



9. Fromm's Humanism as a Challenge for a Christian Theology

Reflections on a Fruitful Discussion between Christian Theologians and the Humanist Fromm

The having/being alternative develops the earlier distinctions „productive/nonproductive“ and „biophilic/necrophilic.“ As a characterological concept, it has empirical validity and is the quintessence of religious experience. The encompassing meaning of the experience of the having/being alternative makes it possible to postulate a nexus in the grounding of the is and the ought of human existence where the experience of the having/being alternative is itself the interpretive key by which man ultimately grounds himself in what he is and in what he ought to be. The grounding of the individual in the mystical experience of the ONE represents a challenge for any theology that grounds man autonomously. Such a challenge can lead to a fruitful exchange between Christian theologians and the humanist Fromm¹ if what applies to every challenge by mod-

ern humanisms applies here as well: „The challenging modern humanisms are themselves being challenged.“²

First, the self-understanding of the discussion partners must be clarified. The theologian who wants to show that his talk about God is rational is not used to seeing man's existence, meaning, and obligation grounded in experience, although he knows that his talk about God is possible only when there is experience of God's speech, and that it is consequently grounded in such experience. He also knows that theology only attains its goal when it furthers {280} the belief that man experiences his life, his meaning, and his existence as grounded. Theology mediates religious experience but cannot itself be the experience of God while confining itself to talk about him.

Mysticism is different³ because it is concerned with experiential value and because, by represent-

¹ Fromm himself attributed a growing importance to the dialogue between humanists and Christians. Concerning the significance of humanism within the Roman Catholic Church, one need only mention men such as Pope John XXIII and Teilhard de Chardin or, among theologians, Karl Rahner and Hans Küng, according to Fromm (cf. „Afterword“ [1961b], p. 261). It must be admitted, however, that so far this dialogue has taken place primarily in the English-speaking world. See R. Banks, „A Neo-Freudian Critique of Religion: Erich Fromm on the Judaeo-Christian Tradition“; P. A. Bertocci and R. M. Millard, *Personality and the Good. Psychological and Ethical Perspectives*; R. B. Betz, *An Analysis of the Prophetic Character of the Dialectical Rhetoric of Erich Fromm*; A. M. Caligiuri, *The Concept of Freedom in the Writings of Erich Fromm*; O. B. Curtis, *The Role of Religion in Selfhood: An Examination of Humanist Psychoanalysis in Erich Fromm and Christian Selfhood in Wayne Oates*;

M. C. Ebersole, *Christian Faith and Man's Religion*; J. J. Forsyth and J. M. Beniskos, „Biblical Faith and Erich Fromm's Theory of Personality“; J. S. Glen, *Erich Fromm: A Protestant Critique*; G. B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement: A Comparison of the Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm*; S. Hiltner, *Psychotherapy and Christian Ethics: An Evaluation of the Ethical Thought of A. E. Taylor and Paul Tillich in the Light of Psychotherapeutic Contributions to Ethics by J. C. Fluegel and Erich Fromm*; V. A. Jensen, *Failure and Capability in Love: An Integrative Study of the Psychology of Erich Fromm and the Theology of Erich Brunner*; J. J. Petuchowski, „Erich Fromm's Midrash of Love: The Sacred and the Secular Forms“; Y. Suzuki, *An Examination of Doctrine of Man of Erich Fromm and Reinhold Niebuhr*; W. C. Tilley, *The Relationship of Self-Love for the Other with Special Reference to the Thought of R. Niebuhr and Erich Fromm*.

² H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*, p. 37.

³ See p. 195f and 273f.



ing a negative theology, it usually overcomes the inability of theology to be direct religious experience. Negative theology is due to the insight that thinking about God with the object of arriving at substantive knowledge of him conflicts with the experience of God himself as a matter of principle. Religious experience is possible only in the experience of one's own not-knowing. Every knowledge of God is recognized as a heteronomous determination and must therefore be done away with. Theology attempts, of course, to reflect and transcend this position when it attempts to show and ground the rationality of religious experience. To be able to advance grounds for the rationality of religious experience, theology needs transcendence. Pointing to transcendence, it also claims that it transcends the level of religious experience by thought. It aims at an ultimate ground beyond man and postulates a theonomous grounding of every human reality, including the religious experience of the mystic. This goal contradicts that of mysticism, for it is precisely the demonstration of some ultimate reason or a theonomous grounding of religious experience that mysticism is not interested in. Mysticism sees itself as an ultimate grounding because only the experience of the ultimate ground can be an ultimate ground.

