

THE METHOD OF CORRELATION

by  
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Within modern history a number of positions have been developed with regard to the relationship of humanity with the divine. We have seen "the death God" and the rise of televangelism. We have witnessed nations which have adopted the credo of atheism, and other nations involved in holy wars and claiming divine sanctions. Each of these cultures has developed their society to reflect their theology, or maybe their theology to reflect their society.

The principle of methodological rationality claims that all scientific approaches to reality follow a method. According to Paul Tillich, systematic theology follows a method of correlation. It is important to remember that a particular method is not adequate for every subject. A method is a tool, which must be appropriate to its subject matter. Therefore no method can be developed without a prior knowledge of the object to which it is applied. The method of correlation cannot be used in other systems and must only be used in the theological system.

An analysis of our human situation uses terms that are referred to as "existential". Mythological material shows that basic existential questions were developed very early in the history of humankind, as early as humankind thought about itself. The questions humankind asks are about the nature of humankind. Humankind asks questions about its relationship to other things, beings, or species. Implicitly we are asking these questions about ourselves.

Humankind is the question that it asks about itself. The basic premise of the method of correlation is that theology has not answered questions that humankind has not asked. Therefore humankind can understand the answers theology reveals if they have an understanding of their own human situation.

In Systematic Theology Paul Tillich describes the method of correlation as it works with his systematic theology. I wish to use the basis of correlation to analyze Karl Barth's theology and also Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy, inasmuch as they pertain to the relation of culture and the Divine. This will be done after the method of correlation is explained thoroughly enough to be generally accepted. I will also gravitate Feuerbach's philosophy into a theology by affirming the actuality of God. In the conclusion I will note where I deviate from the theology of Paul Tillich and provide my own insights.

The method of correlation seems to be greatly overlooked by our society, I believe others in my generation will agree. In reading Tillich I feel his insights as a theologian have also been underrated, granted he is very well known, but I feel the method of correlation and his understanding of the nature of God warrant more credit. It is in this light that I present this paper.

The term "theology" is derived from two words, theos (god), and reasoning, logos. Theology in its broadest sense is reasoning or thinking about God and God's relationship to humanity and the world. Reasoning or thinking pervades every spiritual activity of humanity. By using the term "spiritual" Tillich is describing the "dynamic-creative nature of man's personal and communal life" (Systematic, p. 15). Humanity cannot be "spiritual" without the dimension of words, thoughts, concepts.

In the introduction it was mentioned that basic existential questions were formulated very early in the history of humankind, as early as humankind thought about itself. These questions, however, arise within a certain cultural context. In recognizing this interplay of religion and culture the issue arises as to the relation of religion and culture. Tillich proposes the following definition of this relationship: "Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself" (Essential, pg. 103). Every human act, including every religious act is, to some extent, culturally formed or influenced. It does not matter if these religious acts develop from organized religion or the most intimate movement of the soul. Any expression of religion is colored by the limitations of a culturally formed existence. The specific culture determines the

method in which the expression is made, by the individual or the group. "Religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion"(Essential p. 103).

Theology has the difficult task of uniting two polar ends, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation into which the eternal truth must be received. As a function of the Christian Church, theology must serve the needs of the church. With regards to the Christian Church the theological polarities are: the basic statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation. Most theologies are unable to express the complete truth or they are not able to relate the truth to the situation. An example of this could be a liberation theology. Some radical black theologians sacrifice elements of the truth within their theological framework. This sacrifice occurs when these theologians forgo nonviolence for violence or destruction to aid their struggle. James Cone, in his book A Black Theology of Liberation (1970), implies that blacks will have nothing to do with whites and seems to condone violence as means to secure the black peoples rights. In his book Cone states, "To be black is to be committed to destroying everything this country loves and adores"(p. 49). Later in the book he continues his anti-white rhetoric, "The goal of black theology is the destruction of everything white so that black people can be alienated from alien gods"(p. 118).

