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PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

An Analysis of
The Protestant Philosophy of
Pierre Thévenaz

The first chapter of this thesis analyzes Barth's theology. Because of their relevance to philosophy in general and Thévenaz's thought in particular, the questions discussed are Barth's polemic against natural theology and his doctrine of the knowledge of God. The conclusion is that a theology of grace does not exclude philosophy as such, but does exclude it insofar as it tends to become a theologia gloriae. Chapter Two deals with Thévenaz's philosophy insofar as it develops out of confrontation with the Word of God. It describes the "conversion of reason", showing that such conversion is not incompatible with the autonomy of reason. The final chapter criticizes various conceptions of the relationship between faith and reason. It culminates in an evaluation of the synthesis proposed by Thévenaz and concludes that his Protestant philosophy goes beyond Barth (without betraying his fundamental intention) and remains valid as long as it persists in being a "philosophy without Absolute".

Christian Experience in the Philosophy
of Pierre Thévenaz

by P.A. Carpenter

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the sense that it provides information about a philosopher who is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. (In fact the only translation of his work in English is a small collection entitled What is Phenomenology? Editor James Edie, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1962) Whether or not this is a valuable contribution will depend on the view of the reader; but the thesis aims to show its value by bringing into focus the originality of this thought and the contribution it makes to the controversial question of the relationship between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. The interpretation of Thévenaz is largely my own owing to the fact that very little work has been done on him. This however contributes to the originality of the thesis.

I am grateful to Professor Joseph McLelland for suggesting Thévenaz as a subject for study, and for his encouragement and advice throughout the writing of the thesis. I am also grateful for the help given me by Professors J.L. Leuba and F. Brunner of the University of Neuchâtel; and I am especially indebted to Mme. Pierre Thévenaz for her courtesy and willingness to talk with me about her late husband. And lastly, my thanks go to my mother, my wife, and Miss Karin B. Hauschild, who helped with the typing, proofreading, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The question of the relationship of philosophy and theology, says Paul Tillich, is the question of the nature of theology itself. That is why, he says, as long as theology exists every generation must search for new solutions to this problem.¹ This is the purpose of this thesis: to further the quest for new solutions. Hopefully then the discussion will throw light on the problem and clarify not only the specificity of theology,² but also the specificity of philosophy.

These comments justify the choice of "Philosophy and Christian Experience" as the topic for this thesis. They also explain the choice of Pierre Thévenaz because, as we shall see, his entire philosophy constitutes an effort to establish an authentic relationship between faith and reason. Of course we might have chosen from among the many philosophers or theologians who have made faith and reason their special concern, but Thévenaz was preferred to any of

¹P. Tillich, The Protestant Era (abridged edition) trans. J.L. Adams, (University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 83

²In English the word "specificity" is generally confined to the vocabulary of medicine and pathology, but in its French form (spécificité) it is often used in the sense of "quality", "nature", etc. There are nuances in spécificité however which are absent in these other words; thus when I talk for example of the spécificité of theology I am referring not only to the nature of theology but also to those characteristics in it which make it distinctive and unlike any other discipline. This is the sense I wish to convey whenever I use the English form, "specificity", in reference to theology and philosophy.

them, primarily because of the interest he provoked, talking of Protestant philosophy, a philosophy having as its point de départ the theology of Karl Barth! But Etienne Gilson had said that philosophy was impossible within Protestantism, and possible only within a Catholic perspective.¹ An analysis of Thévenaz, it was hoped, would clarify the issue, and, as it turned out, Thévenaz was vindicated. In fact this is the major conclusion of this thesis: that Protestant philosophy, a philosophy in a Barthian perspective, is a valid concept. Another reason for studying Thévenaz's thought is that it teaches us something about philosophy in Europe today. It shows us new horizons and sets us free from any exclusive preoccupation with the kinds of philosophy that we find on this side of the Atlantic or in the English-speaking world in general.

Thévenaz was a Swiss who lived most of his life in Suisse romande and died there in 1955 at the age of forty-two. At the time of his death he was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Lausanne, but before coming to Lausanne he had been at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale and also at the University of Neuchâtel. During these years as a teacher of philosophy, he had managed to write rather extensively, though it is in essay form rather than book form that he developed his ideas.

¹E. Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, (Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1949), p. 41

He worked on only one book, but his premature death prevented him from finishing it; fortunately however the unfinished manuscript was taken and published under the title, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique.¹ The obvious importance of his philosophy made it essential to put his writings into a form which would make them more readily available to the general public. Consequently a publishing committee gathered from here and there articles, addresses, etc., and published them in two volumes which they called L'Homme et sa Raison.² Later another collection was made, entitled, De Husserl à Merleau-Ponty. Many of his writings still remain in the form of contributions to collective works, journal articles, etc. A complete list of these can be found at the end of L'Homme et sa Raison, Vol. II.

One would have thought that French Switzerland would have been most influenced by the French philosophical tradition, but in fact, says André de Muralt, its "maîtres à penser", whether in theology or philosophy, are German. In this connection de Muralt mentions Luther, Kant, Husserl, Barth. All these thinkers have made their mark on Thévenaz.

¹This title was the choice, not of Thévenaz, but of those who edited the book.

²Paul Ricoeur states in his preface to L'Homme et sa Raison that he was impressed by the extreme coherence of the articles that make up this collection, especially considering the fact that they were chosen "au hasard".

We see echoes of Kant for example when, in his discussion of the Augustinian synthesis, Thévenaz says: it is not our purpose to describe the structure and detail of this synthesis; what is of importance is to make clear "its conditions of possibility."¹ Husserl's influence is reflected in Thévenaz's use of the phenomenological epoché.² Luther's influence is not direct, as with Kant and Husserl, but mediated through Barth. The influence of Barth of course is paramount; it is his theology in fact which constitutes the starting point of Thévenaz's philosophy. De Muralt thus talks of the "particularly striking manner" in which the work of Thévenaz exhibits the "point de rencontre de la théologie barthienne et de la réflexion autonome."³ Thus when Thévenaz envisaged dialogue between philosophy and theology it was always the theology of Barth, the "new theology" as he once called it, that he had in mind. This fact made it necessary to deal with Barth at great length; the whole of Chapter One is therefore an elaboration of his theological position.

The French tradition was not without effect however, despite the more widespread influence of German thought.

¹P. Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 280. (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1956) Vol. I and II. For further detail concerning the Kantian influence in Thévenaz see Chapter Two, Part III.

²See Chapter Two, II, 3.

³André de Muralt, Philosophes en Suisse Française, (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1966), p. 13

This is particularly true in the case of Thévenaz. Descartes above all contributed to the direction of his thought,¹ both directly and through the tradition which he inspired, viz. "reflexive analysis" (sometimes referred to as Spiritualisme français). Ricoeur talks of reflexive analysis, rather than phenomenology, as the "chemin", the path, of Thévenaz's philosophy; he is correct in saying this, because Thévenaz is quite emphatic that reflection, in the sense of "retour à soi", is ontologically, even if not chronologically, prior to phenomenological intentionality: attention (Descartes) rather than intention (Husserl) is therefore the fundamental structure of consciousness. Having said this however, Thévenaz points out that phenomenology and reflexive analysis need to cooperate so as to trace "un chemin nouveau à la pensée philosophique".² In addition to these currents of thought, mention must also be made of existentialism, that of Sartre and Camus, that of Marcel and certainly that of Kierkegaard. All these thinkers have profoundly influenced the thought and style of Thévenaz's work.

One final word must be said on the influences surrounding Thévenaz's thought. Arnold Reymond, in his Philosophie Spiritualiste³ talks of the tradition in Suisse romande of

¹See Chapter Two, Part III

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 120

³A. Reymond, Philosophie Spiritualiste, (F. Rouge et Cie, Lausanne, 1942)

encouraging the closest rapport between philosophical and theological reflection. Thévenaz talked of the "authentic value of this tradition" and demonstrated his own acceptance of it by directing his efforts towards the construction of a Protestant philosophy.

The first chapter of this thesis is an analysis of Barth's understanding of the specificity of theology. The main points in it are Barth's polemic against natural theology and his doctrine of the knowledge of God. These aspects of his thought were selected, because of their relevance to philosophy in general and to Thévenaz's thought in particular. The conclusion of this chapter is that a theology of grace does not exclude philosophy as such, but only excludes it insofar as it tends to become a theologia gloriae. Chapter Two deals with Thévenaz's philosophy insofar as it develops out of confrontation with the Word of God. It describes the "conversion of reason", showing that such conversion is not incompatible with the autonomy of reason. In the final chapter, "Towards a Protestant Philosophy", the discussion moves away from an analysis of Thévenaz's thought as such to a consideration and critique of the various ways of conceiving the relationship between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. This chapter culminates in an evaluation of the synthesis proposed by

Thévenaz and concludes that Protestant philosophy goes beyond Barth (without betraying his fundamental intention) and remains valid only as long as it persists in being a "philosophy without Absolute".

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPECIFICITY OF THEOLOGY

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The first step in our enquiry into the specificity of theology, as Barth conceives it, will be an examination of what he considers pseudo-theology, that is to say, natural theology. This comes under the heading "Natural Knowledge of God". The next step is to define his understanding of the veritable knowledge of God. Following this, comes the critique, which deals first with the minor and then the major criticisms.

I. "NATURAL" KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

A. The Theological Veto

Some critics of natural theology have attempted to defend their position from the philosophical standpoint. H. Mansel for example, in his Limits of Religious Thought¹, argued along the lines that any attempt to conceive of or even deny the Absolute necessarily involves self-contradiction.² Arguing likewise from a philosophical perspective, W. Hordern³ affirms that Barth's kerygmatic theology "seems to have a point" in view of the fact that the natural theo-

¹H. Mansel, Limits of Religious Thought, ^{Bampton} Oxford Lectures, 1858. (Gould & Lincoln, Boston, 1870)

²Ibid, p. 27, 110

³W. Hordern, Speaking of God, (MacMillan, N.Y., 1964)

logian "has to defend convictions that are crucial to the rational proof but not to Christian faith".¹ Why not then, Hordern suggests, abandon these philosophical presuppositions, which anyway are not even shared by all natural theologians, and speak from the "convictional basis" of the Christian faith alone? It goes without saying that such arguments are not exactly invulnerable. J.S. Mill² brings to light the grave problems inherent in Mansel's approach. What Mill dislikes the most is Mansel's equivocal use of the term "Absolute": Mansel had said that any conception of the Absolute involved contradiction, but nevertheless the constitution of our minds compelled us to believe in the existence of an Absolute Being. If both these affirmations are to have any meaning, so Mill's argument implies, it is clear that the self-contradictory Absolute, the thought of which just leads to a "web of contradictions"³ cannot correspond in any way to the Absolute, which is the object of faith.⁴ As for Hordern's argument, all we need say is that lack of agreement over philosophical prin-

¹Ibid, p. 189

²J.S. Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, Vol. I. (W. Spencer, Boston, 1865) Chapter VII

³Mansel, Op. Cit., p. 81

⁴The question of equivocal predication is discussed further in Part III.

ciples is scarcely an adequate basis for abandoning the philosophical endeavour to achieve a natural knowledge of God.

On much firmer ground than either Mansel or Horder, Barth opposes the claims of natural theology on the basis, not of some disputable philosophy, but of biblical revelation.¹ And the Bible, according to the Reformation view which Barth accepts, teaches the radical corruption of man, which of course makes impossible any natural knowledge of God.

Man, says Barth, is entirely closed to the "readiness" of God;² he is hostile to grace; in fact, the struggle against grace is "man's own deepest and innermost reality".³ The crucifixion of Christ proves this beyond doubt.⁴ This portrait of man applies not merely to the unbeliever, but

¹H. Bouillard thus distinguishes Barth's teaching from the "fideist" doctrines of men such as Lammenais, which were condemned by the Catholic Church. These doctrines were based primarily, he says, on certain philosophical theories of knowledge. (See H. Bouillard, "A Dialogue with Barth - the Problem of Natural Theology", pp. 203-226, in Cross Currents, Vol. XVIII, 2, Spring, 1968, p. 212)

²K. Barth, Church Dogmatics II, 1 (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1957), p. 133. (In future references where Church Dogmatics is mentioned, this Vol., i.e., II, 1, is intended.)