Although this is merely a synopsis of theology and mysticism, it is indispensable to set forth self-understanding and goals if a discussion between Christian theology and Fromm's humanism is to take place. For Fromm's position differs from that of the theologian. Because of his Jewish ancestry and because of the way he dealt with the problem of religion throughout his life, he is more appropriately referred to as a „mystic.“ The question of the theologian interests him only where theology could become an obstacle to mystical experience. This does not mean, however, that he wishes to dispute theology's right to exist. Whether it should or should not exist is decided, as far as he is concerned, by whether or not it furthers the mystical experience of the ONE. What counts is the religious experience, not rational demonstration by {281} complicated theological reflection. For him, truth is

not decided by whether a conviction can survive rational scrutiny but in the experience of truth, which is itself experienced truth. This is also the reason he can claim that belief in God is of secondary import. Theism or nontheism is not ultimately decisive for the religious experience. The experience of the ONE as the negation of all knowing, willing, and having does not need to be demonstrated by rational thought; it is true and rational in itself.

It is in *the attempt to ground his humanism in mysticism* that Fromm's contribution to the discussion between theology and mysticism must be seen. By using the characterological finding that being is possible and real to the extent that it is free of having, as he interprets the mystical experience of the ONE, and by making this plausible, he answers those questions regarding the grounding of the religious that theology is normally concerned with. The having/being alternative reveals the condition for the possibility of religious experience generally and creates a nexus between the grounding of religious and empirical experience. The unity of empirical experience, when aided by characterology, and of religious experience in the mysticism of the ONE is guaranteed by the having/being alternative, which is valid for both experiences.

The nexus in the grounding of empirical and religious experience that the having/being alternative makes possible defines Fromm's concept of humanism and the discussion between Christianity and humanism along with it. Fromm's humanism not only combines scientific knowledge and religious experience but can also ground both concepts in such a way that the truth and bindingness of scientific knowledge and confidence in them have their ultimate ground in religious experience on the one hand, and religious experience has its ground in the empirical experience that science makes possible on the other. For that reason, the mystical experience of the ONE is not a leap into some sort of transcendence or irrationality; neither is it a mystification of reality (mysticism is the very opposite of mystification) but represents the consistent, if not continuous, realization of the experience that man is to the degree that he negates the determination



of his life by what he has and can have. The experience of the ONE gives an answer to the question and the questionableness „man“ without {282} leaving the sphere of the human. For it discovers that with the negation of all possible having determinations of human existence, unity with oneself and with the natural and human enviroing world becomes possible, and that it is only in the freedom from all heteronomy that reason and love unfold.

A productive exchange between Christian theologians and Fromm's humanism must respect this distinctiveness of his humanism concept, which is both scientific and religious. It must be acknowledged that:

1. Fromm's scientific humanism is grounded in the mystical experience of the ONE.
2. With the help of the having/being alternative, the truth and bindingness of what man is and should be are ultimately grounded in the mystical experience of the ONE.
3. This ONE can be experienced by man.
4. The grounding nexus that mystical experience creates lays claim to autonomy vis-à-vis theological attempts to ground religious experience.