Cone further sacrifices elements of theological truth when he exclaims, "Black theology will only accept a love of God which participates in the destruction of the white enemy"(p. 136). Another black theologian, Joseph Washington, provides a more militant interpretation of the black power movement. These black theologians feel it is necessary to sacrifice part of the Christian message to attain their rights. Christ is involved in supporting black power. Black theology is to utilize the Christian faith to liberate the black people from white oppression. Is part of the Christian message violence and destruction? These black theologians are letting their situation dictate their theology. Theology is to unite the polar ends in a balanced way, granted there is no clear criteria for this union, but a theology should not overlook such an important doctrine, such as nonviolence, to placate the situation. Other theologies are afraid of missing the truth, such as Fundamentalism, so they identify the truth with the traditional concepts and culture, then try to impose these on a new, different situation. They are sometimes blinded by their own quest for the eternal truth. Fundamentalism as a theology confuses the eternal truth with the temporal reception of these truths, it fails to take into consideration the present situation.

The "situation" is one polar end within theology. The situation refers to a culture's "scientific, artistic, economic, political, and ethical forms in which they express

the importance of the human situation, and presume they can teach and preach a pure and original kerygma.

There is a branch of theology called Apologetic theology, or "answering theology." In Tillich's view, apologetic theology attempts to answer the questions implied in the situation with the impact of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answers. It attempts to answer questions concerning its own existence with the reverence and power of the eternal truth in a way that the apologetics interpret their existence which answers their questions. One must keep in mind that practically every theology is apologetic. Is there any question that has been answered by any apologetic theology that humankind has not asked? Therefore, in order to answer a question one must have something in common with the person who asks it, however vague the relationship may be. As you recall from the introduction, to create a tool one must have an idea of the subject matter. To create a method, one must have an idea of the system. The nineteenth century apologetic theologians used methods which caused the name "apologetic" to be a distrusted one. Their attempt to defend Christianity against humanism, naturalism, and historicism was a retreating one. As scientific knowledge advanced, apologetics retreated to other areas where they could fit God in to. They tried to find a place for God within the tangible world. This was a weak and frightened approach.

The afore mentioned kerygmatic theologians, such as Karl Barth and the Neo-Barthians, commonly feel that apologetic theology is a surrender of the kerygma, the immovable truth. The message must be objectively put into the situation, thrown at those in the situation, as Tillich puts it, "thrown like a stone"(Ibid, pg. 7). But this does not fulfill the needs of the church. The church must present the basic statement of the truth of the Christian message and also interpret this truth for each new, different situation. To simply "throw" the message at those in the situation would result in fundamentalism. It would be nothing but the repetition of Biblical passages. Karl Barth, however, does not argue this. "The word of God", for Barth, is not identical with the Bible. Even if the purest kerygmatic theologians did nothing but that, they cannot escape the fact that each of the Biblical writers was in a different conceptual situation. Throughout humanity language is the basic expression prevalent within every situation, therefore even the most kerygmatic of theologies cannot escape the problem of the "situation".

Apologetic theology must itself take into account the claim of kerygmatic theology. "It loses itself if it is not based on the kerygma as the substance and criterion of each of its statements"(Ibid. pg.7). Without a base of kerygma, any theology would result in more or less a philosophy of religion. Theologians of the last two centuries have



struggled with this problem. To resolve a theological method in which message and situation are related in such a way that neither of them is removed.

According to the principle of methodological rationality, all scientific approaches to reality follow a method. A method is a manner of working, a tool, which must be adequate to its subject matter. For example, a hammer cannot be developed if the would be inventor had no idea of what a nail was or what his tool, method, would be used for. A method cannot be developed without a prior knowledge of the system to which it is to apply, conversely a system cannot be developed without a prior knowledge of the method which will apply to that particular system. "Method and system determine each other"(Ibid. pg. 60). Furthermore, no method can be adequate for every subject matter. Since method and system determine each other, no method can be developed without a prior knowledge of the system which is to be built by the system. A hammer cannot be used adequately as a screwdriver. When one gives a description of a tool it is, "a description of a decisive aspect of the object to which it is applied"(Ibid. p.60). A cognitive relation will reveal something about the object, and something about the subject in that specific relation. To develop a hammer one must comprehend its association with the nail. In turn a nail cannot be developed without a prior concept of the hammer. This interdependent

relationship is the basis for understanding the method of correlation.

In theology the term "correlation" has three important implications. There is a correlation between religious symbols and that which is symbolized by them. This meaning refers to the central problem of religious knowledge. Concepts involving the polarity of the human and the divine are correlations. This second meaning involves the statements about God and the world, the infinite and the finite. There is also a correlation between humanity's ultimate concern and that about which humanity is ultimately concerned. Humanity's ultimate concern is an interpretive occurrence, there is a difference between this and that about which humanity is ultimately concerned. This third meaning of correlation exemplifies the divine-human relationship within the religious experience, where "God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation" (Ibid. pg. 61). The divine-human relation changes with every development, personal and historical. This change is due to the interpretation involved in the relationship. The divine-human relationship is a correlation.

