilbert Vanderplaat, "Pannenberg's Critique of Barth's Theology of the Word," (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1983), 181.

itself suffer (if nowhere as seriously as Barth's) from a certain degree of revelational positivism. If so, his theological endeavour will continue to remain foreign to those outside the faith.

This is not to say, of course, that Ott's theology cannot be of assistance to those who already believe. At the very least, it undoubtedly assists believers in articulating their experience of faith. Here, for example, his existential analysis of the Trinity could bring to a higher level of awareness the actual difference that belief in God makes. Again, however, his presuppositions clearly determine his account of the facts, and would, it seems, only be compelling to those who believe already. Despite these weaknesses, we are not proposing that Ott abandon the theological circle. Our concern is not that Ott takes the existence of God as a presupposition of theology; it is that he has not yet convincingly shown that a comprehensive analysis of human experience requires this assumption.

Summing up, we can say that Ott's goal to remain faithful to scripture is by and large successfully attained. His goal, however, of communicating the Gospel would seem to fall somewhat short of his own agenda.

2. Hermeneutical Theology and the Role of Philosophy

Despite having raised fundamental questions about Ott's project, it is clear to us that Ott has shown that hermeneutical and ontological questions are inevitable for the

current task of theology. This is the most significant lesson to be drawn from Ott's theology. To raise, however, hermeneutical and ontological questions means that theology must first establish a proper relation to philosophy. What we propose now is to evaluate this relation by focusing upon three related themes in Ott's theology. Each of these themes is to be understood as a basic directive for theology's current task. These directives can be expressed as follows: first, theology must make the hermeneutical task its all encompassing horizon; second, theology should make eclectic use of philosophy; and third, apologetics must again become a legitimate concern for theology.

(a) Theology as Hermeneutical

Ott's proposal that revelation be articulated as philosophical theology means, in effect, that theology become entirely hermeneutical. That is, theology is to make the task of communicating the Gospel its primary consideration. This directive lies at the basis of Ott's criticism of Barth. In Barth, we recall, the hermeneutical motive arrives, as it were, too late. It comes after a Christological deduction, at which point theological statement is then applied to the sphere of human experience. In other words, Barth's formulation of theological statement is not exclusively carried out in a hermeneutical context. By contrast, Ott proposes, and we agree, that theological statements be existentially interpreted from the start. There are to be no exceptions to the

rule. Even contents of scripture that seem hopelessly mythological must constantly be reexamined with the primary aim of elucidating their existential meaning. To ensure, moreover, that God's encounter with humanity comes to its fullest expression theology must start with the concrete fact of God and man in their unity (i.e., take the incarnation seriously). It can then avoid a revelational positivism and an anthropological reductionism.

That theology be hermeneutical also means that it always be directed to the preaching office of the Church. What Ott excludes here is any tendency to interpret theology as somehow divorced from the practical life of the Church. According to Ott, the theologian must always acknowledge that his first responsibility is to serve the Church in its witness and that the problem of witness is essentially hermeneutical (i.e., communicating Christ in the current situation). It is not enough to formulate dogma and then, having done this, hand it over to the preacher whose task it is to render these findings communicable. He should know from the start that his primary task is to communicate the Gospel and that this coincides with the primary task of the preacher.³

³ Heinrich Ott, Die Antwort des Glaubens, (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1972), 78-84. See also Ott's article, "Die Bedeutung des Studiums der systematischen Theologie für die Ausbildung des Predigers," Wort und Gemeinde: Probleme und Aufgabe der praktischen Theologie, ed. R. Bohren (Zürich: EVZ - Verlag, 1968), 160.

(b) The Relation between Philosophy and Theology

If Ott issues a firm directive that theology be hermeneutical, he does so only on the basis of a properly established relation between philosophy and theology. Ott, we recall, argues that theology is permitted to draw on worldly conceptualities as a methodological consequence of the Incarnation. For Ott, this has entailed situating theology in a hermeneutical and ontological context. That this context is also shaped by philosophy means that Ott has had to establish a proper relationship to philosophy. Here again Ott proves instructive for the current task of theology.