If these implications of Fromm's concept of humanism are respected, the interpretive key, the „having/being alternative,“ can serve as a critical theory for a variety of problems and questions of Christian theology. From the perspective of Fromm's humanism, the question of the grounding of the autonomy of human existence and obligation (of what man is and ought to be) can be answered by the assertion that a Christian theology can ground man's autonomy theonomously, provided belief in God does not mean heteronomy in the definition of human existence. The Christian faith is certainly open to such a possibility of theonomous grounding: the more radically the idea of the man-god as son of man is understood and realized, the closer the answer of the Christian theologian and the Christian mystic will come to the answer of the humanist. The experience and definition of man, of his being and his obligation, are then tied to the

understanding of Christ's life and the following of Christ, because in Christ's total humanity, God's essence reveals itself. Such a theonomous grounding of man's autonomy can be found in theology.⁴ Examples would be the Father-Son relationship of the Gospel According to John, the theologies of Christian mystics, and the ascription of the *lex nova* and the *lex naturalis* in Thomas Aquinas. All these theologians wish to {283} ground human existence and obligation theonomously in such a way that the condition for the possibility of humanness, that is, God-God's will and reason as they became manifest in the life of Christ-corresponds to those potentialities for the unfolding and realization of human existence that are grounded in man.⁵ Of course, the realization of such a humanism that is „willed by God“ and grounded in him is tied existentially to the life of Christ. For in Christ, the confidence in one's own *humanitas* is ultimately grounded, which means that autonomy and the experience of man's powers is relational: their validity is ultimately grounded in, and guaranteed by, the experience of following Christ. Like the humanistic attempt, the Christian realization of humanness is grounded in the experience of man's own powers. But for the Christian, the possibility of this experience lies in adherence to Christ, because in the life of Christ, God's will regarding man's perfect form--that is, his will regarding eschatological *humanitas*--expressed itself in a way that is valid for all time.

The endeavor of Christian theologians to ground the autonomy of man (and of the moral) theonomously does not necessarily imply a heteronomous claim in the theological definition of ~what man is and should be, nor does such theological reflection and the demand that Christ be fol-

⁴ On the philosophical problem of this „demand that the divine and the human coexist,“ see J. Möller, *Die Chance des Menschen*, pp. 286-324. On the (unresolved) question of the relation between philosophy and mysticism, n. 23, p. 321, is especially informative.

⁵ On the theological problematic generally, see H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*; on the specifically theological-ethical question, see pp. 155-159.



lowed necessarily reduce the possibility of experiencing and realizing human and humanizing potentials. But in view of the criticism Fromm's scientific and mystical humanism entails, such theonomous grounding is a possibility only for those Christian theologies that do not insist on heteronomy in the theonomous grounding of human existence and human obligation. There is no requirement here to prove in detail that official theology especially succumbs to the temptation to define man heteronomously. A belief that is institutionally protected and supported must always combat the institution's tendency to tie the truth of religious experience to commitment to itself, which means that the problems of self-preservation become a priority for the institution.

Independently of this problem (an important one in theological and ecclesiastical practice) that a relational autonomy concept is a restricted one--and this applies both to theologies that view theonomy as heteronomy and to claims to authority by church and faculties of theology--Fromm's understanding of humanism calls {284} into question theological thought altogether. While it is true that he does not exclude the possibility of a theological grounding of human existence provided this entails no heteronomous claim on man,⁶ he decided in favor of a grounding that dispenses with all theology as talk about God and as reflection about theonomy. The possibility of the mystical experience of the ONE even makes the effort to establish a relational autonomy redundant. His critical question can be formulated in these terms: Why should theology and the theological grounding of the relational autonomy of the human be necessary or meaningful if man is humanized in the religious experience of (eschatological) *humanitas*, and when this religious experience occurs in the most concentrated and effective form in the mystical experience?

⁶ The „human reality which paradoxically in its fullness is itself inexpressible ... can be expressed to a limited degree in different and even contradictory concepts“ (Fromm, „Afterword“ [1961b], p. 263).

Presumably, this question cannot be settled definitively because thinking and talking about God (theology) and experiencing God or the ONE (mysticism) are distinct possibilities for man that are not mutually exclusive and neither of which can be shown to be subordinate to the other. While theology is based on the experience of God's speech and has man's experience of God as its goal, mysticism in Fromm's understanding makes the claim that it can attain to a direct religious experience through the negation of every kind of theological knowledge and therefore believes it can also judge theology. But even this claim that mysticism makes will not prevent man from reflecting on his religious and mystical experience or from making it communicable through language. Verbalization, however, is already theology, even as negative theology.