The method of correlation replaces three inadequate methods in theology. The first method is supranaturalistic. This method develops the Christian message to be a totality

of truths which have "fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world"(Ibid. pg. 64). This results in a total kerygmatic theology where there is no relation with the situation. Fundamentalists are supranaturalistic. To them the Bible is a book of supernatural "oracles" in which the human association is entirely disregarded. The second method derives the Christian message from humanity's natural state, hence it is called "naturalistic" or "humanistic". In the last two centuries much of liberal theology was considered "humanistic". Later in the paper we will review Ludwig Feuerbach who is an accomplished "humanist". Humanists overlook the gap between humanity's existential and essential state, where everything is said by humankind , not to humankind. The dualistic method tries to build a supernatural structure on a natural substructure. The dualistic method recognizes the relationship between humanity's spirit and God's spirit, although an infinite gap exists between them. This relation is attempts to express itself by positing a body of theological truth which humankind may obtain through its own efforts, through "natural revelation". The dualist method analyses human finitude and the question(s) involved in it. They are false because they derive an answer from the form of the question. "The method of correlation solves this historical and systematic riddle by resolving natural theology into the

analysis of existence and by resolving supranatural theology into the answers given to the questions implied in existence."

The Essence of Christianity revolted against what Ludwig Feuerbach thought was a repressive orthodoxy and against the equation of the church with its established social order. Feuerbach wanted to keep the ethos of Christianity without its faith, its humanism without its theism, its hope for man without a hope based in the sovereignty of God. He was a radical subjectivist. His book first published in 1841 has had impact on men who helped shape the modern mind, of such diverse perspectives as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Sartre, and other existentialists and personalists.

Over a century after The Essence of Christianity was written, Christian theologians still cannot ignore the importance of Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy. He has also had an impact on Protestant and Catholic theologians, none more opposite and antagonistic than Karl Barth. The impact on Barth is not a constructive one; instead Feuerbach represents, for Barth, the fundamental flaw of modern thought, including theological thought: the reduction of theology to anthropology. Feuerbach gives him a reason to write, an obstacle his faith must conquer, a clear instance of the wrong turn taken by much post-enlightenment theology.

"Man has his highest being, his God, in himself" (Essence p. 281). By no means does Feuerbach imply panentheistic or pantheistic qualities. Rather, "God" has no objective reality, but is a subjective feeling projected

outward as an external force. God is nothing else than undisturbed, uninterrupted feeling, "feeling for which there exists no limits, no opposites" (Essence p. 283). He states that feelings arise only in the love of humanity for itself. They arise in communication above the egoistic sensations in isolation. Feelings are only in community, "participated sensation is feeling" (Essence p. 283). Therefore one who has no need for participation has no feelings whatsoever. All communication and expressions are an attempt to convey feeling, be they physical, verbal, or otherwise. "The very same thing which, pronounced or performed without the appropriate tone, without emotion, is only an object of indifferent perception, becomes, when uttered or performed with emotion, an object of feeling" (Essence p. 283). Emotion is giving feeling to the expression of an object.

Feuerbach claims that feeling is the last refuge for theology. God as an objective distinct being is abolished because man has no cognizance of anything beyond humanity. The essence of religion is feeling, and therefore must be the essence of God. "And as certainly as I exist, so certainly does my feeling exist; and as certainly as my feeling exists, so certainly does my God exist" (Essence p. 283).

Feuerbach claims, "Man feels nothing towards God which he does not also feel towards man" (Essence p. 284). Religion has no emotions which are particular to itself. The

emotions which religion claims for its object, humanity experiences either in relation to itself, or to Nature. The feelings we feel in the presence of human greatness; reverence, humility, worthlessness, devout admiration, etc., are religious feelings. Purely human emotions are religious, and for that reason religious emotions are purely human. Any member of humanity can only have emotions that are purely human, even if they are religious emotions. One could not impress the emotions of religion upon a human being if the object of religion, God, were specifically different from the human being.

