

What do I mean by distinguishing talk about the meaning of ultimate reality for us from talk about the structure of ultimate reality in itself?

In discussing the systematic ambiguity of the term "doctrine" (*die Lehre*), Bultmann distinguishes between "direct address" and "indirect address," understanding by the first a person's directly calling another to decision—by saying, for example, "Be reconciled to God!" (2 Cor 5:20); and by the second, either a person's explicating her or his self-understanding to another as the latter's authentic possibility, also, or one person's communicating certain significant "facts" to another—in the literal, etymological sense of "fact" as *something that has already been done (factum)* but that is significant precisely because it calls for *something else to be done (faciendum)*. What I mean by "talk about the meaning of ultimate reality for us" is essentially the same as Bultmann's "indirect address" in the second of the two senses of this phrase just distinguished.

Thus one talks about the meaning of ultimate reality for us, as distinct from talking about the structure of ultimate reality in itself, insofar as one so communicates certain "facts—the fact of ultimate reality in its meaning for us and/or the fact of the decisive re-presentation of its meaning—in such a way as indirectly to call one's hearer or reader to decision. Otherwise put: one talks about the meaning of ultimate reality for us insofar as one talks about certain "facts"—the fact of ultimate reality and/or the fact of its decisive re-presentation—in a certain way, namely, as authorizing, i.e., entitling and empowering, our authentic self-understanding as human beings.

By contrast, one talks about the structure of ultimate reality in itself insofar as one abstracts completely from ultimate reality's authorizing our authentic self-understanding. Of course, to abstract from ultimate reality's authorizing our authentic self-understanding is *eo ipso* to abstract from ultimate reality itself, so as to attend solely to its structure, or, as one could also say, solely to the "*concept*" of ultimate reality in general, as distinct from any and all instantiations of the concept, another word for "instantiations" being precisely "facts." Thus if talk about the meaning of ultimate reality for us is already only indirect address, talk about the structure of reality in itself is even more so, although I should want to stress more clearly and consistently

than Bultmann does that even it has the character of address, however indirect, and that the same is true even of the properly metaphysical, or "ontological," explication of the understanding of existence that is given with existence itself. If the possibility of self-understanding that a person directly or indirectly calls another to decide for really is her or his authentic possibility, then it cannot be anything other than the possibility of self-understanding that any instantiation of ultimate reality implicitly authorizes as authentic simply because, being such an instantiation, it does and must have the structure of ultimate reality.

Thus, if the possibility of self-understanding that Paul directly calls his hearers or readers to decide for by saying, "Be reconciled to God!", is, in fact, their authentic self-understanding, then its presuppositions, or the necessary conditions of its possibility, can only be those that really obtain, given the structure of ultimate reality in itself. To be sure, Paul's particular way of calling persons to make this decision may not be the only way of doing so. Certainly, he himself formulates his call in different, even, possibly, incompatible, terms, however clear it may be that it is one and the same decision for which he calls by means of all of his different formulations. But whether the call for decision be direct or only indirect, and however it may be formulated, it really is what it purports to be if, but only if, it is an explicit representation of the same call for decision that is and must be presented implicitly to any human existence whatever as soon and as long as it is human at all. It is just this call, however, that even talk about the structure of ultimate reality in itself cannot fail to issue, however indirectly it may do so.

18 June 1987; rev. 10 October 2003