Yet the legitimation of theology does not do away with the critical questioning of every (Christian) theology by .mysticism, especially by humanistic mysticism. There is the further` fact that the criticism that humanistic mysticism makes belongs to a tradition of dispute that theology and mysticism have carried on inside the Christian religion. The fight of the Church and its theological authorities against alleged gnostics, theosophists, and mystics, and against conversion and reform movements, too often is (or has been) a fight of those who believed they possessed the faith as they battled others who were (or are) inspired by the transforming power of religious and mystical experience. Inquisition and the suspicion of heresy threaten every religious renewal. Whenever {285} religious experience and theological and ecclesiastical doctrine reached some kind of accommodation in the history of the Church and of theology, reflection on and verbalization of the religious and mystical experience became an impulse for theological and ecclesiastical reassessments. Mysticism, being critique, has both a destructive and a constructive function in theology.⁷

Although Fromm's humanistic mysticism calls

⁷ See the distinction drawn between theology and mysticism, p. 120f.



into question every theology, the religious experience of the having/being alternative and its grounding in characterology nonetheless can have significance as a critical theory for a Christian theology, especially for a theology that is administered by the Church. This is all the more true since the having/being alternative has proved to be a suitable interpretive key to Jesus' religious and ethical message and, oddly enough, precisely to those elements in his gospel that would be difficult to understand otherwise and have found little application for that reason. A Christian theology that has its basis in the testimony to Christ's gospel and ethics by those who followed him, and whose goal is to follow Christ now, itself engages in a critical function vis-à-vis differently grounded historical and contemporary theologies and forms of the discipleship of Christ then and now. The having/being alternative can aid in this critical function. By bringing the most diverse statements and demands into a horizon of understanding and by showing the congruence of Jesus' teaching and life, the having/being alternative can facilitate the understanding of Jesus' religious and ethical message. And the interpretive reduction of the substance of Jesus' teaching and life to the having/being alternative makes possible the use of that alternative as a critical theory for the critical function of Christian theology. Finally, because the having/being alternative is not only the quintessence of religious experience and of the theological and ethical verbalizations of that experience but also an ultimate evaluation of fundamental orientations of the character structure and thus a characterological entity, the humane and humanizing qualities of all kinds of theological, ecclesiastical, and religious phenomena can be judged with its aid. For these reasons, Christian theologians should not overlook Fromm's constructive contribution, even though they differ in approach and there is a clearly perceptible difference in principle in the grounding of human existence and obligation. There is an impulse in Christian belief {286} that is critical of religion, of church and theology. Fromm's humanism which, thanks to the having/being alternative, is both religious and scientific,

contributes to the realization of that impulse insofar as it follows and takes hold of Jesus' teaching.

In conclusion, a discussion of the question regarding the specifically Christian in a theological ethic will illustrate this possibility. The opposition to an „autonomous morality in a Christian context“ by the so-called ethics of belief (*Glaubensethik*)⁸ would like to postulate a specifically Christian quality in the content of ethical norms. *Glaubensethik* not only believes that Jesus' ethos constitutes a specific horizon for the Christian that motivates his ethical behavior in a particular way („autonomous morality“ makes the same assumption), but also feels that there are substantive demands that derive only from the devout discipleship of Christ and whose fulfillment requires a strong faith.

Such an attempt to define Christianity as distinct from other religions, and especially from modern humanisms, must be judged as rather apologetic, and name against Fromm's humanistic ethic. The explication of the religious ethos by the having/being alternative has shown that a humanistic ethic can also contain those radical ethical demands that characterize Jesus' message, and that it can ground the bindingness and realizability of such an ethos. From the humanistic perspective, the substance of Jesus' ethos is not necessarily grounded in revelation, nor is belief in the god-man a necessary condition for understanding and realizing it. The having/being alternative adequately explains the rationality of Jesus' ethos. To the extent that alternative is a characterological magnitude, it can ground normativeness in characterological--that is, empirically verifiable--knowledge.