³Ibid, p. 142

⁴Ibid, p. 152

likewise to the believer, the one enlightened by the Word of God¹, Barth thus adheres to the Reformation doctrine which asserts that the believer is not only a saint but a sinner.²

The "new creature" or Kaine Ktisis³ has therefore a totally different connotation for Barth than for Catholicism. The Catholic E. Gilson, for example, interprets this doctrine in the sense that man as such is restored, healed, by grace; to say that a man has become "new" is to make a statement about man as he now exists in history. To be sure, Gilson does not deny the damage done by sin to natural man, but this damage can be "repaired" by divine intervention.⁴ It is from this point of view that Gilson criticises the Reformers for their "conception of a grace that saves a man without changing him, of a justice that redeems corrupted nature without restoring it, of a Christ who pardons the sinner for self-inflicted wounds but does not heal them."⁵ R. Mehl, however,

¹Ibid, p. 134

²See for example Luther's letter of 1st August, 1521 to Melancthon: Luther's Works, Vol. 48, ed. & trans. G.G. Krodel, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1963), p. 282

³II Cor. 5:17

⁴E. Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, (J. Vrin, Paris, 1949) p. 111f

⁵E. Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, Gifford Lectures, 1931/32; trans. A. Downes, (Sheed & Ward, London, 1936) p. 421

defends the Protestant view: in a sense, he writes "nous sommes ressuscités avec Christ (Col. 3:1), mais notre vie nouvelle...n'est pas une vie qui nous appartienne déjà: 'elle est cachée avec Christ en Dieu' (Col.3:8). La vie nouvelle de l'être guéri par la grâce n'est donc pas une réalité anthropologique."¹ Gilson's mistake, argues Mehl, is to regard the Kaine Ktisis from a non-eschatological perspective;² furthermore, he is mistaken in conceiving this question in terms of "restoration", of paradise regained. God's promise, says Mehl, has to do with a new creation: resurrection, not Eden, is our hope.³ Our thinking therefore about the new creature must be determined by the promise and the hope of what man will become; as Barth says: "Man bestowed with eternal life is future man; he is the object of God's promise and of our hope".⁴ Of course, the foundation of this hope, the rock on which we stand, is the revelation in Christ. Does this revelation mean that man as

¹R. Mehl, La Condition du Philosophe Chrétien, (Delachaux & Niestlé S.A., Neuchâtel, 1947) p. 148

²Mehl gives an interesting example of the tendency, already early in the history of the Church, to depart from the eschatological perspective. He points to the fact that the Epistle of Barnabas (16,8) has allowed "actualist" language to dominate the concept of the "new man". (Ibid, p. 154)

³Ibid, p. 149f

⁴K. Barth, The Humanity of God, (John Knox Press, Richmond, Va., 1963) p. 82

he is in himself undergoes some sort of magical transformation, a sort of divinization? Not so, says Barth; "The being and nature of man in and for themselves as independent bearers of an independent predicate, have, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, become an abstraction which can be destined only to disappear."¹ Any doctrine therefore of divinization or perfectionism is excluded. Perfectionism, says Mehl, "nous empêcherait de prendre vraiment au sérieux la Parousie du Seigneur et la crise finale qui y est attachée: il signifie que le temps débouche normalement dans l'éternité et qu'il s'y perd."²

In brief, what Barth and Mehl are saying is that the new creature must be viewed from the standpoint of Christ's Resurrection and Second Coming: this is the Christological perspective and it is simply making the point that the Kaine Ktisis of II Cor. 5:17 cannot be considered apart from the en Christo. Is this a pessimistic appraisal of man? Is this anything more than unqualified negation? This is certainly the impression given by Barth's early writings, and in his lecture "The Humanity of God" (1956) he confesses to a def-

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 149

²Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 157

inite onesidedness in his early theology, acknowledging the need for a change in emphasis.¹ He thus goes to the extent of talking of the "distinction" of man² and of his culture.³ There is even mention in this lecture of the human spirit as "naturally Christian".⁴ Does this mean that Barth has in a sense returned to the viewpoint of natural theology?⁵ Has he rehabilitated man as such? I think not. It is really only on the basis of the "humanism of God"⁶ that man should be considered and taken seriously.⁷ All Barth is doing in this lecture is focussing attention on man, not as he is in himself, but as he is in God, or in Christ. Earlier he had concentrated on revelation's negation of man-in-himself; now he concentrates on man-in-the-light-of-revelation. Earlier it was God against the human (in itself); now it is God for

¹Barth, The Humanity of God, pp. 37,41f

²Ibid, p. 52

³Ibid, p. 54

⁴Ibid, p. 60. This sounds not unlike the affirmation of Joseph Pieper that it is natural for man to believe: unbelief, he says, "contradicts what man is by nature." (J. Pieper, Belief and Faith, N.Y., 1963, p. 62)

⁵John Macquarrie comes close to saying just that in his The Scope of Demythologizing, (Harper, N.Y., 1966. First published in 1960) p. 52

⁶Barth, Op. Cit., p. 60

⁷Ibid, p. 54

the human (insofar as it is in God). Barth is right therefore in denying any change of direction in his thought; the only change is in emphasis.

Sin, therefore, is the pivotal factor in Barth's assessment of natural theology. It is because he is an incorrigible sinner that man must ever be thwarted in his efforts to "lay his hands" on God. If his language is inadequate, it is not due simply to some technical deficiency, it is due rather to ~~this~~^e fact that he is weak and sinful.¹ To assert the possibility of natural theology therefore is to make of sin an abstraction; it is to imply "que quelque chose en nous a échappé à l'action du péché, qu'une faculté est restée intègre, que l'homme grâce à cette faculté demeure ordonné directement à Dieu..."² But sin is irreducible and radical, says Barth, and for that reason all natural theology is a lie.

B. The End of Natural Theology

What precisely does Barth understand by the term "natural theology?" One of the best definitions he gives occurs in his Dogmatics: "Natural theology is the doctrine of a union of man with God existing outside God's revelation in Jesus

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 221

²Mehl, Op. Cit., pp. 88, 86

Christ."¹ Of course, there are manifold nuances in natural theology, but the definition cited makes clear its fundamental orientation, viz. man aspiring to God independently of Christ. It is such an enterprise that Barth condemns, and as he sees it, to call theology "natural" is like calling a parallelogram circular: it is utter nonsense.

A vast tradition in the church however has alleged that there is much of value in natural theology and one of the mainstays of this point of view has been its apparent vindication in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Rom. 1:19-20. Gilson says of this passage that it "affirms by implication the possibility of a purely rational knowledge of God in the Greeks, and at the same time lays the foundation of all the natural theologies which will later arise in the bosom of Christianity."² Barth recognizes the problem posed by such verses and admits that there is without doubt "a whole strand running through Scripture" which seems to justify natural theology³. But this strand, he argues is only secondary; "the leading and decisive strand in the biblical Gospel goes back to the knowability of God

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 168

²Gilson, Op. Cit., p. 26

³Barth, Op. Cit., pp. 99ff, 103ff, 107ff, 119ff

in His revelation."¹ And it is only from the perspective of this main line of thought that meaning can be given to this other, secondary line. In other words, the latter is to be conceived only in subordination to the former. Thus, to give a specific example: given the essential message of Rom. 1-3 (which Barth shows to be: man's sinfulness, God's judgment and His grace), it is impossible for Rom. 1:19ff, and Rom. 2:12ff to be used in the interests of natural theology.² Those passages consequently that speak of "man in the cosmos" as knowing God are not to be dismissed as worthless, since in fact (as not only Brunner, but also Barth admits³) they affirm the existence in created nature of an objective possibility of knowing God. Nevertheless, sin has made such knowledge subjectively impossible; it would have been otherwise only "si integer stetisset Adam"⁴ In a sense then, natural theology is legitimate, but this can only be so as long as it is viewed from the standpoint of revelation - outside this standpoint it is totally without value. Barth therefore concludes his analysis: "Holy

¹Ibid, p. 102

²Ibid, pp. 104, 119

³Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 89

⁴Ibid, (quoted ^{from} Calvin's Institutes I, 2,1)

Scripture neither imposes the necessity nor even offers the possibility of reckoning with a knowledge of the God of the prophets and apostles which is not given in and with His revelation, or bound to it."¹

Despite the veto of Scripture however natural theology has enjoyed outstanding success throughout the Church's history. The Fathers of the Church, such as Origen, appear to have drawn considerable inspiration from it.² Similarly, from Augustine through medieval times (after the rediscovery of Aristotle) right up to the formulae of the Vatican Council, the Church has encouraged its development. Even the normally sharp eyes of the Reformers failed to perceive its presence in their very own thought.³ And among their immediate successors it came to be regarded as "the indispensable prolegomena of theology."⁴ The 18th Century, Barth says, saw the undisguised assertion of the method of natural theology. This same method, whose orientation is from man

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 125

²Ibid, p. 200

³Bouillard, Op. Cit., In his article Bouillard writes that the Reformers "attacked and persecuted the 'justification by works' in the moral domain"; however, they "failed to declare that the scriptural principle of justification by faith alone excluded all natural theology. For Barth, this is an inconsistency..." (p. 213)

⁴Barth, Op. Cit., p. 127. For a criticism of Protestant Orthodoxy, as exhibited in the work of the Lutheran A. Quenstedt, see Church Dogmatics, II, 1 p. 237ff

to God rather than God to man, prevailed too in 19th Century liberal Protestantism.. In this period, says Barth, theology was still under the spell of "the Renaissance discovery that man was the measure of all things, including Christian things"¹; it therefore focussed its attention on "man's supposedly innate and essential capacity to 'sense and taste the infinite' as Schleiermacher said, or the 'religious a priori' as later affirmed by Troeltsch."²

We could point to many more instances of natural theology's presence within the Church, but enough has been said to demonstrate its amazing vitality. What can we make of this élan? Barth's answer is that natural theology survives because it is natural, that is, it corresponds to human nature.³ "The vitality of natural theology is the vitality of man as such...for this reason natural theology can recommend so impressively, and so powerfully intrude, a consideration which is seriously addressed to the sphere of man"⁴. To deny natural theology therefore is to deny oneself.

¹Barth, The Humanity of God, p. 26

²Ibid, p. 21

³Ibid, p. 142

⁴Ibid, p. 165

Consequently its survival within the Church is simply evidence of humanity's irrepressible self-assertiveness and refusal to submit to grace. Barth therefore says no! to natural theology despite its long and prestigious history among the traditions of the Church.

Its defenders however, remain unconvinced and claim justification for their point of view on the basis of the principle of the analogia entis which, they argue, is based on the biblical doctrine of creation.¹ Barth's complaint, however, against the analogia entis is that it assumes that there exists between God and man a common denominator, viz. the idea of being.² If this be so, then God can be known apart from revelation. But is there such a common denominator? asks Barth. That his answer is No! is clear when he asks: "where then is the comparability between His Creator-being and our creature-being, between His holy being and our sinful being, between His eternal being and our temporal

¹James F. Anderson, The Bond of Being, (B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Mo. 1949), p. 309. Anderson talks of "the relation of the world to God established by creation" as "the single, positive basis of the analogy between the world and Him." And in the same perspective, Bouillard says that the "natural power of knowing God comes to man from that fact that God creates him unto His own image." (Bouillard, Op. Cit., p. 219)

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 81

being?"¹ If then there be any analogy between God and man, it can only be that which God Himself establishes and creates by His work and by His action. And since faith alone can recognize this action, the only possible analogy between God and man is that of faith, the analogia fidei.²

If Barth's critique of the analogia entis is valid, it means that natural theology has once again failed to justify its existence. Neither Scripture nor theological tradition (insofar as it keeps to the Scripture) can support it, and now even the analogia entis has collapsed under the Barthian polemic. Can any reason remain for retaining it as a method of Christian theology? If it is claimed that it can serve, from the pedagogical point of view, as a propaedeutic to revelation, it can be argued that it is at worst dishonest, at

¹Ibid, p. 83. Notice his emphasis in this quotation on man the sinner. Here again we see how his doctrine of radical human corruption acts as the criterion of his critique of natural theology.

²Pierre Barthel, in his Interprétation du Langage Mythique et Théologie Biblique, (Brill, Leiden, 1963), pp.141n, 51, briefly outlines the salient points of E. Brunner's opposition to Barth over this issue. Further useful comments on this whole question can be found in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., N.Y., 1967) under the headings: Analogy, Theological Use of, (Analogy in Protestant Theology), and Analogy of Faith. The last part of this chapter (i.e., III B3) will have more to say on this question of analogy.

best condescending to use it thus.¹ As for its role as a propaedeutic, according to Barth, this amounts to placing the apologetic enterprise on the same level as that of the world, which is the level of unbelief. Only a "faith afraid to say its name" will act in such a manner: from the purely practical viewpoint of apologetics, such an approach has little chance of success and is more likely to do harm than good;² besides, to take such an approach seriously is to leave out of account "that the real God, where He is known, kills the natural man with all his possibilities, in order to make him alive again."³

From every point of view, including the apologetic or pedagogical, natural theology is found wanting.⁴ Is it

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 88. Any interest, says Barth, in what natural man does to resolve the enigma of the world and of his own existence can only be feigned, since it was a pedagogic objective which inspired this interest in the first place.