Happiness, in emotional excess, transfers itself to external things. "It is the love which can withhold itself from no existence, which gives itself forth to all; but it only recognizes as existing that which it knows to have emotion"(Essence p. 285). On the contrary, reason has pity on other things, it identifies them in relationship to humanity, as being distinct from humanity. These beings, by reason, do not exist for humanity, but have rights of their own. Reason is the qualifier of Nature, the heart is the qualifier of man. Humanity uses Reason to determine what falls into Nature. If an object is beyond Reason it is labelled "supernatural." The heart grants everything humanity wishes, that reason and Nature denies it. "God, immortality, freedom, in the supernaturalistic sense, exist only in the heart"(Essence p. 285). The heart releases

humanity from the limits and boundaries within Nature. Nature is the "light and measure" of reason. Things which are naturally true are logically true; what has no foundation in Nature has no foundation at all. But reason is also the "light" of Nature. Reason is the essence of things re-established in its pure existence. "Reason divests things of the disguises and transformation which they have undergone in the conflict and agitation of the external world, and reduces them to their true character" (Essence p. 286). Reason distinguishes the essential from the accidental elements. Feuerbach claims the divinity of reason, due to its distinguishing characteristics. Reason has no partiality to a specific species of things, it embraces all with equal interest. Therefore reason is infinite.

For Feuerbach, humanity's lusting after God is not one of the finite seeking the infinite, but a yearning after unlimited, uninterrupted, pure feeling. This approach would reduce God to a state of mystical bliss in which the objective reality and the subjective reality become one. Though in mystical experience the objective is not reduced to the subject; the distinction is transcended.

Feuerbach contends that the religious problem is to give permanence to feeling in spite of the uncertainties of life, and to separate this feeling from disturbances and limitations. Is this state of being possible to achieve and



one still function as a member of humanity? The feeling is to be an unrestricted activity, with no interferences. Therefore, is God not death? If this state of feeling were to occur, than surely that person would cease all human functions, for human functions are, by definition, limiting.

By defining God as undisturbed and ecstatic feeling, Feuerbach's theory must also take into consideration the effect of drugs. Certain drugs, such as lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), or the new drug, "ice" are said to produce such mystical feelings as Feuerbach describes. Is God, then, to be said to be an hallucinogenic drug, giver of the states which Feuerbach defines as the essence of religion?

"God is man's highest feeling of self, freed from all contrarities or disagreeables" (Essence p. 284). The highest feeling is also the highest feeling of the self. When feeling low, one feels physically lowered, when feeling high one feels exalted. "The feeling of the self and feeling are inseparable, otherwise feeling would not belong to myself" (Essence p. 284). God as an object of feeling is nothing more than one's highest feeling of self. Highest feelings of self are produced by our surroundings, we feel good when things go our way, our emotions and feelings are in reaction to our environment. Therefore, if God is the highest feeling of self, then God is created and destroyed by our interpretations of and responses to everyday occurrences. Granted, Feuerbach has not outrightly stated

the above; but it would seem to be a valid conclusion from the extremity of his philosophy.

Feuerbach also has an unusual place for Christ in his system. Christ is the consciousness of our species. The unity of our consciousness is Christ, whom we are all one within. A Christian is one who loves humanity for the sake of humanity. We are all Christ when we "rise to the love of the species" (Essence p. XVIII).

Feuerbach wishes to reduce all theologians into anthropologists. He believes himself to be re-affirming the real essence of humanity and denying the illusory projections of theology. As the object of theology, nothing but the essence of humanity is expressed, therefore, theology is anthropology. The reduction of theology to anthropology is coupled with the rise of anthropology to theology.

Feuerbach's position may be summarized in his own words:

Not the attribute of divinity, but  
the divinity or deity of the attribute,  
is the first truly divine being. The  
only true atheist is he to whom these  
attributes mean nothing. The attributes  
do not depend on the idea of God; rather  
the reverse is true. (Essence p. XVIII).

Karl Barth does agree with Feuerbach inasmuch as to believe in religion is to believe in man. If one has hope

that religion will save humanity, one has hope that humanity will save itself. Faith in Christianity is to have faith in something human, personal, or social.