If the having/being alternative can be shown to be an interpretive key to all elements of Jesus' message, the following observation applies to the function of Jesus' ethos in the grounding of a theological ethic, the differing views of the *Glaubensethiker* notwithstanding: Jesus' ethical message does not represent a compendium of Christian norms. Instead, the various moral demands can be understood as exemplifications of that ethical de-

⁸ Cf. pp. 157-159.



mand that is intrinsic to the promise of the Kingdom of God and that can be made plausible by the having/being alternative. Since that alternative does not present a norm for action but a metanorm, it has {287} an essentially critical function for normative behavior.⁹ This is the reason Jesus' warning about wealth, for example, addresses itself to the attitude, the behavior, and fundamental character orientation of securing existence by wealth. Such a demand can take concrete form in the renunciation of wealth, but its direct target is the attitude. How the attitude that is demanded can be optimally realized in any given instance is decided by the place value that wealth, for example, has in an individual's life.¹⁰

In contrast to the *Glaubensethik*, „autonomous morality“ sees what is distinctively Christian in moral matters „not in concrete ethical injunctions that can be developed from an understanding of the faith,¹¹ but in a specific horizon of meaning that motivates the Christian in his concrete ethical conduct in a particular way and therefore urges upon him a different attitude toward moral demands. In contrast to „autonomous morality,“ a humanistic perspective on Jesus' religious and ethical message asserts that even this specific horizon of meaning produces no effects that differ from those that would result from a humanistic interpretation of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Whether the horizon of meaning is understood theistically--in Christian terms, as the beginning of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ and as a giftlike offer of revelation--

or as the ethos of the renunciation of having that has its „gracelike“ liberating effect in the gamble that is the renunciation of having, Fromm believes that in renouncing the having mode, man experiences that liberated and redeemed humanness that he can interpret as given him, as transcending him, and as revealed to him because it is not a result of his knowing, willing, and having.

Christian theologians will resist such an interpretation of the specifically Christian horizon of meaning. When „autonomous morality“ anchors the distinctively Christian quality of morality in the critical, stimulating, and integrating effects of Jesus' message, it calls for a theistic horizon of meaning: the gracelike offer of a divine will to salvation that antedates all human action. If a Christian accepts God's will to salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ, this new horizon of meaning motivates him to adopt a new ethical attitude. Since the new horizon became incarnate in Jesus, the ethical relevance of this horizon of meaning becomes recognizable in Jesus' life and teaching as his ethos. This ethos, however, is not {288} itself the specifically Christian quality of the moral but a result of it. It can be understood as the consequence of a particular Christian horizon of meaning, but need not be so understood. Interpreting Jesus' ethos by the having/being alternative has demonstrated that the rationality of that ethos does not necessarily lie in a theistic horizon of meaning. While it is true that from a theological perspective, the specifically Christian horizon of meaning is constitutive for Jesus' ethos, Fromm's humanistic perspective sees the reason of Jesus' ethos as grounded in the practice that renounces having. The ultimate ground for this practice of renunciation is the mystical experience of the ONE.

Having drawn a line that marks off the humanistic ethic, and having demonstrated that the having/being alternative serves as a key to the understanding of Jesus' ethos, it now becomes necessary to argue for the understanding that autonomous morality has of the specifically Christian in a theological ethic. For only the adoption of human reason as the principle of all morality can guarantee the communicability and bindingness of norms. This

⁹ By emphasizing the paraenetic quality of the exemplifications, B. Schüller shows convincingly („Zur Diskussion über das Proprium einer christlichen Ethik,“ esp. pp. 332-334), that such critical clarification did not have to await the having/ being alternative as a key to the understanding of Jesus' demands.

¹⁰ While the understanding of Jesus' demands as concretions of a demand that an attitude be adopted touches on some of the concerns of *Gesinnungsethik* and *Situationsethik*, it differs from them in essential points.

¹¹ A. Auer, „Ein Modell theologisch-ethischer Argumentation: 'Autonome Moral,““ p. 42.



concern coincides with Jesus' ethos because through the having/being alternative, the reason of that ethos can be understood as the expression of the rationality of reality, provided that reality itself is interpreted through the having/being alternative, as Fromm interprets it. Representatives of an ethic of belief are therefore incorrect in thinking that where the discovery of norms is concerned, there are real differences between a Christian and a humanistic reason as here described. What difference there is must be looked for where an ethics adapts to the demands of a culture and society that is oriented around having and therefore puts forward a conception of the rationality of reality and of the moral that is no longer either Christ's or humanistic because it no longer follows the reason of the having/being alternative. Both Christian ethics and Fromm's humanistic ethic have a characteristic in common that distinguishes them from other ethics, and that is that the having/being alternative furnishes them with a criterion that is better suited than any other to discover ethical norms that are humane and have a humanizing effect.