²Ibid, p. 93f

³Ibid, p. 90

⁴Tillich criticizes Barth for conceiving evangelization in terms of throwing a stone at "those in the situation". (Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951, p. 7) In Tillich's eyes, this is to ignore the "situation" which, as he defines it, is man's "creative self-interpretation". (Ibid, p. 4) Barth might seem to be acknowledging the validity of such a criticism when he says, in reference to what he terms the "theological existentialism" of Bultmann (though these remarks might just

therefore to be treated as a virulent poison, to be eliminated at all costs? Barth's answer to this seems ambiguous. On the one hand he talks of natural theology as void of reality and therefore not to be taken seriously.¹ We are not to come to grips with it as though it were a real adversary, for it is something "behind" and its elimination is not our affair.² However, on the other hand, he sometimes speaks of natural theology as though it were a real danger, warning that its aims are the exclusive, totalitarian control of the field of theology: secretly it nurtures the pretention that it is in fact "the only possible, right and valid theology".³

as well apply to Tillich): "existentialism may have reminded us once again of the elements of truth in the old school by introducing once more the thought that one cannot speak of God without speaking of man"; but in fact he is conceding very little, for the only speaking of man that Barth envisages is a speaking within the content of the Christ-revelation. Any speaking of man in terms of his own self-understanding is irrelevant to Barth, for the definitive word about man has been spoken. That is why Barth continues the above quotation: "It is hoped that it (existentialism) will not lead us back into the old error that one can speak of man without first, and very concretely, having spoken of the living God." (The Humanity of God, p.56)

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 166

²Ibid, p. 170

³Ibid, p. 137

It therefore constitutes a challenge to the very sovereignty of Jesus Christ¹ and is hence profitable only to "the theology and the church of the antichrist."² Can such remarks be reconciled with Barth's insistence that natural theology is unreal and that there can be no question of a real conflict with it? The answer is yes, as long as we grasp the dialectical quality of his theology. From the perspective of the resurrection, that is, from the eschatological point of view, natural theology is "behind" - but so is sickness and suffering, and death! But since we live "between the times", these afflictions are still "with us" and likewise natural theology. From this standpoint it has reality, but a reality that, along with man as he is in himself, is destined to pass away. It is this transience of natural theology, its failure to provide ultimate assurance, that causes Barth to be so impatient with those who try to uphold it. The reason for its feebleness is that it is caught within the bounds of man's immanent possibilities and, as Barth puts it, the domain proper to man offers in itself no security.³

¹Ibid, p. 163

²K. Barth, "Nein! Answer to Emil Brunner", in Natural Theology, (The Centenary Press, London, 1946,) p. 128. It should be noted that the controversy with Brunner developed in the context of the "German Christian" appeal to natural theology as a justification for their support of the Hitler regime; cf the "Barmen Declaration" made by the Confessing Church in 1934.

³Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 165

The consolation therefore of natural theology is "captious, untenable, false, pernicious"¹; ^{briefly} ~~in a word~~, it is sinking sand.

We are now in a better position to understand Barth's attitude to philosophy.² Insofar as philosophy purports to attain to a knowledge of God, it falls under the same strictures as does natural theology. Thévenaz was right on target when he said: "Si la philosophie ne trouve pas grâce aux yeux de Barth, c'est précisément dans la mesure où elle n'est qu'un cas particulier de la théologie naturelle."³ Barth's "refusal of philosophy" (Thévenaz) is therefore intimately bound up with his refusal of natural theology: he will allow neither the theologian nor the philosopher to get away with any pretention to a natural knowledge of God. There is no such thing as a theologia gloriae, says Barth, the knowledge of God can never be natural. Its basis therefore is not man but revelation. Consequently only revelation can define a veritable knowledge of God.

¹Ibid, p. 169

²The question of Barth's view of philosophy will be more fully developed in Chapter Two.

³p. Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", pp. 81-92 in In Extremis, (Bâle, May, 1942) p. 81

II. VERITABLE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

A. The Divine Incognito

Beginning with the fact that God is known, but denying to natural theology the possibility of attaining such knowledge, Barth concludes that there is only one basis for the knowledge of God, viz. revelation. "Can God be known?" he asks; "Yes, God can be known, but God can only be known through Himself, through His revelation...In tuo lumine videmus lumen - in thy light we shall see light. (Ps. 36:9) That is the first and the final word of Reformed teaching on the knowledge of God."¹ In other words, in the event of the knowledge of God, it is God who takes the initiative,² who even "intrudes" Himself into our world of cognition.³ But why this "intrusion" (Uebergriff)? The only "explanation", says Barth, is God's "good-pleasure". Revelation therefore can be defined as the "good-pleasure" of God that "breaks through the emptiness of the movement of thought which we call our knowledge of God."⁴

¹K. Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, Gifford Lectures, 1937/1938, (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1938) trans. J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson, p. 109

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 23

³Ibid, pp. 67

⁴Ibid, p. 74

God once having taken the initiative in this matter, it does not follow, in Barth's view, that man then becomes the subject in the epistemological relation in the way that he becomes subject in his knowledge of this or that object in the world; on the contrary, it is God, and He alone, who is indissolubly Subject: God alone knows God, says Barth.¹ Man's knowledge of God therefore is not God as He is to Himself, but as He reveals Himself to man: "Inveni te et cognovi te quoniam illuminasti me", says Augustine. "Sed qualiter cognovi te? Cognovi te in te. Cognovi te non sicut tibi es, sed cognovi te sicut mihi es."²

Without doubt such a conception overthrows the view of revelation as the communication of some previously unknown information; it discredits altogether any notion of propositional revelation. The knowledge Barth is speaking of is a knowledge that is inseparable from God's willing and acting. And as such it escapes every criterion external to the Word of God.³ If God is that Object who, by His gracious inter-

¹Ibid, p. 233. James Brown, in his Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber and Barth, (This book initially bore the title Subject and Object in Modern Theology), Croall Lectures, Edinburgh, 1953; (Collier, N.Y., 1962) in the chapter on "God, Indissolubly Subject" makes some very useful comments on this question of "the Subject who is never Object."

²Confessions, I 4,4. Quoted in Church Dogmatics, p. 197

³Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 4

vention, creates the knowing subject,¹ then such an Object must be unique; it cannot be conceived as object among others and thus along with them subject to various philosophical criteria.² The knowledge of God is not in question, says Barth, for if it were then it would not be the knowledge of God. One does not ask the question: "Is God knowable?" because such a question would imply the existence of an external criterion. The problem is not to be posed thus, in abstracto, a priori, but in concreto, a posteriori. The starting point then is not: "Is this possible?" but rather: "It is real, hence possible..."³ This is why Barth insists that his method is essentially the same as that of Anselm, viz. Fides Quaerens intellectum.⁴ Such an orientation makes it impossible for the existence of God to be a matter of doubt or speculation, for this again would mean reducing God to the status of one object among others. God's existence therefore can be open neither to verification nor falsification. For

¹Ibid, p. 21,22

²So free is God of philosophical criteria, says Barth, that he cannot even be brought within the philosophical conception of unity. "Aquinas' sentence that 'Deus non est in aliquo genere' (Sum. Theol. 1, Question 3, Art. 5) must be rigorously applied to the genus 'unity' or 'uniqueness' (one-and-onlyness) also." (Barth, Knowledge of God and the Service of God, p. 21)

³Barth, Church Dogmatics, pp.5, 63

⁴Ibid, p. 4

this reason Barth would totally reject the following assertion made by the Swiss philosopher Arnold Reymond: "la théologie...disparaîtrait du jour où il serait rigoureusement démontré que l'objet des croyances religieuses n'existe pas et qu'il a été façonné dans la conscience humaine par un jeu d'illusions facile à déceler."¹ For Barth, God is beyond such disproof (or proof); His uniqueness lies in the fact that He can never be subsumed within the general categories of our thought.

But God is also unique in that our knowledge of Him, while being "clear" and "certain", yet remains a "mystery".² But this follows inevitably from the fact that He is the subject of this knowledge. If man were the subject, then there would be no mystery since, as Husserl shows,³ immanent knowledge, that is to say, knowledge constituted by consciousness, is apodictic or "absolute": in such knowledge, - the only scientific knowledge according to Husserl - there is no

¹A. Reymond, Philosophie Spiritualiste, (F. Rouge & Cie., Lausanne, 1942) p. 231

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 38

³E. Husserl, Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, (Harper, 1965) trans. Q. Lauer. See his essay, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science."

room for mystery. That is why God has absolute knowledge of Himself, whereas to man He is revealed, but also hidden.¹ Down through the ages, the Church has recognized this hiddenness, this incognito, this akatalepsia, that distinguishes the Object of theology. The problem though, says Barth, is that the Church, in its entanglement with philosophy, has not grounded this truth solidly enough in Scripture (for example, Ps. 139, St. Paul) but has striven rather to justify it in terms of some philosophical doctrine.² Barth insists however that God's incognito is not a philosophical notion but a truth demanded by revelation; it is an article of faith.³ In other words, the notion of revelation is dialectical, that

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 188. "It is because the fellowship between God and us is established and continues by God's grace that God is hidden from us."

²Ibid, p. 185f. It is interesting to note too that Henry Mansel in his teaching on the unknowability of God puts most emphasis on philosophical argumentation. His main point is that reason is limited and that any attempt to conceive of the Absolute leads necessarily to self-contradiction. We are thus left with no alternative but to believe in that which we cannot conceive. (Mansel, Op. Cit., p. 110) In fairness to Mansel, though, it must be added that he does state elsewhere that the teaching of St. Paul is the foundation of the conception of reason's limit. (Ibid, p. 65, where he contrasts Hegel with Paul) Barth's critique however would still hold good in regard to him in view of the fact that he has allowed philosophical concepts such as the "Absolute" to play such a key role in his reflection.

³Ibid, p. 183

is, God reveals Himself, but at the same time He conceals Himself. We do not possess God therefore; we do not circumscribe Him, so to speak, when we know Him. His incognito eliminates such a possibility. A theology which claims to know God "naturali humanae rationis lumine" (Vatican Council, 1870), is therefore ignoring not only humanity's "guilty blindness" but also God's incognito; it has forgotten that "a God who could be known, were no God at all".¹

Are we left then with nothing but God's incognito? Does the knowledge of God finally elude us? No, says Barth, for in accordance with the dialectical nature of revelation, God is not only hidden but also revealed. Paul is saying precisely this when he writes that "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived...God has revealed to us through the Spirit." (I Cor. 2:9-10) God therefore reveals Himself "through the Spirit", that is to say, "to faith" (εἰς πίστιν)², and our task now must be to elucidate, if we can, the meaning of a knowledge known "to faith."

B. The Knowledge of Faith

The knowledge of God, says Barth, is the knowledge of

¹Jacobi, quoted in Mansel, Op. Cit., p. 293

²Rom. 1:17

faith: "everything that is to be said of the nature of faith in general will also have to be said of the knowledge of God as the knowledge of faith."¹ Barth's intention in defining faith as a knowledge is to make it clear that faith refers to God as to an object.² But this relation to the object "God" is an existential relation, which means that the knowledge in question is never irrelevant to the existence of the knower.³ The knowledge of faith therefore is inseparable

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 12

²Ibid, p. 13

³Ibid, p. 226. Barth defines knowledge (knowledge in general) as follows: "that confirmation of human acquaintance with an object whereby its trueness becomes a determining factor in the existence of one who knows." W. Hordern argues that this definition is justified, since "analytical philosophers have made clear' that 'if we restrict our use of 'know' to situations where there is no possibility of being in error, we shall never be able to use the term.'" (J.A. Martin, Jr., The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology, Seabury Press, N.Y., 1966, p. 162) Barth's definition therefore is acceptable even though it fails to specify the conditions of certainty. Furthermore, Hordern sees J.L. Austin as supporting Barth's position: Austin sees 'know' as a performative verb: "When I say 'I know', I give others my word; I give others my authority for saying that 'S is P'" (quoted from Austin, Martin, The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology, p. 162). These few remarks show that it is possible to argue for the validity of Barth's position from a purely philosophical point of view. But Scripture too would seem to support it, as Mehl for example so convincingly shows. (Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 170f) In addition to the Scriptural evidence, however, Mehl also develops the philosophical argument that thought and knowledge are inseparable from engagement. In conformity though to his "Christian philosophy" (we shall be returning to Mehl's views on this matter in Chapter Three) what counts decisively in his argumentation is the Scriptural rather than the philosophical considerations.

from obedience and decision.¹ Furthermore, this knowledge is not possessed once and for all, but must be appropriated moment by moment, since it is in time and not in eternity that we lay hold on truth, or rather, that truth lays hold on us.² This existential emphasis is similarly manifest in Barth's so-called "Christological concentration." The meaning of this phrase is not so much the application of a method to theology, the subordination of all theological doctrines to Christology - though it does include this - as the entering into a vital existential relationship to Christ.³ Christology therefore is practical or existential rather than theoretical. This is what Jacques de Senarclens is driving at when he talks of the "sens large" of Christology; it is more

¹Ibid, p. 36ff. On this question Barth is unmistakably a follower of Calvin who maintained that, Omnis recta cognitio Dei ab oboedientia nascitur (quoted in Barth, Evangelical Theology, (Anchor, N.Y. 1964) trans. G. Foley) p. 14. Such a doctrine, says J. McLelland, implies the "unity of epistemology with soteriology" (J. McLelland, "Calvin and Philosophy", Canadian Journal of Theology, Vol. XI, 1965, No. 1, p. 51) a formula that succinctly sums up Barth's own position.

²Ibid, p. 61f. See also Barth, The Humanity of God, p. 90 where he talks of the act of obedience as calling for continuous repetition.

³"We are not referring to Christology. We are referring, Christologically speaking, to Jesus Christ Himself." (Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 251)

than a methodology; it is an attitude, specifically one of thankfulness before "la grandeur, la puissance et la parfaite suffisance de l'oeuvre de Dieu en Christ".¹ L. Malevez is really making the same point when he refers to Barth's "Christocentrism" as not so much ontic as noetic.² We can conclude therefore that the Christological concentration is above all a relationship to Christ Himself, and the knowledge implied in this relationship is existential, since it is a knowledge that makes a concrete difference to one's existence.

