

Meaning-for-Us/Structure-in-Itself

According to Tillich, philosophy has to do with the structure of being in itself, while theology has to do with the meaning of being for us.

Assuming that Tillich's word "being" is his designation for what I should prefer to call "ultimate reality," I could accept this formulation, provided (1) one can take "philosophy" to mean, really, what Tillich himself calls "ontology" and I speak of as "metaphysics"; and (2) one retains the distinction between theology and faith, and hence the distinctive ways in which they both have to do with the meaning of being for us, theology's way bringing it into close contact with philosophy as well as with metaphysics and morality.

Assuming that these provisions, also, are met, I should want to stress that the meaning of being, or of ultimate reality, for us is intrinsically double-sided, in that it comprises both the ultimate reality that has a meaning for us and the us for which ultimate reality has a meaning, each understood in terms of the other. Thus ultimate reality is ultimate reality as authorizing our authentic self-understanding, even as our authentic self-understanding is our self-understanding as authorized by ultimate reality.

As such, however, the meaning of ultimate reality for us involves both things to be believed (*credenda*) and things to be done (*agenda*) and therefore necessarily has both metaphysical and moral implications. It necessarily has metaphysical implications in that, on the side of ultimate reality, the meaning of ultimate reality for us necessarily presupposes the structure of ultimate reality in itself. It necessarily has moral implications in that, on the side of us, or our authentic self-understanding, the meaning of ultimate reality for us necessarily entails certain properly moral actions.