Independently of the question concerning the discovery of norms, Fromm's humanism calls in question the conviction (which not only *Glaubensethiker* hold) that only a Christian theology can {289} ultimately ground and guarantee the meaning of normativeness. The mystical experience of the ONE must be viewed as a distinctive and valid attempt to ground the meaning of what man ought to be. It is the religious experience of a humanistic ethos whose effects are powerful and which, by its renunciation of all determinations through having, gives direct experience of man's perfect form. The experience of the ONE thus ultimately grounds and guarantees the ethos of the having/being alternative. The ethos of the having/being alternative is therefore the condition for the possibility of the religious experience of the ONE and at the same time that religious experience itself. A humanistic ethic is grounded in the experience of this religious ethos, for humanistic ethics is concerned with strengthening the dominance of the being mode. But because a life in the being mode is only an interchangeable

term for humanistic ethos, a life in that mode is *eo ipso* „ethical,“ that is, morally good. Humanistic ethics aims at the practice of an ethos of being that is ultimately grounded in the mystical experience of the ONE as the negation of all forms of having.

Questions Christian Theologians Might Address to the Humanist Fromm

Humanism both enriches a Christian theology and calls all of it into question. The preceding considerations regarding a productive dialogue between Christian theologians and Fromm should serve primarily to deepen the understanding of his humanism and to forestall a premature judgment of it by a self-assured theology. Such caution has its deeper reason in the claim Fromm's humanism makes: it is based on experience that, even when religious, finds expression in the serious consideration and realization of humanness, and that becomes evident in that act of realization. Fromm attempted to live this humanism. The talk about being as based on the negation of all determinations by having represents the conceptualization of his scientific and religious experience and the daily practice of his religious ethos. The power of his lived humanism, however, does not mean that there are no questions that Christian theologians might address to him. But because humanism takes up the religious problem and gives it a coherent {290} development that leads to a nontheistic mysticism, this dialogue would have to include an inquiry into the claim that mysticism has vis-à-vis theology and, most importantly, the claim that theology might raise vis-à-vis mysticism. The following questions and problems provide points of departure for this sort of definition of the function and place of theology and mysticism:

How can a lived religious ethos and the concomitant experiences be conveyed without the verbalization of the experiences becoming a substitute for the religious experience itself? Why does mysticism usually develop as a countermovement to an established faith that is primarily or wholly oriented



around the avowal of certain dogmas and ecclesiastical structures? To what extent does theology have its legitimation in the necessity to give a philosophical answer to the questions life poses, particularly when theology understands itself as a communicable, rational reflection about empirical and religious experience? More specifically, don't such experiential facts as suffering, fear, sadness, guilt, death, unhappiness, and illness justify theological thought that goes beyond the undoubtedly accurate observation that it is principally the attitude toward these phenomena that decides their existential place value, not the philosophical or theological awareness of their problematical character?

To what extent does the human need for communication and the necessity that experiences be communicable make theology and a communion that is defined by theology and tied to a particular church community indispensable?

Can the relationship between theology and mysticism actually be grasped dialectically in such a way that religious experience can be had only if a theological knowledge that is necessarily an alienation of religious experience is negated? Or isn't it rather the case that in the process of religious experience, a constructive share must be conceded to theology if mystical experience is possible only through the radical realization of a religious ethos, yet this ethos must be thought about, taught, and learned? Where will the critical function of distinguishing between an orgiastic experience of unity and the mystical experience of the ONE be performed unless it be in the rational reflection of religious experience and in the religious and ethical demand that having be renounced?