What Ott has shown is that the relationship between philosophy and theology must always be eclectic and dynamic. By eclectic, Ott means that theology should not assume that one philosophy can best articulate the substance of the Christian faith. Ott, for instance, would be critical of those Roman Catholics who assume that the Aristotelian categories of substance are the definitive means for articulating the truth of the Gospel. So, too, he would also be critical of Protestants who would restrict the phenomenon of faith to the existentialist categories of Bultmann. Ott believes that restrictions like these neglect the fact that the object of revelation is both personal and historical. If Christ, he claims, is actually a concrete person (DB 440), then he is not reducible to a fixed or calculable entity. He appears, instead, as a non-disposable reality who comes to humanity in

varying ways in different times and places. Theology, then, must be constantly attuned to the way in which Christ is encountered. It must take its cue from its object and "follow the tracks of Christ" (DB 440). This means, too, that it should look for those concepts (i.e., philosophical) that best articulate our current experience of God. These concepts, however, are never to be granted an independent status to which theology must then conform. They are to be modified from the outset by the object of revelation. Here, we recall, that Ott's appeal to the analogy of proportionality came dangerously close to letting philosophy control the contents of theology.

Naturally some philosophies will appear more appropriate than others. This was particularly clear in Ott's appeal to personalism as opposed to the categories of traditional metaphysics. Again, however, Ott will not be tied to a specific personalist ontology. He draws on personalism eclectically and expects, no doubt, other philosophies to arise that can also be of assistance. Of importance for us, is that Ott's eclecticism points the way to a comprehensive theological ontology. Indeed Ott believes that theology must constantly keep abreast of philosophy's contribution in disclosing new aspects of reality. The same, he argues, should also hold true of theology's relation to all of the social sciences (die Geisteswissenschaften). Whether it be sociology or political theory, it must constantly remain aware

that the social sciences may offer appropriate conceptualities for articulating the reality of God. If, for example, a theory of the Unconscious were gradually to gain currency, this could be of considerable value in articulating Christ in our broader mental lives.⁴ By extending, moreover, our knowledge of human structures (i.e. existentials), the chances of rescuing larger contents of scripture from the sphere of the mythological would also be increased. In this respect, Ott issues a firm directive that theology push for the most inclusive concept of self-understanding possible. Again, this entails an eclectic and dynamic openness to the philosophical enterprise.

(c) Apologetics and Proof

Finally, Ott's conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology is also important for a re-examination of the role of apologetics. As we noted in our introduction, apologetics has come under considerable criticism, especially from Karl Barth. Barth, we recall, took the position that apologetics is a form of natural theology. By making reason a springboard to revelation, it seemed to deny the need for God's grace.

Without denying the basis of Barth's criticism, Ott, it seems, has overcome Barth's objections while still

⁴ See Heinrich Ott and Walter Neidhart, Krone der Schöpfung?: Humanwissenschaften und Theologie, (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1977), esp. 11-15.

affirming the legitimacy of the apologetic task. Like Barth, Ott begins with the presupposition that Christ is universal. But where he differs is in his willingness to exhibit the truth of this assumption. Ott, for his part, starts with the assumption that revelation is already experienced through the inner workings of grace (i.e., that Christ is experienced as a "structural moment" of humanity) (DB 427). This is crucial, since what it means is that Ott's apologetic is Christologically determined from the outset. In other words, Ott's appeal to reason, and this includes philosophy, cannot be understood as a springboard to revelation. It occurs instead as a critical moment in the explication of faith from within grace itself. Ott avoids the charge, then, that apologetics is merely a human enterprise divorced from revelation.

Here, too, we have already seen how Ott draws eclectically on philosophical anthropology with the aim of showing that certain human experiences - also shared by the atheist - are best explained by positing the God of the Bible. To this extent, Ott's theology is clearly apologetic. It takes within itself the phenomenon of atheism and makes this an unavoidable factor in its own deliberations.

In nuce, it is Ott's conviction, and we agree, that apologetics ultimately coincides with the hermeneutical task. In other words, the purpose of both is to communicate the Gospel. Apologetics, then, should not be understood as a

particular part of theology. It ought to be seen as constitutive of the horizon in which theology is done as a whole.