This examination of the existential sense of the knowledge of faith has been a philosophical or epistemological enquiry; we must now go further and examine the theological ramifications of his doctrine. Our primary goal is still to determine in what sense Barth conceives of God as revealing or disclosing Himself to faith.

In describing faith Barth sometimes uses the word "participation". The fact that Christ is "for us" (for all eternity!) ensures that we genuinely participate in what he is and what he has done.³ In other words, Christ is the foundation of our participation in the knowledge of God.

¹J. de Senarclens, "La Concentration Christologique", (pp. 190-207), in Antwort, (Evangelischer Verlag, Zollikon-Zurich, 1956), p. 198

²Barthel, Op. Cit., p. 135 n 36b

³Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 156

Through Christ, man is not left outside but is included within the circle of God's self-knowledge.¹ Now in using the word "participation" to describe this relationship, Barth does not wish to imply a participation in any mystical sense; nothing could be farther from his intention. Repeatedly he insists that faith is not to be confused with the mystical experience.² His opposition to mysticism is based on the fact that it claims to enjoy an immediate relationship to God.³ But Barth denies the possibility of such a relationship in view of the fact that man has been totally corrupted by the Fall; to assert the possibility of the mystical experience would therefore mean admitting that some faculty in man remains unimpaired by sin. But, as we have seen in our discussion of natural theology, Barth will not allow any such divinization of man: for Barth, as for Luther, man is saved but not divinized by grace; he is simul peccator et justus. Barth is therefore unimpressed by such arguments as that offered by T. Corbishley in the New Catholic Encyclope-

¹Ibid, p. 151

²Ibid, pp. 10ff, 56f

³See for example Augustine's account of his experience of God at the window in Ostia (Confessions, IX, 10) and Barth's discussion of this. (Church Dogmatics, p. 10ff)

dia.¹ "There seems to be no reason in the nature of things, why, in some cases and for special reasons, God should not confer a grace that might restore a person temporarily to that condition of perfection that man enjoyed before the Fall." Far from raising man to some "condition of Perfection", grace, in Barth's eyes, comes down to man where he is; that is to say, God reveals Himself within our world in such a way that while our knowledge may be of the world and its phenomena, yet by grace this same world becomes a revelation of God.² In other words, it is the subject-object relation which defines the conditions in which revelation occurs among us.³ Any alleged transcending of this relation is purely fanciful. The tragedy therefore of mystical theology is that finally it leaves man alone with himself.⁴ There is, consequently, point to what Corbishley calls R.A. Vaughn's "unkind definition:" "Mysticism is that form of error which mistakes for a divine manifestation operations of a merely human faculty."⁵

¹His article "Mysticism"

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 207

³Ibid, p. 57

⁴Ibid, p. 197

⁵Corbishley, New Catholic Encyclopedia

When Barth therefore talks of man participating by faith in the being of God, he does not mean that there exists between man and God some direct line of communication; he means that we know God within the limits set by His grace. To go outside these limits, the way that mysticism does, is to turn one's back on grace, thereby forfeiting any possibility of a veritable knowledge of God. To stay within these limits is to recognize that our knowledge of God can never be anything more than indirect: "At bottom, knowledge of God in faith is always this indirect knowledge of God, knowledge of God in His works, and in these particular works - in the determining and using of certain creaturely realities to bear witness to the divine objectivity. What distinguishes faith from unbelief, erroneous faith and superstition is that it is content with this indirect knowledge of God."¹ Thus not only reason, but faith too, must submit to the limits imposed by grace. Neither one nor the other can break through into direct communication with the Divine.² As far as language is concerned, this necessary

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 17

²Mansel rightly criticizes Kant for seeing in the Moral Reason "a source of absolute and unchangeable realities"; this, Mansel objects, is to make "the law of human morality...the measure and adequate representative of the moral nature of God." (Mansel, Op. Cit., p. 183) Humanity consequently is divinized and the Moral Reason achieves direct access to God. If the Moral Reason, then why not the Speculative Reason too? Mansel therefore concludes that Kant has been guilty of a serious inconsistency; the proper course would have been to apply the

indirectness in our relation to God means that here too there can be no claim to adequacy. We might call this the "crisis of theology". There is no special kind of language whether esoteric or simple and biblical, which remains untouched by this crisis.¹ Like the sword of Damocles, God's incognito hangs menacingly above the words and ideas that man uses in his attempt to witness to God.² Thus as regards ethics for example, the most that it can hope to formulate are "conditional imperatives:" Evangelical ethics, says Barth, "will leave the pronouncement of unconditional imperatives to God."³ In brief, all language about God is dialectical, so that any statement about Him comprises both a "Yes" and a "No".⁴ Pessimism however is not the last word, for Barth talks of God's victory over the inadequacy of language.⁵ This does not mean that language is made somehow adequate; rather in spite of its inadequacy it is nevertheless true or in conformity to truth.⁶ Rightly understood, says Barth, the incognito of God excludes all defeatism and des-

concept of limit, not only to the Pure Reason, but likewise to the Practical Reason.

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 194f

²Ibid, p. 203

³Barth, The Humanity of God, p. 86

⁴The dialectical nature of theology will receive further elaboration in Section III, B 3

⁵Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 220

⁶Ibid, p. 202

pairing resignation. Within the incognito is God's disclosure to faith; that is why, in spite of his fundamental incapacity, man can really think the unthinkable and say the unsayable.

Thus the indirectness of our knowledge of God and the consequent incongruence of human language as such do not mean a lack of objectivity as regards this knowledge. Being indirect it might have to do with the "secondary objectivity of God" (the "primary" being God's direct self-knowledge); yet such an objectivity "is distinguished from the primary objectivity, not by a lesser degree of truth, but by its particular form suitable for us, the creature."¹ So its genuineness, its truth, is not in question. "Indirect yet real": these words sum up Barth's position in the matter.

"Human yet divine" would likewise be an appropriate summary. Barth's refusal therefore of a mystical interpretation of faith is his way of asserting the "humanity" of faith. But this does not mean a reduction of faith to a mere product of the human consciousness. "With faith itself" he says, "comes the conclusive insight, that no one has the capacity for faith by his own effort..."² Faith

¹Ibid, p. 16

²Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, p. 106

therefore is a divine gift, a work of the Holy Spirit; it is God's miraculous apprehension of man's entire being.¹ This is why, as Mehl points out, in spite of the ability of empirical psychology to trace the intellectual and psychological antecedents of faith, there can be no psychologistic reduction of faith since it is "aussi miraculeuse que la Révélation elle-même".² Faith therefore can be called "the temporal form of his (man's) eternal being in Jesus Christ,"³ or, as Barthel so well expresses it: "face anthropologique de l'agir de Dieu 'in Spiritu Sancto' 'hic et nunc'".⁴

God's "agir" "hic et nunc" - this is the primary emphasis in this section dealing with God's disclosure to faith. Man as such, fallen man, is barred forever from the tree of knowledge; but man en Christo, the KaineKtisis, does really know God: "we have to do with a knowledge which is true, not only there and then (i.e., at the "last day"), but also here and now."⁵ Revelation therefore does take place; there is a veritable knowledge of God. But the found-

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 201

²Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 126

³Barth, Op. Cit., p. 158

⁴Barthel, Op. Cit., pp. 136n, 37a

⁵Barth, Op. Cit., p. 209

ation of this knowledge, as we have shown, is God's revelation alone; the only theology possible is a theology of revelation. Against such a theology a Feuerbach is impotent.¹ But turn aside from revelation and search for another foundation for theology and the ghost of Feuerbach returns to haunt theologians with the secret fear that perhaps all their theologizing is nothing more than talk about themselves, nothing more than a projection into infinity of man's own nature and being, a sterile reflection of his own glory.² But a theology of revelation has no fear of Feuerbach, because it refrains from any absolutizing of the natural; it even refrains from making any absolute claim to know God. There is no such thing as a "last word" says Barth; the question must constantly arise: do we genuinely participate in the veridical knowledge of God?³ It is such self-criticism finally that stops the mouths of critics such as Feuerbach and that convinces us that Barth's theology of revelation is one worth taking seriously.

¹"Theology is anthropology," said Feuerbach, "i.e., in the object of religion which we call in Greek Theos, in English God, there expresses itself nothing other than the deified nature of man." (Feuerbach, "Das Wesen der Religion", 1848, Lecture 3, quoted in Church Dogmatics, p. 292)

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 71

³Ibid, p. 250

III CRITIQUE

One can scarcely hope to do justice to a critique of Barth in the space of a few pages. However, it will be worthwhile to mention some of the criticisms that have been made, some of which are relatively minor, while others, more incisive, touch the very nerve centre of the Barthian position. The aim of this section is to bring into focus the really significant critique; in so doing we shall find ourselves in a better position to understand the thought of Thévenaz. Seeing that he accepted the Barthian theology en bloc as a point of departure for his philosophical reflection, it is inevitable that a critique of Barth will apply equally to Thévenaz.

A. Minor Criticisms

What we can consider minor are the criticisms that accuse Barth of being a defeatist,¹ an existentialist,² and an irrationalist.³ These allegations can be dealt with summarily.

¹J.B. Pratt, according to an article by Brand Blanshard in Faith and the Philosophers, ed. J. Hick, (MacMillan, 1964) p. 200

²E.L. Mascall in "Some Reflections on Contemporary Existentialism", pp. 1-11, in Religious Studies, 1966/1967, 2, p. 6

³B. Blanshard, Op. Cit., p. 197ff; also Ian Ramsey in "Contemporary Empiricism: its development and theological implications", pp. 174-184 in The Christian Scholar, Vol. XLIII, 1960, p. 184

As to the first, all we can say is that it is difficult to see why a theology which makes God and His revelation its exclusive foundation can be termed "defeatist". Of course, in a sense this is defeatism; as far as man's powers and pretensions are concerned it is defeatism. But the point is really optimism. To be sure, the revelation of God of Barth's theology is that such defeatism¹ in Christ is judgment, but it is promise too and as such it is good news, evangelion. "Triumphant" is therefore more appropriate than "defeatist" as a description of this theology.¹ As Barth himself says: theology is a happy science.² As for Barth's being an existentialist, we might reply as follows. First of all, Mascall's use of the term "existentialist" in relation to Barth hardly seems justified, especially when he lists "anthropocentrism" as one of the three basic characteristics of existentialism. In the light of our study of Barth's theology, with its explicit rejection of the anthropocentric view, we must simply conclude that Mascall is mistaken, at

¹G.C. Berkouwer, in his The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, (Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1956) convincingly shows the triumphant quality of this theology. On more than one occasion, he says, Barth has accused Christianity of being "too little a pronouncedly triumphant religion and of giving too little evidence that it is really free from anxiety and fear" (p.355). Clearly, therefore, Berkouwer concludes, "the triumph of grace is the centre of Barth's theology." (p. 381)

²K. Barth, Evangelical Theology, p. 10

least insofar as Barth is looked upon as anthropocentric. Of course, his indebtedness to the existentialism of Kierkegaard is well-known. But equally well-known is his development away from an existentialist to a Christological orientation.¹ Furthermore, many statements that he makes show that he is opposed to some of the basic tenets of existentialism. Thus when he says: "man in the cosmos, confronted by God's revelation, becomes objectively another man, and that long before he knows it, prior to any decision on his part"² - he is taking up a position in direct contradiction to the view, expressed for example by Sartre, that man determines his own being.³ In other words, what man is is entirely the result of his decision, his "choix originel"; in this view there can be no question of man's becoming anything "prior to any decision on his part". Similarly Barth's understanding of freedom can be shown to be radically different from that of Sartre or Camus. Thus, even though we must concede that there are points of contact between Barth and existentialism

¹See Bouillard, Op. Cit., p. 206, where he discusses Barth's relation to existentialism.

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 110

³See for example "Existentialism is a Humanism", in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. W. Kaufmann, (Meridian, N.Y. 1956) p. 298

(in his existential conception of knowledge, in his emphasis on personal encounter, etc.) we must reject any allegation that he is an existentialist. His orientation is quite otherwise. Closely allied to the "existentialist" charge is the one accusing him of irrationalism. Blanshard thus charges him on the one hand with advocating the surrender of reason¹ and on the other hand with not putting this into practice himself.² As for the first point, it is clear that Blanshard has mistaken Barth's polemic against a human dependence on reason when the knowledge of God is at stake, for a total negation of reason. In other words, to make use of a distinction of Tillich's,³ he mistakes Barth's opposition to "ontological" reason for a rejection of "technical" reason. However, this is certainly not Barth's purpose, as his condemnation of the sacrificium intellectus (or even the "leap of faith") so clearly demonstrates.⁴ Regarding his alleged inconsistency Linwood Urban in his discussion "Barth's Epistemology"⁵ remarks that "in matters of the content of

¹Hick, ed., Op. Cit., p. 174-175

²Ibid, p. 176

³Tillich, Op. Cit., p. 72ff

⁴Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 8

⁵Hick, ed., Op. Cit., p. 222

the faith, Barth cannot be accused of inconsistency in his use of rational argument as long as he does not claim that we should believe his theology because of the arguments."

