

According to Bultmann, a human being does not understand her- or himself in a world view because what she or he wills to understand in such a world view is her- or himself as on hand (*vorhanden*) and as a part of a world that is on hand (GV 3: 30). But I don't see how this could be true of any and every world view purely formally, in abstraction from its content, since Bultmann also allows that even the content of ideas of the Christian proclamation can be explicated as a world view; and it is clearly essential to *this* content, at least, and so also to any explication of it as a world view, to distinguish clearly and sharply between everything that is on hand, on the one hand, and human existence, which is precisely *not* on hand, on the other.

What's Bultmann's point, then? It's disclosed, I think, by the context of the above, which is framed—before and after—by these two statements: "Revelation does not provide this self-understanding . . . as a world view that one sees into, possesses, and applies. . . . Revelation does not mediate a world view, but rather addresses the individual as an existing self." In other words, revelation is addressed to the single individual as such, whereas a world view informs the rational mind, which is, in the nature of the case, not individual but general, universal. The proper response to a world view, accordingly, is to accept or reject it, to hold it to be true or to hold it to be false. But the proper response to revelation is to understand myself here and now in a new way.

Another thing to keep in mind in this connection is that even existentialist analysis, which clarifies the fact that we are each individual selves who must again and again freely decide how we will understand ourselves, cannot avoid thereby becoming a world view, in that it talks about us as instances of a kind, even if not of a kind that is "on hand" in the way in which, at least for our ordinary sense experience and understanding of them, the kinds of things around us in nature are "on hand."

5 December 2001