

Bultmann's understanding of theology and philosophy is like Heidegger's in understanding their relation as a relation between two sciences, or forms of critical reflection. Bultmann further agrees with Heidegger that, while theology and philosophy are alike insofar as both are sciences, they are nonetheless absolutely, not merely relatively, different, because theology, however unique, is one of many positive, or ontic, sciences, while philosophy is the one and only phenomenological, or ontological, science.

Because of this absolute difference, theology and philosophy ask logically different kinds of questions and, therefore, can neither contradict nor be synthesized with one another. At the same time, theology as a positive, or ontic, science necessarily presupposes philosophy as a phenomenological, or ontological, science, even while philosophy, in turn, in no way presupposes or implies theology. Philosophy's only necessary condition is *human* existence as the being who understands itself and therewith understands beings and being as such, while theology neither would nor could exist at all but for *Christian* existence as the human being who understands her- or himself and everything else on the basis of God's self-disclosure through Jesus Christ.

But now, for reasons that need not be gone into here, philosophy as the one and only phenomenological, or ontological science, necessarily includes a "fundamental ontology" in the form of an "existentialist analysis." And it is precisely this analysis that theology most directly presupposes. Just as there is "a language in which existence naively expresses itself," so there is also "a science that talks about existence without objectifying it into being within the world" (*NTM*: 101). The task of such a science is "to develop the understanding of existence that is given with existence itself in an appropriate conceptuality. Therefore, it does not ask the question about the meaning of existence as an existential question but rather inquires by way of existentialist analysis what existence means in general, in the knowledge that the existential question can be answered only by existing itself" (107). This means that philosophy does not "prescribe to us: so should you exist!" It "says to us only: you should *exist!* Or if that is already to say too much, philosophy shows us what existing means. It shows us that human being, in contradistinction

from all other being, means precisely to exist—to be a being that is given over to itself and has to take responsibility for itself. Philosophy thus shows us that human existence comes to its authenticity only by existing, and therefore is realized only ever anew in the concrete here and now. It does not propose, however, to create an existential understanding of the here and now by existentialist analysis; it does not take this away from us but rather leaves it precisely to us" (107 f.).

Just what philosophy properly does is further clarified by some of Bultmann's other statements about existentialist analysis as such and Heidegger's existentialist analysis in particular. Thus he says, for instance, "Martin Heidegger's existentialist analysis of human existence seems to be only a profane philosophical presentation of the New Testament view of who we are: beings existing historically in care for ourselves on the basis of anxiety, ever in the moment of decision between the past and the future, whether we will lose ourselves in the world of what is available and of the 'one,' or whether we will attain our authenticity by surrendering all securities and being unreservedly free for the future" (23). "Heidegger's philosophy calls us back to ourselves from our lostness in the 'one,'" and "Heidegger can call each of us to the resolution of existing as a self in face of death because he makes clear that our situation is one of being thrown into nothing; thus we only have to accept being what we already are" (25, 26). "Existentialist analysis may well be able to say that free openness for the future is a characteristic of human being insofar as we exist in our authenticity. But is it able by virtue of saying this to give us such openness as concretely existing human beings? It is as little able to do so as it can give us existence at all; it can only say to us that if we want to exist genuinely we must be freely open for the future. It can also remind us of just how frightening this is when it tells us that, for it as philosophical analysis, the future can be defined, finally, as nothing, as our own individual nothing, and when it therefore understands free openness for the future as simply the readiness for anxiety that we each have to take upon ourselves by resolve" (117 f.).