3. Legacy as a Theological Tool

At the beginning of our study, we argued that changes in Ott's development were directly related to his twofold test of theological adequacy. Assuming this, we then showed how this test was operative in successive phases of Ott's development. A significant part of this programme had to do with Ott's notion of legacy. For Ott, we recall, meeting his test of theological adequacy often entailed a dialogical encounter with others. This usually took the form of an analysis in which Ott exposed the unthought dimension of a particular author's work. Having said this, we wish, if only briefly, to examine the hermeneutical legitimacy of Ott's notion of legacy. To keep our analysis specific, we have chosen to discuss Ott's relationship to Barth.

To begin with, it is clear that Ott intends to remain faithful to his Barthian legacy. This was evident in his early alignment of Heidegger and Barth. It is also evident in recent attempts to develop an existential context for Barth's Christology. To be sure, Ott rejects Barth's theological method. He does so, however, precisely to bring Barth's Christology and human experience into increasingly intimate alignment. As Ott puts it, his disagreement with Barth is not about the facts, but about how these facts are

expressed. But at this point, we should pause and ask if this is really the case. Is Ott actually faithful to his Barthian heritage? Is his disagreement only about method and not about the facts? And perhaps more importantly, is there something about Ott's use of legacy that suggests continuities where continuities are absent?

We believe that Ott's use of legacy - as it is currently understood - introduces too much latitude and vagueness. The consequence is that substantial differences between Ott and Barth are artificially suppressed. Hence while Ott intends a radical Christocentrism, it is by no means clear that he intends it in a way that conforms to the theology of Barth. Ott, for example, speaks of God as a postulate in a way that Barth would reject (G 7). Barth insisted that talk of God always begin with unquestioning obedience to the Word. It was never, as it were, to become a matter of debate. So, too, the hermeneutical cast of Ott's programme clearly betrays the influence of Bultmann more than it does Barth. Even as late as The Humanity of God, Barth could still remark that the hermeneutical problem is secondary and that "revelational positivism" is sometimes necessary.⁵ Given this, we might ask

⁵ Karl Barth, The Humanity of God, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1961), 58-9.

In this vein, Ott himself writes:
 Ich kann von dem Gesagten aus J.M. Lochman wie auch Karl Barth darin durchaus zustimmen, daß der Glaube die *conditio sine qua non* der Theologie sei. Dies freilich nicht in dem Sinne, dass der Glaube zunächst gewisse Axiome für wahr halten muß, auf denen die Theologie dann aufbaut. Sondern in dem Sinne: daß der Glaube und die

the following: What aspects of Barth's theology can be jettisoned without denying the integrity of his programme?

As things stand now, Ott's conception of legacy fails to answer this question. Because this conception is far too broad, it lacks criteria for establishing continuities between Ott's and Barth's theologies. We noted a similar problem in Ott's alignment of Heidegger and Barth. There, we recall, Ott came dangerously close to identifying the "divine" with the God of Christianity. Indeed his assessment of the unthought dimension of Heidegger (i.e., his legacy) was implicitly criticized by Heidegger himself. So, too, one might question Ott's identification of Bultmann's method of existential verification with Bonhoeffer's method of non-religious interpretation. One critic already has.⁶ While debating this

Glaubwürdigkeit Gottes den ganzen Frage-Antwort-Prozeß, als welcher sich die Theologie vollzieht, allererst ermöglicht, in Gang setzt und in Gang hält. - Nicht zustimmen kann ich Barth/Lochman darin, daß der Glaube nicht Thema der Theologie sei. Er ist freilich nicht das einzige Thema der Theologie. Im Denkprozeß der Theologie kreist der Glaube als menschliche Haltung nicht nur um sich selber. Soviel ist richtig. Aber andererseits ist die Besinnung über das Thema 'Glaube', über die Struktur des Glaubens, wie wir sie eben jetzt vollziehen, doch zweifellos auch ein Stück Theologie.

Heinrich Ott et al., Dogmatik im Dialog, vol. 2, 221.