Isn't it true that where theology is seen only as negative theology, {291} it is overlooked that mystical experience is always discontinuous experience whose interpretation and verbalization are themselves theology, so that theology and mysticism necessarily quicken and criticize each other? As long as mystical experience can only be discontinuous, must the developing awareness and knowledge of the unity of the religious experience--that is, „positive“ theology--not be a constructive precondition

for a mystical experience of the ONE? In terms of personal experience and psychological preconditions, it may be asked: Doesn't a person who has the mystical experience of the ONE as a discontinuous experience of his life wholly in the being mode use this experience he has had as a form of knowledge that prompts him to have further religious experiences, so that reflection about the experience and its interpretation constitute a necessary and positive mediating function for religious experience? Doesn't this mean that religious experience necessarily depends on theology, and must one not concede to theological knowledge and reflection that functional significance that may accrue to all objects of having? The fact of having itself does not tell us whether this having is functional or a mode of existence. Precisely where theology mediates religious experience, theological knowledge means a functional having.

When this mediating function of theology is denied, is there not the attempt to ignore both the admission of finiteness and the acknowledgment that there is a necessary mixture of the fundamental orientations of being and having in the character structure because all one wants to see is the possibility of the religious experience in a punctual life that is lived wholly in the being mode? Doesn't the view that concentrates entirely on the end point of a negative dialectic and that envisages only the punctually possible experience of this end point in the mystical experience of the ONE neglect the concrete dealing with reality by a character structure that, even when the being mode is dominant, is always also determined by the having mode? Doesn't this mean that life succumbs to the temptations of religious enthusiasm and certain gnosticisms that assert, at the price of a practical, rationally governed sense of reality, that messianism and eschatology are at hand?

If it is true at the level of characterology that human existence is marked in principle by a mixture of the two modes even though {292} punctually, the experience of a life wholly in the being mode is possible, why should the peculiarity that human life is fundamentally mediated and determined by hav-



ing not be relevant to the application of the having-being alternative to the problem of religious experience? Why should what is true of life in general not be true of the mystical experience: namely, that the mystical experience calls for theological reflection so that the religious—including the religious ethos—is mediated and determined in principle by theological reflection, that is, in and through a communion?

That theology necessarily hinders or prevents the religious and mystical experience cannot be proved until theology surrenders its functional distinctiveness and replaces the religious experience. But why should „positive“ theology be *a priori* a having determination and therefore hinder or prevent a religious experience if it is true that human life is fundamentally mediated by having and this does not automatically bring the dominance of having with it?

Since the religious experience is discontinuous and not the same thing as a life in the being mode, must the necessity of a mediation not be taken seriously and does it not become necessary to demand a mediation whose goal is the experience of immediacy?

All these questions notwithstanding, we will conclude with the following reflection: The mystical experience of the ONE is the discontinuous experience of a life lived wholly in the being mode. This experience itself is not mediated but results from the negation of every kind of mediation. The phrase „man for himself“ applies here. Every belief, every hope, and every love of oneself, of man, the

world and *humanitas* is grounded in this experience. It presupposes that man experience himself as totally free and independent, for it is only then that his life, his action, his love, his reason, compassion, willingness to sacrifice, his selflessness, his sharing, his forgiving, and his joy can be grounded in him. And only when they are grounded in him is it he that loves, thinks, works, shares, sorrows, delights.

Theistic religion and theology wish to mediate. Christian theology presents itself as a mediator and therefore requires the imitation of Jesus. The decisive question is this: What is being mediated, and to what end? If redeemed man is the goal, then here also, what is mediated is that *humanitas* that is experienced as man's capacity for immediacy. If religion, the Church, and theology can make {293} possible such experiences of immediacy, then these institutions have a mediating function and define themselves by the task of making the immediacy of human life possible. Whether the Christian religion, theology, and the Church actually do justice to this task will not be decided here.

It can be said, however, that the writings of the New Testament testify to the fact that Jesus' life had such a mediating function, a function whose aim is the immediacy of the religious experience of God in man. Under these conditions, the question concerning the identity and the difference of Christianity and humanism is decided by a personal decision to risk the experience of immediacy. Here the ethos of Jesus and the ethos of humanism make an identical avowal: The Courage to Be Human. {294}

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