Besides this basic agreement, Barth is the antithesis to Feuerbach. According to H. Richard Niebuhr, Barth must encourage others to read Feuerbach. Barth must not do what his contemporaries did: they banished him, labelled him a heretic, and warned all against the dangers of exposing themselves to such a subversive interpretation of Christianity. For Barth the refusal to hear an opponent would be to doubt the sovereignty of God. A faith in God that is so unsure of itself that it refuses to hear criticism is a very unstable faith. Barth had his students read Feuerbach so that they might see what is to become of any theology which begins with humanity's subjective states. Barth has concern for the revealed primacy of God as the starting point of all Christian interpretations. The subject of God begins with God; otherwise we are not speaking of God, as Feuerbach's method demonstrates. Barth is not an anti-humanist, he is a humanist though the affirmation of humanity is made in Jesus Christ, and accepted by humanity.

Barth feels that Christianity must return to the doctrine of the absolute transcendence of God. God is God, and humanity is humanity, incapable of knowing God. Truth, about God, being in essence eternal, is not discoverable by

humanity. The truth is a divine revelation, a gift from God, because absolute truth cannot be discovered by humanity. The transcendental, the absolutely objective, cannot be reached by humankind. The chasm between God and man prevents any real communion or communication between the "I" and the "Thou", except insofar as it is given, not achieved, earned, or reasoned.

The Bible, like any other book, is a work of humanity. Unlike the fundamentalists, Barth does not equate revelation with the Bible, or treat the Bible as the Word of God. By the infusion of a mysterious, "super-rational, transcendental element," it becomes a vehicle for the word of God. The Bible as we know it is not the real Bible, because of humanity's imperfection and inability to comprehend or express things as they essentially are. The real Word of God, is both hidden and revealed in the Bible. The mysteries of God are unrecordable in human language or thought, but mediated through the imperfections, limitations, and relativities of human language within a certain historical and cultural context.

Barth and his contemporaries have labelled Feuerbach as a "true child of his century," a "non-knower of death," and a "mis-knower of evil." The reduction of theology to anthropology, and the elevation of anthropology to theology, is not the "essence of christianity," but the essence of idolatry. We can no longer shut our eyes to the vast inhumanities that we have done to ourselves. In the

Ceasars, Napoleons, Stalins, and Hitlers we see what often happens when human beings begin to play God and arrogate to themselves divine attributes. It is absurd to relate the essence of God with the essence of humanity which is evil throughout. "Are we willing to admit that even in our relation to God, we are and remain liars, and that we can lay claim to His truth, His certainty, His salvation as grace and only as grace" (Barth, preface to Essence p. XXIX)

Barth tries to warn about identifying the Word of God with any human institution. He refers to the words presented to us by the Bible and by the human Jesus as "tokens". One cannot directly receive the Word of God by reading the Bible, but these "tokens" are the medium for the Word of God, they are not identical with it. There Barth attempts to avoid the idolatry of fundamentalism, which attempts to possess the absolute.

The Scripture tells of the revelations received by their authors. As one reads the Scripture, the same God who revealed itself to them may also reveal itself to us. According to Barth, the Bible is a record of previous revelation and a promise of future revelation.

Barth's theology is built on the act of God in Christ. We know what both humanity and divinity is by looking at Christ. He denies that humankind can have any knowledge of God, apart from experience. Barth denies any a priori reasoning, that is a claim to know truths apart from an

experienced event. A priori reasoning would give humanity an understanding of God without experiencing God; this would give humanity the ultimate yardstick to judge God's revelations. All knowledge must be a posteriori, knowledge after one has experienced an event. We cannot know what God is until God is given in self-revelation. "We cannot know a priori that God is love; we only learn that after the life of Christ makes God's love manifest"(Guide p. 135).

In Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl, Barth grants that Feuerbach is right about much theology, for much theology has become anthropology. He also makes claim that Lutheranism is one of the sources of atheism, this was "When Luther ceased to be interested in what God is in himself and became emphatically interested in what God is for man"(Protestant p. 357). The course of theological development has been proceeding in a way that humanity is renouncing God and proclaiming itself as the final arbiter of all things and the highest level of reality.

As we have reviewed each theologian we have seen that each has a specific understanding of God; each has a different meaning of what God is for them. There are two interdependent factors that structure the meaning of God; the tension within the idea of God and the temporal factors determining the movement of history. Political, economical and cultural factors are involved in this development. The idea of God is not simply developed only in the light of an ultimate concern, separate from history. On the other hand, neither the rise nor the development of God can be explained culturally or socially without any basis of the ultimate concern that is, reduced to cultural, social, or psychological factors. "Historical forces determine the existence of the idea of God, not its essence; they determine its variable manifestations, not its invariable nature" (Systematic p. 220). The situation of any temporal period can change the idea of God, but it does not produce it, the idea of God is historical.