⁶ See Eberhart Bethge's review of Reality and Faith: The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, vol. 1, by Heinrich Ott, Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 23, no. 1 (Fall 1967): 93-97. Bethge writes:

Ott still seeks to identify Bonhoeffer's non-religious interpretation with the existential (der existenzialen). True, he does this with reference to a reformulation of the concept of existential interpretation, but does he succeed in overcoming the ingrained associations of the old concept? Is there still not a shift in or reduction

point is beyond the scope of our study, further investigation appears to be in order. Again, what is needed is a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of legacy that specifies more clearly the basis of claims for establishing continuities between a variety of different thinkers.⁷ Failing this, Ott would probably do better to speak of his indebtedness to Barth, rather than imply fidelity to his legacy. The latter suggests a relationship of totality, whereas Ott's relation-

of Bonhoeffer's intentions? Without wanting to consider Bonhoeffer's category of the non-religious as particularly fortunate, one must, nevertheless, acknowledge that, until now, no appropriate substitute has been found for this category. To exchange it for 'existential' might, perhaps, call attention to the elements of existential interpretation which are involved in Bonhoeffer's intentions, but the exchange should not lead one to believe that the category covers all that Bonhoeffer wished to express with non-religious interpretation.

⁷ In other quarters, work is being done that could assist in tightening up the methodological criteria for Ott's use of legacy. This work focuses upon Gadamer's theory of interpretation from which Ott draws his own understanding of legacy. Sponsors of this work are critical of the fact that Gadamer lacks the methodological criteria for distinguishing between correct and incorrect interpretations. This is crucial, since, according to Gadamer, the fact that a text's meaning transcends its author's intention does not amount to saying that any interpretation will do. Consequently sympathetic critics such as G.B. Madison have tried to expose implicit criteria in Gadamer's own work. Madison cites a number including comprehensiveness, coherence, penetration, and suggestiveness, none of which will be taken up here. Suffice it to say, Ott's use of legacy could prove more convincing, if he were to pay greater attention to his interpretative criteria. The bases, then, for establishing continuities between Barth, Bultmann, and Ott could then be more clearly justified, and the reasons for extending their thought more easily understood. See G. B. Madison, "Method in Interpretation," Unpublished Paper, McMaster University, 1984. esp. 7-16.

ship to Barth is essentially partial and eclectic.

Another problem underlying Ott's notion of legacy is the tendency to separate questions of method and questions of content. This, too, exaggerates similarities at the expense of important differences. In the case of Bonhoeffer, for example, Ott interprets the difference between Bonhoeffer and Barth as essentially a difference in method. The same view clearly underlies his own understanding of his relationship to Barth. This is to assume, however, that form can be separated from content, and that the latter remains the same despite significant differences in method. For us, however, it seems that the kind of Christ expressed in Barth is significantly different from that expressed through Bonhoeffer's notion of non-religious interpretation. We would never deny, of course, that Barth and Bonhoeffer intend the same person. Nonetheless, it is too much to assume that there is ultimately agreement in the facts, since facts are only given through particular interpretations or methods, many of which are different. In sum, Ott's notion of legacy inflates similarities at the expense of significant differences.

4. A Closing Word

Finally, it is our belief that Ott's programme points the way that contemporary theology must take. Clearly it is no longer sufficient simply to assert that the Gospel mirrors reality. Reality and faith must be shown to coincide in so far as this is possible. For those who would believe and also

be honest, this is a moral as well as a religious necessity. It is to Ott's credit that he faces this problem directly, even if, as yet, he still falls short of his goal. That Ott, of course, falls short of this goal in no way invalidates the necessity or legitimacy of his task. Indeed it may be that no theology can ever respond to the current situation completely. Perhaps, as Ott himself observes, the most that it can hope for is to "follow the tracks" of Christ (DB 440;PG 383). Theology, then, will always fall short of its "final concreteness" (DB 441). Nonetheless, Ott insists, and we agree, that any theology worthy of scripture that would also speak to current reality requires the development of a hermeneutical ontology. Only then can faith and reality be shown as one and the same.

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