W. Hordern sums up the matter quite well when he writes: "kerygmatic theology is no enemy of reason; what it denies is that reason by itself can establish convictions. But, given its convictional basis, kerygmatic theology strives to show the meaning, that is, the reasonableness, of the message that comes from God."¹

B. Major Criticisms

Of more significance are the following criticisms:

1. Barth's theology is unduly influenced by philosophical presuppositions
2. It is fideist and therefore incapable of achieving a veritable knowledge of God
3. It is untenable from the ethical point of view
4. Its view that man is totally passive in his relation to God's revelation is likewise untenable

Let us take these criticisms one by one.

1. Several critics² have maintained Barth's indebted-

¹Hordern, Op. Cit., p. 108

²Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 58, 63; George S. Hendry in "On Barth, the Philosopher", in Hick, Op. Cit., p. 213f; C. van Til in Christianity and Barthianism, (Baker Book House, Mich., 1962) p. 408

ness, if not subordination, to Kantianism. Hendry therefore asserts that the "real inspiration of the 'dialectical theology'...was the transcendental dialectic of the First Critique".¹ Now we can hardly deny the presence of Kantian philosophy in Barth, but this surely does not invalidate his theology; an anti-Kantian such as van Til might seem to think so, but then van Til could be charged with judging Barth, not from a theological, but from a philosophical standpoint. Barth admits that the theologian must frequently utilize philosophical concepts but in doing so he must always "theologize" them, so to speak;² in other words, the coherence of these concepts and formulations must submit to "the coherence of the divine revelation", not vice versa.³ In principle therefore Barth rejects the subordination of theology to philosophy, though of course from this it does not follow that he has not in fact allowed certain philosophical presuppositions to preponderate. However, in any attempt to determine whether philosophy has influenced his theology or the reverse, there necessarily arises that insoluble "chicken-egg" problem. Henri Miéville for example

¹Hick, ed., Op. Cit., p. 214

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 187, 188

³Barth, The Humanity of God, p. 93

holds that Barth's theology rests upon the philosophical presupposition which too summarily conceives of man and God as separate entities "sans communauté d'être"¹. However, against this view we can maintain that Barth's rejection of any community of being between man and God is itself determined by the Reformation doctrine of the Fall. If this is so, then Miéville's criticism is invalidated. Whatever conclusion we arrive at however, it is obvious that external arbitration is impossible; such an issue can only be approached from within, that is, in terms of Barth's theological position. Our conclusion therefore must be that, while philosophical notions might enter into his theology, their role is subordinate; and this conclusion remains valid even if it were possible to show beyond any doubt that in Barth's own history certain philosophical ideas preceded parallel theological doctrines.

2. Another charge against the Barthian position is that it is fideist. With Barth in mind, Bouillard writes: "If the God who reveals Himself is completely different from the God of our reason, then how could one escape the charge that

¹H. Miéville, Condition de l'Homme, (Librairie Droz, Genève, 1959) p. 221n2. Miéville is a Swiss philosopher whose criticism of Thévenaz we shall later be discussing.

our faith in Him is arbitrary?"¹ What Bouillard is implying is that faith must be compatible with reason so as to avoid arbitrariness. But is such a faith the true faith? Can reason be the measure of faith? Barth says "no", primarily on the ground that man (his reason included) has been totally vitiated by the Fall. But this does not entail a denial of the rationality of faith, for if faith were irrational through and through there could be no question of any intellectus fidei. Thus, when Barth talks of faith as rational, he does not mean that it conforms to human rationality, but rather that it possesses its own rationality, the true, the normative rationality. "The element of reason in the knowledge of the object of faith," says Barth, "consists in recognition of the rationality that is peculiar to the object of faith itself. Ontic rationality precedes noetic."² Such rationality, as we saw in our discussion of the knowledge of God in Part 2, escapes all criteria, and the theology which is based on this divine rationality can only be a theology that listens and responds; it can never take the initiative, for the Word is the initium.

¹Bouillard, Op. Cit., p. 220

²K. Barth, Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum, trans. I.W. Robertson, (S.C.M., London, 1960) p. 50

The logic of theology therefore, according to Barth, can only be a human ana-logy to God's Word.¹

Now, such a theology, since it is nothing more than ana-logical is not identical to the divine rationality; its utterances are not truth "fallen from heaven".² We are not arbitrarily absolutizing some human position, Barth says; "this bound knowledge of God...is a human thesis like any other, to which as such the question coming from without seems to be not only permissible but even necessary."³ However, as for the "reality" and the "possibility" of the knowledge of God, these of course cannot be called in question "from without". This means that while the actual, existential knowledge of God is incapable of being called in question, the theoretical discussion of this knowledge, the theological system as such, is certainly open to criticism and correction. Barth is not however conceding very much here, for obviously this criticism cannot call in question the presupposition of this theology, viz. the reality of God and hence the objectivity of faith. Criticism therefore can do no more than improve the inner

¹Barth, Evangelical Theology, p. 13

²K. Barth, Philosophie et Théologie, trans. F. Ryser, (Labor et Fides, Geneva, 1960), p. 11

³Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 30

coherence of the system, show the need for more emphasis at one point and less at another, etc.¹ But criticism cannot initiate a change in direction. Such a position, Ian Ramsey complains, amounts to the "logical segregation of theology;"² or, as John Hick puts it, it is "autonomist". Many have sought to defend the validity of the autonomist position.³ W. Hordern is of particular interest, especially with his concept of the "convictional" basis of all "language games", including the theological;⁴ J.A. Martin however accuses Hordern, and those who share his point of view, of falling back too easily on an insistence on "convictions"; "If there is a difference of opinion regarding what is known, it is suggested, the difference rests finally on irreducible 'convictions' regarding what knowledge is."⁵ Martin is right in pointing to the danger of falling back "too easily"

¹See for example Barth's own self-criticism undertaken in The Humanity of God.

²Ramsey, "Contemporary Empiricism: its development and theological implications", in The Christian Scholar, p. 181

³For example, A. Plantinga, C.C. Richardson, Dennis O'Brien (See Hick, ed. Faith and the Philosophers) Hick too defends it, but not before subjecting it to some incisive criticism. p.239ff

⁴Hordern, Op. Cit., pp. 68ff, 102f

⁵Martin, Op. Cit., p. 163

on such a position although there is no doubt that the autonomist position contains much truth. Hick puts it well when he says that the "autonomy of religious language" theory is "importantly right...in recognizing a foundational situation beneath which one cannot dig with ratiocinative tools - namely, the fact of religious faith, with religious language as its expression."¹ And of course a similar convictional basis is discernible also in philosophy: Q. Lauer thus writes: "rationality itself...has a non-rational foundation, in the sense that it must begin with an act of faith in reason (for which there is no reason)".² Nevertheless, despite this apparent defensibility of the autonomist position, the fact remains, as Thévenaz has pointed out when discussing Barth's Dogmatics, that this position is the great stumbling block,³ since it does not solve the problem of how we are to distinguish the arbitrary, the subjective, the pathological from the authentic and the objective.⁴ And it is precisely the apparent arbitrariness of this position to which Bouillard, as we noted earlier, takes exception. In the light of our discussion, our conclusion therefore must be that we have no choice

¹Hick, ed. Op. Cit., p. 241

²Q. Lauer, Op. Cit., p. 26

³Thévenaz, Op. Cit., p. 87

⁴Ibid, p. 88

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¹Hick, ed. Op. Cit., p. 241

²Q. Lauer, Op. Cit., p. 26

³Thévenaz, Op. Cit., p. 87

⁴Ibid, p. 88

but to reconcile ourselves to this "apparent arbitrariness", but we must insist on retaining the word "apparent", for to agree to the predicate "arbitrary" would amount to denying the reality of the knowledge of God.

3. This difficulty of apparent arbitrariness is especially acute in the domain of ethics. The philosopher J.S. Mill was particularly disturbed by the implications of a theology that did not possess a univocal knowledge of God. Mill understood Mansel to be using language about God equivocally.¹ Mill argued for univocal predication, not merely in a logical sense (as with Ockham), but in an ontological sense. "Language," said Mill, "has no meaning for the words Just, Merciful, Benevolent, save that in which we predicate them of our fellow-creatures...If in affirming them of God we do not mean to affirm these very qualities, differing only as greater in degree, we are neither philosophically nor morally entitled to affirm them at all."² Would Mill's critique apply equally to Barth? Before replying, let us briefly examine Barth's position.

Certainly Barth does defend the use of analogy as a "mean"

¹Mill, Op. Cit., pp.127,128

²Ibid, p. 129

between univocity and equivocity,¹ but it must be remembered that he extracts it entirely from the context of natural theology and thus its validity stems, not from the power of philosophical reasoning, but from God's intervention or revelation. Provided God has thus acted, our words become an analogy of the Creator, though without losing their creaturely character.² In other words, there is a positive content in our analogical predication only to the extent that God so to speak "awakens" our notions and words, which however in themselves are "wholly and utterly insufficient to designate God."³ Barth's position therefore can be described as follows: in itself language about God is equivocal. Revelation nevertheless overcomes this equivocity, thereby giving to language a positive content. Such a position is therefore "dialectical", rather than equivocal.⁴

Mill's critique therefore is inapplicable to Barth; on the contrary, Mill's own position is open to some grave objections, especially in view of the fact that it implies no

¹Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 224ff

²Ibid, p. 231

³Ibid, p. 235

⁴Mehl clarifies this sense of dialectic when he writes: "la vérité révélée ne peut pas être saisie dans un acte unique de la pensée humaine, mais bien dans deux actes qui s'opposent et entre lesquels l'esprit est alors obligé de rétablir non pas un lien synthétique, mais une tension." (Mehl, Op. Cit., pp.138,139)

discontinuity between God and man: Mill smugly assumes that he knows the meaning of "goodness": "I will call no being good," he says, "who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures"; then, somewhat unnecessarily, he adds: "and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."¹ Mill is right however in describing as "morally pernicious"² a doctrine that maintains the absolute equivocation of our words about God. Mansel's problem was his effort to defend a theology of revelation philosophically, when its only possible defence is from a position within the experience of revelation.

Barth's theology therefore survives the ethical criticism, though without effacing the apparent arbitrariness that we talked of earlier. This is no Achilles heel, however, although it might seem to be to those who insist on ironclad assurances. There is certainty, says Barth, in our knowledge of God, but it is a certainty dependent on God's "good-pleasure."³ And it is precisely this dependence that must be stressed, for outside of this relation there is no certitude whatever. In other words, one cannot "lay one's hands"

¹Mill, Op. Cit., p. 313

²Ibid, p. 115

³Ibid, p. 74

on certainty or, as Kierkegaard put it: "If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty..."¹ Our lot therefore, Barth affirms, is to have to remain within the "dialectic of certainty and uncertainty", even though, as far as God is concerned, this dialectic is surpassed and overcome.²

4. Barth's dismissal of natural theology as illegitimate and useless has led him to deny that there is any "point of contact" (Anknüpfungspunkt), any "questioning after God", natural to man, which might render possible the communication of the divine message to man.³ "The Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is therefore revealed and believed to be God, does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates."⁴ The epistemological question therefore is not "How is human knowledge of revelation possible?" but "What is man's real knowledge of divine revelation?"⁵ Such a position has however been challenged on the ground that it reduces man to the level of "stocks and

¹S. Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie, (Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 182

²Barth, Church Dogmatics, p. 75

³Barth, Church Dogmatics I, 1, p. 29

⁴Barth, "Nein!" Op. Cit., p. 121

⁵Barth, Church Dogmatics I, 1, p. 30

stones;"¹ it does so, it is argued, because it forgets that recreation occurs through grace and not through omnipotence.² Furthermore, the demand made upon man is not strange to his nature, says Tillich, for otherwise it would not concern him.³ Consequently there must be some Anknuepfungspunkt if revelation is really to take place; or, as recent criticism has put it, there must be some Vorverstaendnis. One of the most important advocates of this critique is R. Bultmann. His basic line of argument is that this pre-understanding implied by our understanding of revelation is an understanding of our existence. Other critics too, such as H. Bouillard and L. Malevez, have likewise asserted the existence of some pre-understanding or antecedent philosophy, though without accepting the Bultmannian anthropology. What we must focus our attention on therefore is not any particular anthropology, but this idea of pre-understanding. The decisive error of Bultmann, according to Barth, is not so much his existential analytic of Dasein as his subordination of the Christian

¹This is a phrase Brunner uses in his argument with Barth. (Natural Theology, p. 31)

²See J. Baillie, Our Knowledge of God, (Oxford University Press, 1963; first published 1939) p. 24

³Ibid, p. 26

message to a normative philosophy.¹

In general all these critics of Barth arrive at their position with the help of some form of the transcendental method; that is to say, they direct their enquiry, not to the question of the reality of the knowledge of God, but to the conditions of its possibility.² Joseph Pieper therefore reaches the conclusion that the revelatory pronouncements of God must be "human", "at least to the extent that the believer can grasp out of his own knowledge what they are about."³ In different words, but in the same spirit, Bouillard argues that the knowledge of faith "presupposes a rational moment of natural knowledge."⁴ Apart from such a knowledge (as implicit as it may be) "nothing would authorize us to affirm that the God of the Bible is really our God."⁵ A natural knowledge of

¹L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, trans. O. Wyon, (S.C.M., 1958; published in French in 1954) pp. 200-201

²Kant writes: "I call every knowledge transcendental, which occupies itself not so much with objects, but rather with our way of knowing objects, insofar as this is to be possible a priori." (Quoted by E. Coreth, Metaphysics, trans. J. Donceel, N.Y.: Herder & Herder, p. 35) See also p. 36f where Coreth discusses various anticipations of the transcendental method in the thought of such men as Plato, Augustine and Aquinas.