Tillich gives an example of a feudal order of society which "conditions the experience and adoration and doctrine of God hierarchically" (Systematic p. 220). The idea of God was present before the feudal period and is still present after the feudal period. The idea of God is present in all periods, but the attributes change. Even the Christian theologian's meaning of God is dated. But the fact that this theologian is grasped by the idea of God is not dated.

Feuerbach claimed that humanity was the highest of all

species, nothing can be above humanity. This implies that God, as a reality other than ourselves, does not exist. Tillich, however, tells us that the question of the existence of God can be neither asked nor answered. If asked, the question itself is assuming a superior role over the subject of the question, therefore the question implicitly denies the nature of God, its transcendence and immanence.

"The concept of existence and the method of arguing to a conclusion are inadequate for the idea of God" (Systematic p. 206). This is because in every argument someone is trying to derive a conclusion from something that is given about something that is sought. By doing this God is derived from the world, therefore God cannot be that which transcends the world. These arguments do not prove Gods existence. "They are expressions of the question of God which is implied in human finitude" (Systematic p. 206). We do not know God, therefore by arguing Gods existence we are expressing the uncertainty of God in a form that suggests our finitude. The arguments for the existence of God are an analysis of our human situation, in such a way that God seems necessary

In regards to the relation of culture with the Divine, Feuerbach would claim that everything is said by humanity, not by a god. Tillich claims that humanists overlook the gap between humanity's existential and essential states. Humanism "develops its answer out of human existence,



unaware that human existence itself is the question" (Systematic p. 65). If Feuerbach were alive today one would not try to prove the existence of a transcendent God to him. Instead one would affirm the actuality of God. To express the idea of God as the ground of being, or of being-itself. God cannot be interpreted as a being alongside or above other beings. "If God is a being he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance" (Systematic p. 236). Even if God is called the "highest being", or the "most perfect", and the "most powerful" being, these are all categories of finitude. Tillich states that when superlatives are applied to God they become diminutives. They place God on a level with other beings, at the same time elevating him above all of them. If God were understood as the ground of being many confusions in the doctrine of God would be avoided. What is required is a different, and less misleading, manner of speaking about God. The power of being is a very simple concept to understand. God is the ultimate determiner of our essence. The common ground of all that exists. God is the power which creates a monad to be a monad and a mountain to be a mountain. This concept does not "reduce" God as some people think, it affirms God's radical transcendence. Because God as the ground of being is not as magical as tradition holds, people view this as a reduction of God. God is the power of being in everything and above everything. "If God is not being itself, he is subordinate

to it"(Systematic p. 236). God possesses aseity. This can only be if he is being-itself, the ground of being.

In the theology of Karl Barth we hear the concept of "omnipotence", which implies a highest being who is able to do whatever it pleases. For Tillich this idea must be rejected. The concept of "omnipotence" implies a highest being who asks itself which of the infinite possibilities shall it actualize. This situates God on the divide between potentiality and actuality. In God there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality. Some other theologians such as Luther and Calvin interpreted omnipotence to mean omniactive. Tillich finds a difficulty with this interpretation. It does not recognize the transcendent element in God's omnipotence and identifies it with temporal happenings. Omnipotence correctly interpreted is "the power of being which resists non-being in all its expressions and which manifests itself in the creative process in all forms"(Systematic p. 273)

The method of correlation states that no answer was ever given without a question being asked. There can be no solution without a problem. Every theologian writes because they feel there is a problem that needs to be addressed. This problem can be structural or it can simply be an overlooked and not yet noticed aspect of theology; either way there is a purpose to writing. This can vary from vast sweeping theological views to bumper stickers. The author wishes to present or solve a problem.

The question arises now as to why did Barth take the position that he held?

