

In re-reading Bultmann's essays on "Humanismus und Christentum," I have been struck by two insights.

The first is that the difference Bultmann is at pains to point out by distinguishing between "humanism," properly so-called, and (both ancient and modern) subjectivism is not essentially different from the difference underlying Phenix's distinction between the two types of democracy, i.e., the "democracy of worth" and the "democracy of interest," which is essentially the same distinction, of course, that Gamwell makes between two types of liberalism, i.e., "reformed [or reconstructed] liberalism" and "established liberalism." (I also seem to see a clear connection between Bultmann's distinction and the distinction I have made between "secularity" and "secularism." There are, of course, differences between these two distinctions, in that humanism, in Bultmann's understanding, is explicitly "faith in the spirit," while secularity is distinguished by affirming all that follows from such a humanistic faith without explicitly affirming, even though certainly not denying, humanistic faith as such. But while secularity, in my understanding, is not explicitly religious or metaphysical, in the way in which humanism, as Bultmann understands it, clearly is, it is also not relativistic or nihilistic in the way in which secularism is and, according to Bultmann, subjectivism is as well.)

The connection here becomes clearest when Bultmann clarifies the difference between the understandings of "freedom" typical of humanism and subjectivism respectively. Whereas for the second, freedom is the freedom to do as one pleases without external constraint or interference—to pursue one's "interest" or "preference"—freedom for the first is the freedom to do what is worth doing—to believe what is true, to enact what is good, and to create and appreciate what is beautiful (*GV*, 3: 66 f.). (It also occurs to me in this connection that the eulogistic use of the word "culture," which is striking in Bultmann's characterization of humanism, becomes intelligible if one distinguishes between the concepts and symbols, and thus the "culture," involved in anything that human beings think, say, or do, insofar as they are human at all and the concepts and symbols, and thus the "culture," that is involved in their thinking, saying, and doing what is worthy of being thought, said, and done. Of course, the problem with

humanism is that *what is held to be thus worthy* is one thing, *what really is thus worthy*, something else!)

The other insight I've had is that the current struggle between defenders of "rationality and realism" and "postmodernists" continues the same struggle begun between Plato and the Sophists in antiquity and renewed in the nineteenth century between humanism, on the one hand, and positivism, on the other. (Significantly, Bultmann specifies "positivism" as the philosophical attitude corresponding to the naively optimistic faith in historical progress with which the nineteenth century began, only to end in relativism and nihilism [GV, 3: 62, 67 f.]. I should want to hold, naturally, that there can be merely secular as well as ~~the~~ militantly secularistic forms of positivism and that the forms characteristic of the nineteenth century were often enough more the first than the second.)

The thing that is so clear from Bultmann's essays—and so welcome—is that in any such struggle fidelity to either the humanistic tradition or the Christian tradition requires recognizing that the two traditions are on one and the same side over against all subjectivism, relativism, and nihilism. They both presuppose that human existence is constituted from beyond itself, and that, therefore, some things are, while others are not, worthy of being believed, enacted, and appreciated. Moreover, they both explicate this presupposed faith in the meaning of life in metaphysical or religious terms. Therefore, while the two outlooks are different and such that not both can be true, adherents of each tradition can acknowledge a certain validity in the other. Thus even as the Christian must deny that the norms of the true, good, and beautiful are themselves God and that knowledge of these norms is itself knowledge of God, the Christian may also affirm that these norms either are or are included in *the law of God*. This means that, while fidelity to the norms of truth, goodness, and beauty is not itself the way to salvation, or the means of finding a genuine relation to God—for "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4)—these norms nonetheless remain in force as God's holy, inviolable demand; and the love to which the believer is freed by God's grace and which is the fulfilment of the law is nothing other than the fulfilment of these norms (Rom 7:12; 13: 8-10; Gal 5: 14) (GV, 2: 146). Furthermore, the Christian may unhesitatingly allow that Christianity has need of the means

that humanism provides in order to be and to remain effective in the world. Directly or indirectly, the individual Christian can realize her or his faith in acts of love in daily life only by means of acquiring knowledge, enacting justice, and creating ^{and appreciating} beauty. On the other side, the humanist may allow that, for all of its importance, spirit alone is not and cannot be the only shaper of human life. No science, law, or art can provide an answer to the individual person's ownmost question in face of the power of fate, suffering, and death. Indeed, humanism—or, better, the individual person to whom humanism offers itself as a possibility for understanding her or his existence—has need of Christian faith to be continually reminded of the profound questionableness of human life and to avoid succumbing to the illusion, which humanism tends to foster, that human beings can become lords of themselves and their lives by what they are able to know, do, ^{and appreciate} and create.

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