Bultmann attempts to make clear again and again that and why "existential understanding" is one thing, "the existentialist understanding of human being that philosophical analysis works out," something else. "Of the

second one can certainly say that statements expressing it have the meaning of timeless truths and, insofar as they are to the point, can be valid as such. But existentialist analysis points beyond itself, so to speak, in that it shows (and this, too, would be a 'timeless truth') that existential self-understanding takes place only as my own particular self-understanding in existential decision. In my existential self-understanding I do not understand in general what existence is (that would be existentialist understanding), but I understand myself in my concrete historical here and now, in my concrete encounters" (116). Considering Bultmann's general use of terms, one may infer from what he here says about existentialist analysis consisting in "timeless truths" that such an analysis is, in effect, a "world view." But because such analysis "points beyond itself" in the way he says it does, it presumably satisfies the criterion he stipulates by saying that a "'Weltanschauung' . . . is the more legitimated the more it expresses the historicity of the human being" (*History and Eschatology*: 149).

In any event, it is clear from the above passages that, while philosophy, including existentialist analysis, is, in Bultmann's understanding, a phenomenological, or ontological, science, it nevertheless functions, or can be made to function, at least indirectly, existentially—not in that it calls us to a specific self-understanding, but in that it calls us to understand ourselves authentically. Precisely in clarifying what existing means, existentialist analysis at least indirectly calls us to exist, and that means, to exist authentically, in freedom from the past and for the future. The difficulty, however, is that philosophy as such is as powerless to give us such an authentic existence as it is to give us any existence whatsoever. In this respect, philosophy, in Bultmann's view, can never do more than, on Luther's analysis, the law can do: it can confront us with the demand to live authentically, but only so as to condemn us. It cannot give us the freedom from ourselves without which we are unable to obey the law's demand.

But if this is correct, one can understand Bultmann's statement that, while Heidegger, unlike Kamlah," does not characterize the attitude of resolution as submission[,] it is clear . . . that accepting one's thrownness by resolving to die is an act of radical highhandedness." "If genuine life is a life of submission, it is missed not only by those who live by disposing of what

can be disposed of instead of by submitting but also by those who understand even submission to be an aim that they can dispose of and do not see that their authentic life can only be an absolute gift." In this respect, the existentialists, who seek to get beyond the everyday existence of securing ourselves by disposing of what can be disposed of, may be thought of analogously to Paul's thinking about the Jews who seek "righteousness," only to lose the very thing they seek, because they want to be "justified" by their own works, because they want to "boast" in the presence of God. "In the 'boasting' of Jews who are faithful to the law, just as in the boasting of Gnostics who are proud of their wisdom, it becomes clear that the basic human attitude is the highhandedness that tries to bring within our own power even the submission we know to be our authentic being, and so finally ends in self-contradiction" (28).

This is the very point Bultmann returns to in clarifying the difference between "the false scandal" that myth occasions for the modern woman and man and "the true scandal" of the kerygma itself, by which they, no less than women and men otherwise, are offended. "Modern women and men, also, attempt to understand their existence by objectifying thinking (to the extent that they are not 'existentialists' who are beyond this). For them the genuine scandal lies in the fact that they are expected not to understand themselves by objectifying thinking, which is in fact always a striving after security. The whole thrust of New Testament thinking, insofar as it is opposed to that of modern women and men, lies precisely in its breaking down their security and showing them that they can exist in a genuine way only by surrendering their own securing and existing out of the grace of God. The genuine scandal is at bottom one given to the *will*, and it is a scandal for thinking only insofar as the will explicates itself in thinking! (Naturally, the scandal is the same for the existentialists insofar as they secure themselves, not, to be sure, through objectifying thinking, but through their own free resolve.)" (*Barth/Bultmann Briefwechsel*: 176).

In sum: Bultmann's understanding is, in effect, a point-by-point restatement of Luther's, with the one important difference that he is much more self-conscious about the way in which—and the reasons why—theology, perforce, depends upon philosophy. With this difference, he, too,

holds that philosophy at its best can clarify our authentic existence and call us to actualize it, thereby performing the proper function of the law. But he is no less clear than Luther that even the best philosophy cannot do any more than this, because the only human beings to whom it can issue its call are radically fallen human beings, and itself, simply as philosophy, is powerless to free them from their radical fallenness. Only the event of God's prevenient grace through Jesus Christ can give us the authentic existence that philosophy, in its way, also calls us to actualize.

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