Karl Barth would like to present to us a theology without philosophy, a naked theology. Theology can stand alone according to Barth, without philosophical conditioners. But we as human beings are conditioned by our culture in a way that we can never objectively interpret anything. Theology reflects the situation of the author, who can never write out of the bounds of his/her situation. Similarly, modern authors cannot write Shakespearean plays. Every culture has immensely changed since the time of Shakespeare, the specific situation in which he wrote is gone. Though the attempt at writing a Shakespearean play is possible in our culture, the product will not be Shakespeare. An author has no choice but to write in his/her situation, about that situation. Even if the author writes a story set in the past or the future, the plot and the story itself were influenced and inspired by the author's current situation. In this sense an author can have a change of heart as his/her situation changes and consequently be ashamed of material wrote at an earlier period in their life. Even the present day defenders of Karl Barth admit that theology cannot stand outside of culture. Every being in humanity has a history, this cannot be disputed. And every being in humanity reacts to situations in their history, so that their situation at any one time is a result of acting on other past situations.

Therefore any person who presents an ahistorical theology has overlooked their development up to their current situation. If an author presents a theology, that theology has a history of the author, because it is the authors past which led to the development of the theology. Theology cannot exist without culture, and culture cannot exist without history.

Another possible reason why Barth took his position involves his own fluctuations in theology. He wrote first in correlation with Kant, then existentialism, and finally junked the whole approach. This reaction by Barth can be labeled as methodologism. This method according to Bill Dean encompasses the conviction that all intellectual failures have developed out of a prior intellectual failure. The failure does not concern the specifics of the intellect, the failure is in the methods of intellect. One example given of this type of failure is the right method of knowing which is the correct claim to knowledge. A second part of this definition by Dean is the understanding that the most rational cure for the failure is to alter or completely change the method of thought.

Barth believes that to start a theology with humanity leads to reductionism. A belief that to start with humanity is to end with humanity, where there can be no denial of Feuerbach's philosophy. One who starts with humanity reduces theology into anthropology. Theologians of all denominations often discuss the possibility of knowing God.

Can humanity understand God, either in its self manifestation or in his aseity. To answer this the theologians often write lengthy, broad explanations about the transcendent God, and the infinite gap between God and humanity. This is done by Karl Barth, placing God as the starting point for all religions. Barth also might be rejecting a God who can be reached by human reason. This would not be God, for Barth, but something beneath human existence. To place God at the front of all religions, one must first start with revelation, a posteriori knowledge of God, given to humanity by God. If revelation were not the starting point then God would be known a priori. A knowledge of God without experiencing God would give humanity the power to judge God's revelations. For Barth, without revelation we are not talking about God. To confront this proposal I will quote the young theologian, Patrick Lutter; "Can we experience an event objectively? How do we break out of culture to experience it? If we don't, how can we know it is truly 'revealed'." We as a society have defined terms such as "revelation", so to experience revelation one must use the cultural criteria established by society. In the Old Testament the prophets need to prove their oracular powers, this is done by culturally defined and expected processes. The writings of Jeremiah provide a perfect example. If the early prophets did not satisfy the cultural criteria, they would be labeled

as false prophets. In any culture that may experience revelation, this revelation is defined culturally.

I feel this approach of staring with God to explain why humanity cannot understand God is all wrong, if the question involves humanity, then the question should start with humanity. One should start with the human situation. This approach to the knowledge of God saves us the task of tripping through the delicate balance of symbolic language to instill the nature of God. Quite simply humanity cannot comprehend anything beyond humanity. For example, the grey whales have very complex songs which they sing up and down the coast of California, humanity can hypothesize the content of the song, but unless we are the whale we cannot understand the song.

Conrad Hyers gives another example, most of us have dissected a frog, a pig, or some other creature reeking of formaldehyde at one time in our academic careers. Every year millions of animals must be destroyed so young students can poke and prod their way through the creature. Humanity can dissect every frog in the world and never know anything about the frog save its physical structure. Only that particular frog, lying spread eagle on the table could have ever known itself. Can humanity even understand itself? Due to the present situation with the condition of the earth, I think not. If humanity could comprehend itself it would live in a way that realizes the interdependence upon

each other. To borrow a term from Tillich, humanity would live in a theonomy, where the law of humanity is the law of God. Currently our situation has it where we cannot understand ourselves as a whole, we cannot comprehend humanity. Each person must start with their own role in humanity, when every person has done this then humanity will understand humanity. And only then can humanity understand anything else.

If humanity would only understand God as the ground of being, then our world would rid itself of the many inhumanities and ecological vulgarities we are now faced with. Comprehending God as the power of being allows us to better understand our situation, with compassion to all that exists, not just to our society, our gods, ourselves. This will allow us to understand humanity, and to live in a universal theonomy.

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