³Pieper, Op. Cit., p. 11

⁴Bouillard, Op. Cit., p. 217

⁵Ibid, p. 218

God is consequently the "transcendental condition" for the occurrence of revelation. In the light therefore of Maréchal's identification of the cognitio naturalis with Kant's a priori knowledge, Bouillard affirms that "we understand by natural knowledge of God, a knowledge a priori, not thetic, which comes into play when presented with the data of the Bible."¹

What the transcendental critique claims to show is that revelation is possible only if preceded by a knowledge derived, not from revelation, but from our own resources. Only then is it possible to conceive of God as our God; only then is it possible for God really to confront us in His revelation. To deny that the "points of contact" are natural, to say that the Holy Ghost creates them, is in fact to deny that revelation takes place. Such a critique despite its debt to modern philosophy, is in principle the same as that of Aquinas, who maintained that cognitio fidei praesupponit cognitionem naturalem.² Both approaches ask what is presupposed by our knowledge of God, and both conclude that what is presupposed is knowledge that is our own, "natural" knowledge.

The restatement of the problem in transcendental terms

¹Ibid, p. 219

²Quoted in Pieper, Op. Cit., p. 41

however, does little to allay Barth's suspicion of natural theology, for in his eyes God is no less subject to the norms of human reason in post-Kantian than in pre-Kantian natural theology. And Barth will never allow any conception of God which subordinates Him in any way to man.

J.L. Leuba however argues that Barth has accepted too uncritically the Kantian notion of reason according to which reason determines a priori our possibilities of knowledge. If such a conception is correct, then Barth is right: revelation's acceptance of the conditions of intelligibility would mean the subordination of revelation to man. Leuba however argues that we are by no means committed to such a view of reason. Why should the reason necessarily determine its object? "Elle peut être réceptrice sans être nécessairement créatrice. Elle peut déterminer des coordonnées de connaissance sans nécessairement que ces coordonnées créent ipso facto l'objet qui viendra s'y inscrire."¹ This passive role that man plays in the event of revelation is further illustrated by Bultmann's distinction between the existential structure of man and the existentiel event of revelation.² The existential structure,

¹A private letter dated 14 April, 1969. J.L. Leuba is Professor of Theology at the Université de Neuchâtel.

²R. Marlé, Bultmann et la Foi Chrétienne, (Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1967) pp. 62ff Marlé explains this distinction as follows: "L'ordre existencial se réfère à un point de vue purement formel ou structurel; l'ordre existentiel, au contraire, est celui de la réalisation effective, concrète." p. 63

says Leuba, cannot by any means elicit the existentiell event. But it is the system of anthropological coordinates in which the existentiell event comes to take its place, a place intelligible to man. The point of such arguing is to show that pre-understanding, when understood in terms of receptivity, in no way detracts from God's primacy in the event known as the knowledge of God. Barth of course long ago rejected the notion of receptivity or capacity for revelation as understood by Brunner.¹ But his reason for doing so was that Brunner, according to Barth's analysis, had in fact added "something very material" to what was supposed to have been man's merely formal capacity for revelation,² thereby contradicting his own "unconditional acceptance of the Reformers' principle of sola scriptura - sola gratia".³ This means that if we are to attempt to reconcile any notion of receptivity with Barth's theology, we shall have to define our terms with extreme care. Is such a reconciliation possible? The following discussion should cast some light on this question.

¹Barth, "Nein!" Op. Cit., p. 78ff

²Ibid, p. 82

³Ibid, p. 80

In his comments on justification in its relation to natural power, Aquinas quotes Augustine: "to be capable of having faith...belongs to man's nature; but to have faith...belongs to the grace of the faithful."¹ In other words, man can receive faith (or as Aquinas says, naturaliter anima est gratiae capax) but he cannot lay hold on it or take it himself. Faith or grace is therefore like a gift which one can receive but not take; if taken it can no longer be called a "gift". But Augustine asserts that "to have faith...belongs to...grace." The existential reality, having faith, depends therefore on grace: this is not in man's power. All that is in his power is the capacity to receive this faith that God gives; that is to say, there exists in man a receptivity which responds to grace. But this receptivity cannot be conceived of as an autonomous power in man, for to become actual it is totally dependent on God's grace; the act of receiving depends on grace. Apart from His grace therefore, in itself, it is nothing.² Receptivity is therefore not a natural possibility; it is a possibility of grace. Barth's hostility

¹Aquinas, Summa Theologica II, 1, Qu. 113, Art. 10

²At Vatican I it was argued that a potency which is never actualized is absolutely non-existent. (Bouillard, Op. Cit., p. 228n71). A potency which is dependent on something else for its actualization is likewise non-existent, at least insofar as it is considered in itself.

consequently to the notion of receptivity seems unjustified, for in no way does it surrender to the outlook of natural theology. Thus if pre-understanding is described in such terms, that is in terms of an existential notion of receptivity, there is no concession whatsoever to natural theology. The idea of "existential receptivity" therefore belongs within the framework of grace and is perfectly compatible with a theology of revelation.

Such compatibility however cannot be maintained when we conceive of man as "asking the question of God". In reference to Bultmann, Malevez writes that "there is in Dasein as such an existential knowledge of God which is experienced and exercised in the question of happiness, of salvation, of the meaning of the world and of history, of the authenticity of the human being."¹ "Natural" knowledge of God is thus conceived as a questioning. Now Coreth has shown that the act of questioning implies some knowledge of that which is being questioned. This he calls the "pre-knowledge" of the question. Included in this pre-knowledge is what he terms an "anticipation" (Vorgriff) of the as yet unknown; this is a "pure" pre-knowledge which, "as the moment of pure sur-

¹Malevez, Op. Cit., p. 176

passing and pure anticipation, is the constitutive condition of the possibility of any question whatever.¹ Thus a questioning about God implies a "pre-knowledge" of Him. Hence, to talk of man's role as merely "questioning" is still to subscribe to the basic tenet of natural theology, which is that man can know God independently of revelation.

It is clear then that the concept of pre-understanding is one which has to be very carefully defined, if it is to avoid becoming simply another form of natural theology. This does not mean that it should be entirely dispensed with, for otherwise there would result a radical discontinuity between man and God, and then, as Macquarrie argues, even the mediation of the Holy Spirit would not prevent our knowledge of God from being the response of a puppet.² Some notion of pre-understanding must therefore be retained (and it is the merit of the transcendental critique to have shown this need) but, as our analysis has shown, it must be defined in terms of existentiel³ receptivity if it is to avoid the pitfall of natural theology. Therefore, even while agreeing with Barth's critics that there must be some pre-understanding as a transcendental condition for the occurrence of revelation, we

¹Coreth, Op. Cit., pp. 56,57

²Macquarrie, Op. Cit., p. 50f

³Which is perhaps more accurate than "existential". See above the quotation from R. Marlé.

nevertheless believe that we are not being unfaithful to his essential insight that theology's only foundation is grace. Thus, within the framework of grace, that is, within the perspective of a theology based solely on God's grace, it becomes possible to develop a philosophy. Such a philosophy will not of course be derived from grace as from a basic principle, deductively, but will depend on grace, existentially. It will be a passive philosophy, though passive only in the sense that it will depend on God. And despite this dependence (or because of it!) it will be an autonomous philosophy. Just how this is possible we shall see as we turn to examine the "Protestant philosophy" of Pierre Thévenaz.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SPECIFICITY OF PHILOSOPHY

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With Karl Barth, says Thévenaz, "la théologie...a pris mieux que jamais conscience de sa spécificité."¹ This chapter will attempt to show that philosophy, thanks to Thévenaz, has become more than ever aware of its specificity. Some, as we shall later see, seriously question this. Nevertheless, it seems clear that in combining the most recent philosophical insights with inspiration drawn, not only from the most ancient wisdom, but also from the Christian faith, he has succeeded in grasping the true nature of philosophy and in producing a philosophy of the most striking originality. André de Muralt attests to this originality when he makes the comment that Thévenaz's treatment of faith and reason is something unique in the philosophical thought of French Switzerland.²

It is Thévenaz's opinion that originality is possible only when there is openness to experience.³ Such openness

¹Pierre Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, ~~Vol. I, II~~ (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1956) Vol. I, p. 54

²André de Muralt, Philosophes en Suisse Française, (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1966), p. 81

³Under the impact of experience, says Thévenaz, "la raison répond par une situation différente de la raison dans le monde, c'est-à-dire par une philosophie originale." ("Situation de la raison: essai de philosophie protestante," in Hommage et Reconnaissance, (Festschrift for K. Barth's 60th birthday, Neuchâtel, 1946) p. 121

was particularly characteristic of Thévenaz himself, and that is why the concept of "l'expérience-choc" is of such importance in his thought. He always philosophized in the light of experience.¹ We shall therefore begin our study of his philosophy by examining this notion of "expérience-choc". It is Thévenaz's contention that Christianity, the "expérience-choc" par excellence, has profoundly influenced the course of philosophy. We shall however discuss the historical aspect of the "conversion" of philosophy in the context of Part III, "The Crisis of Philosophy", and in Part II, we shall see how the philosophical reason, thanks to the "shock" induced by the Word of God, becomes more deeply aware of its specificity.

I. L'EXPERIENCE-CHOC

When Thévenaz talks of the shock of experience, he is talking as a realist. That is to say, he is insisting that philosophy does ~~not~~ make contact with the real, that it feels the "bite" of experience. That is why he often quotes, with evident approval, Marcel's phrase "la morsure du réel",² as well

¹Mme. P. Thévenaz, now living in Lausanne, informed me that shortly before her husband's death, when he was still hoping to recover from the cancer which had suddenly afflicted him, he was preparing to give a course in the University of Lausanne on the "problem of pain"!

²For example, Thévenaz, "Métaphysique et Destinée Humaine", (pp. 31-51) in L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1943), p. 51

as Rimbaud's "réalité rugueuse."¹ The progress of philosophy, he says, is possible only as long as the reason remains open to experience,² as long as it does not shut out the possibility of "wonder" (étonnement)³. Philosophy's primary concern therefore, before any effort at critical philosophical interpretation, is to let speak facts, events, experience...In this way it comes face to face with what Thévenaz terms the "valeur de choc de l'événement".⁴

The shock of experience, as Thévenaz points out, has profoundly affected the course of philosophy. Many examples come to mind. The death of Socrates came as a "choc terrible" to Plato, forcing him "à reprendre tout à neuf le problème de la cité, de la justice", and also "à rompre carrément avec la sophistique."⁵ The sceptics, shaken by the contra-

¹Ibid

²P. Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1960), p. 20

³Thévenaz contends that the "wonder" in question is that of Plato rather than that of Aristotle. An excellent example of Plato's conception occurs in The Symposium where Alcibiades is deeply wounded by "la vipère socratique" (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, I, p. 181). "L'étonnement d'Aristote," says Thévenaz, "c'est celui de la raison critique...Celui de Platon, c'est la crise de tout notre être..." (Ibid, p. 182)

⁴Thévenaz, "Noël", (pp. 249-252) in Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, (Tome VI, Lausanne, 1956) p. 252. See also Thévenaz's article "Événement et Historicité", (L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 121-138) where he emphasizes the contingent nature of the "event". It is precisely this contingency that constitutes its quality of "shock" or "scandal".

⁵Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 14

dictions of the great philosophical systems, tried to be faithful to their experience and thereby called in question the philosophical enterprise as such. To take one more example: there was Kant who had the troubling experience of the contrast between Newtonian science and the critique of Hume. The result of this "expérience-choc" was his awakening from a "dogmatic slumber", and the inauguration of a "Copernican revolution" in philosophy.¹ Such experience-shocks illustrate what Thévenaz means by this term, but none of them expresses it with total adequacy. They are all relative; the Christian experience alone is radical. Thévenaz therefore describes it as "l'expérience-choc par excellence".²

As far as philosophy is concerned, what it finds most shocking in Christianity are the words of Paul especially in I Cor. 1:19³ and I Cor. 3:19⁴ But do these words mean what they seem to mean? Are they as "shocking" as they appear?

¹Ibid, p. 14ff

²Ibid, p. 29. In future, when the Christian experience is specifically meant, "expérience-choc" will be capitalized thus: Expérience-choc.

³"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart"

⁴"For the wisdom of this world is folly with God." The French "folie" seems better than "folly" because it connotes both foolishness (folly) and insanity. Both meanings, it seems, are implied by the Greek moria.

Gilson does not seem to think so. In his discussion of these verses, there is no sense whatever of shock, of "bouleversement".¹ There is no question of the negation of human wisdom as such, for in his opinion Paul is merely proclaiming the substitution of one wisdom for another, a superior wisdom for an inferior. His aim is to show that the Gospel is not only salvation but also wisdom. But surely no special demonstration is required to show that the divine wisdom is divine wisdom! What he is saying therefore is that the divine wisdom is wisdom as we understand it; only it is a wisdom far greater, far more sublime, than that of man. The difference is quantitative not qualitative. It is apparent that such a view must act as a shock-absorber; the words of Paul could never come to Gilson as they do to Thévenaz, as "a clap of thunder in a blue sky".² Once again, of course, we are touching upon one of the fundamental disagreements between Catholicism and Protestantism. For the former the Fall has produced in human reason a wound grave et acerbum,³

¹Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 22f

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 113

³Pius IX, Ex Allocutione 'Singulari quadam', 9 Dec. 1854

but this wound is far from being mortal for, as Gilson says, man "est demeuré plus capable de bien penser que de bien faire."¹ Protestantism however in no way spares the reason; along with the will it too falls under the judgment of the Cross. That is why Thévenaz, the Protestant philosopher, talks of the reason's "solidarité profonde avec le péché de l'homme".² In his interpretation this is the meaning that must be given to those words of Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians. Only then will it be possible for the reason to experience "conversion".

II. THE CONVERSION OF REASON

The conversion of reason implies a reason in need of conversion. We must therefore question the state of reason prior to its "conversion". Thévenaz provides the answer when, instead of talking of "conversion", he talks of "désabsolutisation" or "dédivinisation": these words imply that reason considers itself to be "absolute" and "divine", and that its conversion is a matter of its losing this element of divinity. Before analyzing the nature of this conversion, we must first ask what Thévenaz means by "une raison divine".

¹Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 111

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, I, p. 261

A. Divine Reason

The most striking example of the divinization of reason, according to Thévenaz, occurs in Greek philosophy. Thus when the ancients defined man as a "rational animal" they meant an animal raised above other animals by a divine spark, the logos, the reason. "La raison était une faculté divine, mise à la disposition de l'homme; elle était même conçue chez Platon, Aristote, Marc-Aurèle comme un hôte divin logé en cet animal humain, comme un étranger qui souffre de Heimweh et ne songe qu'à regagner sa patrie (Plotin)"¹ This conception of a continuity between earth and heaven, between man and the divine, has its roots in Parmenides, the so-called "founder of ontology" (R. Kroner). According to him "being and thought are identical". What this means according to H. Dooyeweerd's interpretation, is that for Parmenides the visible world is devoid of all true being. And only theoria leads to knowledge of divine physis because theoria is identical with being.² Greek ontology, according to the Genevan Hellenist René Schaerer, was thus "impregnée de sacré",³ and by the

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 144

²D.H. Freeman, A Comparative Study of the Relationship between Philosophy and Theology as Exemplified by Representatives of Neo-Augustinianism, Neo-Thomism, and Neo-Existentialism, (Dissertation in Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania, 1958), p. 81

³R. Schaerer, "Pierre Thévenaz et Nous" (pp. 163-184) in Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, (Tome VI, Lausanne, 1956) p. 169f

time of Plato the goal of philosophy was conceived in terms of likeness ^{to} of God.¹

Thévenaz's basic criticism of such a conception of philosophy is that it spells the annihilation of man: "La part de l'homme s'est tout simplement annulée par l'assimilation au divin (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ)."² Thévenaz develops this point somewhat in his article "L'Historicité de la Raison."³ Here he discusses the distinction made by the Greeks between men and animals. Unlike the animal, thanks to that divine spark within him, the reason, man had a divine destiny. To forget this destiny was to remain at the level of the animal; but to awaken to it was to rise above the animal to the clear light of the divine. Here man truly came to be, whereas in his previous state of unconscious animality he was not, strictly speaking. True being therefore was proportionate to the degree of divinization. "L'Homme est désormais grâce à la raison, mais est-il homme?" asks Thévenaz. He answers with-

¹Homoiōsis tō theō, Theatetus, 176b. Thévenaz makes frequent reference to this passage, seeing it as a classic expression of the Greek outlook. See also The Republic VI, p. 484f, where Plato talks of the philosophical nature as characterized by a stretching forward in desire to the whole of reality, "both divine and human" (p. 485). Justin Martyr's study of Plato's philosophy convinced him that its aim was "to gaze upon God" (Dialogue with Trypho, Ch. II)

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 190

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 159-176

out hesitation: "Non, il est divin."¹ In the Greek view therefore, according to Thévenaz, man was nothing but a "trait d'union entre l'animal et la raison, ou même le champ de bataille où la raison divine s'efforce de triomphe^A de l'animalité, où l'éternité l'emporte sur l'historicité."² Caught between contending forces, man as such becomes a "frail and fleeting shadow"; the price he pays for divinization is therefore the loss of his humanity.

René Schaerer however disagrees with Thévenaz's analysis. He argues that in the light of the phrase following the homoiōsis, viz. kata to dunaton, it is clear that Plato "ne songe nullement à s'ériger en absolu", but is thinking rather of the possibilities open to man, of the "niveau suprême de réalisation auquel il peut atteindre entant qu'homme."³ Furthermore, "en cherchant à se diviniser, le Grec s'efforçait moins de se faire Dieu que de rejoindre humainement Dieu, qui demeure toujours au-delà."⁴ But how is it possible for man to maintain a distance from the divine as long as there is any

¹Ibid, p. 161

²Ibid

³Schaerer, Op. Cit., p. 182 (My italics)

⁴Ibid (My italics)

question of "assimilation"?¹ And even if this assimilation be only "partial" (as Schaerer maintains), then the human is still engulfed in part; besides, the aim is assimilation "as far as possible", which surely implies that total assimilation is the ultimate goal. Thus by admitting a "relative" divinization, Schaerer leaves intact Thévenaz's basic point, which is that the Greek reason was divine, and that by means of this reason man aspired to a divine destiny and in so doing forfeited his humanity.

¹To the Greeks to know something was to be assimilated to it. The basic principle of their epistemology was that "like knows like". Empedocles thus wrote:

"For 'tis by Earth we see Earth,
by Water, Water,
By Ether, Ether divine,
by Fire, destructive Fire,
By Love, Love,
and Hate, by cruel Hate."

(quoted by Aristotle in De Anima, I, 2, p. 404b). Hundreds of years later the same principle was echoed in the writings of the Neoplatonist, Plotinus: "To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the Soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful." (Enneads, I, p. 6,9) In the light of such passages, it becomes clear why theoria cannot be understood to mean a detached, spectatorial view of things; on the contrary, theoria entails assimilation: "contempler" says Thévenaz, "c'est être." (Thévenaz, "Valeur de la Connaissance Philosophique", Leçon inaugurale donnée le 1er novembre, 1948 à l'Université de Lausanne, La Concorde, Lausanne, 1949, p. 178)

But not only does a divine reason entail the loss of humanity; it also means the loss of the "historical". Thévenaz deals with this theme at some length in his article "Événement et Historicité"¹. The Greek reason, concerned to construct logical connections and necessary foundations, is scandalized by the apparent contingency of the "event" (événement)². Unable to accept this, the philosopher seeks to rationalize the event; he forces "son apparente contingence dans un ordre nécessaire, dans une trame logique et intemporelle."³ By reacting thus, Greek philosophy eliminates any possibility of having a philosophy of history. For a Greek, says Thévenaz, "philosophie de l'histoire est une contradiction dans les termes, un carré rond..."⁴ The historical is the new, the unexpected, the disconcerting, the contingent, and only a philosophy which faces up to this can possibly hope to develop a philosophy of the historical.

It is precisely such lack of openness to "events" that leads Thévenaz to refer to the divine reason of the Greeks as "autistic".⁵ The basic malaise of the autistic reason,

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, pp. 121-138

²Ibid, p. 121

³Ibid, p. 123

⁴Ibid, p. 102

⁵Thévenaz defines autism, originally a psychological term, as an alienation from oneself "parce que le soi s'est vraiment perdu en lui-même, plongé dans une subjectivité sans référence objective externe." (La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 51)

says Thévenaz, is its total lack of "conscience de soi"¹ In the final analysis this lack is due to the fact that there is no genuine "other" (autrui) and it is only in the presence of "another" that "conscience de soi" becomes possible. The history of philosophical discussion, says A. de Muralt in his analysis of Thévenaz, might seem to bear the marks of real dialogue, but in fact what takes place is nothing but a monologue: in reason's monologue "n'intervient aucun interlocuteur, aucun autrui ", aucune autre raison capable de la mettre en question."² Thus, even when faced with very serious objections, reason emerges unscathed, its autarchy (autarchēs) undisturbed, because, as both Kant and Marx said, "la raison ne se pose jamais que des problèmes qu'elle peut résoudre."³

But what about the self-criticism to which philosophy has subjected itself, not only since Kant, but even since Socrates? Is there not ample evidence here that reason's condition is anything but one of autism? This does not nec-

¹In general, I shall leave this phrase untranslated, for neither "self-consciousness" nor even "self-awareness" translate it adequately. "Conscience de soi" implies not only "awareness" but also an "explicit consciousness of"; that is why the English terms will not do.

²A. de Muralt, Op. Cit. p. 39

³Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 32

essarily follow, Thévenaz replies, for a critique of reason does not necessarily imply the overcoming of autism. As long as "critique" is understood in the sense of "judgment", the autistic attitude remains intact: the critical, the judging reason remains above all crisis.¹ It surveys all from its observatory, thus becoming what Thévenaz terms "une raison point de vue."² Another term that Thévenaz uses for this reason that sees but is not seen is "la raison instrument".³ This corresponds more or less to what Tillich calls the "technical reason".⁴ Such a reason, says Tillich, "however refined in logical and methodological respects, dehumanizes man if it is separated from ontological reason."⁵ Thévenaz likewise contrasts it with ontological reason. Thus, in the case of Parmenides, for example, "Le penser n'est pas

¹See L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 168ff, where Thévenaz discusses the Greek origin of the word "critique", i.e., krisis, showing how not only "judgment", "decision", but also "crisis" are implied in the Greek word and its derivative "critique".

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p.94ff
One can grasp the meaning of this description if one imagines a man looking out of a darkened room onto a lighted street; he can observe passersby without being seen himself.

³Ibid, p. 97f. See also L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 143f

⁴Tillich, Op. Cit., p. 72f

⁵Ibid, p. 73

en marge de l'être comme un point de vue sur lui pour le contempler du dehors, ni comme un instrument pour l'appréhender ou l'embrasser;"¹ on the contrary, "Le penser (νοεῖν) et ce en vue de quoi il y a pensée (νόημα) sont identiques, car sans l'être...on ne trouvera pas le penser."² Since Parmenides however, with philosophy's progressive "forgetting of Being" (Heidegger), and especially since the breakdown of German classical idealism in the wake of English empiricism, the instrumental or technical concept of reason has come to predominate, and one outcome of this development has been the elevation of epistemology above ontology.³ Thévenaz however rejects such a position,⁴ and argues that the task of philosophy today is the reintegration of knowledge (or reason) into being and into man.⁵ The phrase "into man" shows that

¹Valeur, Op. Cit., p. 175

²Ibid, p. 176. (Quoted from Parmenides)

³This was especially true of the early neo-Kantians who, in spite of their critique of positivism, accepted its central thesis, i.e., that physicomathematical science provides the paradigm of all valid forms of knowledge. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, "Neo-Kantianism")

⁴Valeur, Op. Cit., p. 173. Tillich agrees here with Thévenaz (Tillich, Op. Cit., p. 71), and likewise Jean Wahl. ("Existence Humaine et Transcendance" in L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, p. 156n 1)

⁵Valeur, Op. Cit., p. 184

Thévenaz is not an ontologist the way Tillich is for example, for while he emphasizes the need to conceive of knowledge as being, he also emphasizes that we must recognize its contingency, i.e., its humanity. The Greek ontological reason is therefore not the answer, for such a reason, he says, never finds itself "en condition",¹ i.e., "à hauteur d'homme". Such a reason consequently is as autistic and as lacking in "conscience de soi" as the "raison point de vue" or "raison instrument". Thévenaz distinguishes other terms, such as "la raison assimilatrice"² or "natural reason",³ to designate the various guises assumed by the autistic reason, but all these forms of autism, he says, are simply so many expressions, evident or camouflaged, of the divine or contemplative reason.⁴ Thus not only the deified reason of Hegel, but also the technical reason of positivism, can rightly be termed "divine".

It may be argued however that, while the epithet "divine" may be applicable to the reason of Plato, of Aristotle, of Marcus Aurelius, surely its usage today is somewhat archaic! Not so, says Thévenaz, for "dans la mesure où la raison est

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 144

²Ibid, p. 98

³Thévenaz, "Situation de la raison: essai de philosophie protestante", in Hommage et Reconnaissance, p. 120

⁴Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 100

censée être comme un oeil qui ne se voit pas lui-même, comme un point de vue d'arbitre, l'attitude de l'homme vis-à-vis de sa raison est exactement la même que pour Platon ou Marc-Aurèle".¹ In other words the problem of divine reason is a contemporary issue and not merely some archaeological datum from the history of philosophy. A critique therefore is needed, not only of ancient, but of modern philosophy, and this critique should aim above all at the dedivinization, the conversion, of reason. But before examining the meaning of this "conversion", it might be useful to summarize the argument so far.

The basic contention of Thévenaz's critique of philosophy is that Greek reason is divine, and being divine, it is autistic and closed to experience. Furthermore, this divinized reason has survived down through the centuries and will persist as long as it remains untouched by the shock of confrontation with a genuine "other". Alone, however, it can never achieve liberation - "on ne se réveille jamais tout seul d'un sommeil dogmatique"² - besides, "la raison n'aurait aucune raison de sortir de son autisme par elle-même."³ What is need-

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II. p. 144

²Ibid, p. 171

³Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 53

ful therefore is not "autocritique", which only reinforces autism's stranglehold, but "crise de soi".¹ And this can only come about in the brutal encounter with the reality of contingency, the reality of an irreducible history, the shock of an "event".²

We have analyzed the concept of "expérience-choc" and we have described the autistic reason, the reason which has not felt "la morsure du réel". We must now examine the way in which the Christian experience brings about the conversion of reason and thus the transformation of philosophy.

B. CONVERSION

1. From Autism to Conscience de Soi

As we remarked above (IIA), the fundamental weakness of the divine, autistic reason is its lack of "conscience de soi". And the reason for its lack, as we have seen, is that there is no "other" in its world. The "Expérience-choc" however changes all this. For the first time, says Thévenaz, "la raison rencontre...un autrui, quelqu'un qui lui parle vraiment un autre langage. Le Logos qui l'accuse n'est pas le même que son propre logos à elle. C'est vraiment un autrui, son premier autrui."³ In this encounter reason's fundamental

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, I. p. 172ff

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 171

³Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, pp.90,91

autism comes to light; but this coming to light means the dawning of "conscience de soi", and since this is the very antithesis of autism, the latter disintegrates, like the morning mists before the rising sun.

In this new situation, naïveté is no longer possible; what reason is, what man is, no longer "goes without saying". The question "what is man?" now arises with new intensity, something that always happens, says Thévenaz, "quand la vie nous bouscule ou nous brise, lorsque nous sommes arrachés à notre assiette stable par le choc des expériences individuelles, ou des événements extérieurs."¹

Philosophically this self-awareness, this question about oneself, expresses itself in the turning towards metaphysics, not a metaphysics of exteriority, but of interiority, of inwardness; conversion takes place, says Thévenaz, ab exterioribus ad interiora.² Such an orientation is particularly characteristic of the French tradition of reflexive analysis,³ a

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 146

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, I, p. 219

³See Thévenaz's article, "Réflexion et Conscience de Soi", in L'Homme et sa Raison, I, pp. 103-121, where he criticizes Husserlian intentionality, arguing that reflection is ontologically prior (p. 119); he thereby shows himself to be closer to reflexive analysis than phenomenology, as James Edie states in his introduction to Thévenaz's What is Phenomenology? (ed., James Edie, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1962, p. 13f)

philosophical tradition having its modern roots primarily in Maine de Biran's "metaphysics of consciousness" (Wahl)¹, and continuing through such philosophers as Félix Ravaisson (1813-1900), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), and Louis Lavelle (1883-1951). The main significance of such metaphysics, Thévenaz remarks, is that it constitutes an effort on the part of reason to overcome unconsciousness and self-ignorance and to establish a relation to itself.² Such a movement does not mean a flight towards subjectivism, a pre-occupation with oneself at the expense of the objective. On the contrary, says Thévenaz, only reason's relation to itself, its awareness of being at a distance from itself, can "constitute" and "establish" it as reason, and this means the possibility of an objectivity less preoccupied with itself, a reconquest of the world of the object.³ In other words (and this is insisted upon by the French "spiritualistes" such as Biran) "conscience de soi"

¹Bergson said of Biran (whose dates are 1776-1824): "On peut se demander si la voie que ce philosophe a ouverte n'est pas celle où la métaphysique devra marcher définitivement." (Quoted in Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, I, p. 220)

²Ibid, p. 235. J. Wahl comments in his Tableau de la Philosophie Française, (Gallimard, 1962) that the idea of "relation" is one of the most fecund that one can find in French philosophy (p. 144). Relation too was important for Kierkegaard who, we recall, defined the self as "a relation which relates itself to its own self." (Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling)

³Ibid.

is the prerequisite of a true, objective understanding¹ - which brings to mind Kierkegaard's affirmation that self-understanding is an "absolute condition of all other kinds of understanding."² Furthermore, the reflection here in question must not be confused with introspection. Q. Lauer, in a footnote to Husserl's essay "Philosophy as Rigorous Science", remarks that while "introspection" simply "observes" interior states, "reflection" grasps them vitally.³ This is what Descartes intended when he talked of "l'acte d'attention intellectuelle"; likewise Biran ("l'effort musculaire") and Bergson ("l'intuition"). The purpose therefore of reflexive analysis is "de faire s'agir, synthétiquement et immédiatement, la conscience explicite de soi dans l'acte réflexif lui-même."⁴ Reflection, consequently, is more a question of "creation" than of "contemplation", of "willing" than "seeing". It is clear then that when we talk of reflection in this metaphysical sense, we mean a reflection that "engages" the subject, a reflection in which he undergoes change or conversion. Metaphysics,

¹Ibid, p. 120f

²Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 276

³Lauer, Op. Cit., pp. 93 n 29

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 112f

Thévenaz therefore writes, "implies conversion"; in fact, he adds, "il s'agit moins d'une méta-physique que d'une métanoïa, d'une conversion spirituelle."¹ As we remarked earlier however, such reflection arises where there is "conscience de soi", relation to self, and this is only possible where there has been confrontation with "another" in the shock of experience. Ultimately therefore it is thanks to the "other" that conversion occurs. But if the reason is thus dependent on "another", can it retain its autonomy? Is the autonomy of philosophy still possible in such a context?

We might find an answer to this question if we consider for a moment the encounter between Socrates and Alcibiades as described in The Symposium. In his discussion of this question, Thévenaz states that the Socratic encounter "a été ^{un} ~~en~~ heurt décisif, elle a produit un effet de choc, elle a suscité un ébranlement intérieur profond."² But what precisely has Alcibiades come up against? What could have caused such an upheaval? Has he been crushed as it were by the sheer weight of Socrates' personality? No, says Thévenaz, for there is something strange and self-effacing about Socrates; "Sa figure s'estompe dans une aura de mystère."³

¹Thévenaz, "Métaphysique et Destinée Humaine", in L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, p. 38

²Thévenaz, "Socrate et Alcibiade - ou la rencontre philosophique" (pp. 18-24) in Rencontre (Lausanne, May, June, 1950) p. 19. See The Symposium, p. 215d, 218a.

³Ibid, p. 20

The encounter with Socrates is therefore, in a sense, an encounter with "nothing" (néant); it is an encounter that one can sum up in the words: "He had escaped me!"¹ Alcibiades' reaction to his meeting with Socrates is a feeling of being "possessed", reduced to a "slavish state", "ashamed".² As regards his feeling of shame, Alcibiades imagines that it has been caused by his confession to Socrates that he ought to change his style of life, whereas in fact his confession has been more to himself than to Socrates; it has merely taken place before Socrates, that is, in his encounter with him. Alcibiades has therefore come face to face with himself and now, even if he does escape Socrates' presence, he cannot escape himself. Something new has arisen, says Thévenaz, "l'Alcibiade de la honte et de la conscience de soi...La morsure est inguérissable; la rencontre, ineffaçable."³ It is at this point, says Thévenaz, that true philosophical reflection gets underway.

We can see from this analysis that the shock leading to the experience of "conscience de soi" was not of such a nature

¹The Symposium, p. 219e

²Ibid, pp. 215d, 215e, 216

³Thévenaz, "Socrate et Alcibiade - ou la rencontre philosophique" (Rencontre) p. 24

as to take away Alcibiades' autonomy. The bite of the "Socratic viper" was merely the "occasion" for his awakening, the impetus for philosophical reflection.

It is Thévenaz's contention that the Christian experience acts likewise as an "occasion", thereby allowing the resulting reflection to be truly autonomous, i.e., philosophical. The distinctive aspect of the "Expérience-choc" though, that which makes all other "experience-shocks" merely relative, is that it calls in question the reason itself, accusing it of "folie". The disconcerting thing about such an accusation is that it is so unexpected, so unlike any other. If it formally contested reason's pretensions, or its methods, or its errors, or its exaggerated self-confidence, if it invited reason to make various adjustments in its outlook, reason would somehow be able to cope; it might even implement the suggested changes, provided they were reasonable. But this!¹ The reason cannot help but feel a void opening before it; the possibility of madness (folie, déraison) rises up, demanding consideration, demanding to be taken seriously. As A. de Muralt points out, it is because the Christian experience is faith in a real

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 30

event, the Cross of Calvary, that "elle ne laisse plus à l'homme la liberté de l'indifférence ou de la méconnaissance. De quelque manière que ce soit, il faut prendre parti, et ne pas prendre parti, est encore en l'occurrence prendre un parti."¹ If man, if reason, must therefore take some position vis-à-vis this event, with its challenge to reason's sanity, what will this position be? What should it be?

The authentic response, according to Thévenaz, is to open oneself to this experience, even though it will mean henceforth an ineradicable "thorn in the flesh". Such a course, as far as Thévenaz is concerned, will give rise to a new philosophy, not a divine philosophy, a philosophy of the Absolute, but a philosophy before God. Before such a course is taken however, the reason experiences two major temptations. On the one hand it feels tempted to rise up in revolt.² This verdict of "folie" is obviously unjust! But if it is urged, then surely the onus probandi rests with the accuser, not the one "unjustly and brutally" compelled to defend himself! Besides, who is the accuser? God? But who can prove that it is really God? Is it likely or reasonable

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 41

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 34ff
See also p. 140.

to suppose that He would thus address the reason? Anyway, to accept such a verdict, to resign oneself to "non-sens", would surely amount to a betrayal of reason and all it stands for! The accusation of "folie" is therefore quite untenable; there is no doubt whatever that reason's course is straight and sure! In thus revolting, the reason is simply attesting to its "unconditional devotion to the truth". Reassured, the reason regains its equilibrium; "rational absolutism" again takes command.

But does it really? Can a reason that would be true to itself, so offhandedly dismiss experience? Is it not reason's most profound vocation "de rendre compte ou, à tout le moins, de tenir compte de l'expérience, si choquante qu'elle puisse être?"¹ As such reasoning proceeds, the second temptation, to "abdicate", to surrender to the absurd, becomes more and more appealing.² What use is there in all this immense effort of rationality, this passionate, obstinate, conscientious search for truth, if finally the Way, the Truth and the Life, arises for man in some totally different manner! One must be insane not to submit to the evidence! Sacrificium intellectus then it shall be! Thévenaz grants the radicalism of such a solu-

¹Ibid, p. 36

²Ibid, pp. 37f, 141

tion, but calls it the "empty and vain radicalism of suicide": abdication, he adds, has never been a philosophical solution.

Thévenaz therefore says no! to any facile extremism, whether it be revolt or abdication. His solution is to accept experience, even if it be the shattering words of St. Paul: "I ^{will} destroy the wisdom of the wise..." Thus, as A. de Muralt puts it, "Pierre Thévenaz les reçoit en plein coeur et elles inaugurant sa démarche philosophique."¹

2. The Autonomy of Reason

We must now ask how it is that these words of Paul are able to inaugurate a philosophy. As Alcibiades was shocked into "conscience de soi" by his encounter with Socrates, so the reason now is shaken out of its unconsciousness and naïveté by the "deranging and shocking" message of the Cross, and out of this, so Thévenaz says, there develops a philosophy. But how can this be? The answer is quite simple. The reason accepts this "mise en question", this possibility of "non-sens", as its problem.² What appeared before as a heteronomous imposition, inviting either revolt or abdication, now is transformed by reason's changed intentionality, and the "Expérience-choc"

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 41

²"La raison n'a pas supprimé le problème qui lui était brutalement posé de l'extérieur: elle en a fait son problème, le problème philosophique radical." (Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 41)

becomes instead an incentive to philosophical reflection, an occasion for reason to strive towards a deeper self-understanding; it becomes "a call to responsible initiative".¹

The act however, the assumption of responsibility, demands an earnest, determined effort ("ascèse", Thévenaz calls it); only against great odds can this goal be achieved. But, as Thévenaz often reminds us, difficulties, obstacles, even antinomies, are the condition of philosophical progress; that is why he can talk of the Christian experience as liberating, even exhilarating.² It is with such an attitude that the reason accepts the possibility of "folie" as its own problem.

Now the ability thus to assume its responsibilities in the face of decisive, shaking experiences, is the true meaning, says Thévenaz, of the autonomy of reason.³ "Autonomy" however is a term which is generally misunderstood and there is need he says, for it to be redefined.⁴ The greatest source of error is its confusion with "autarchy".⁵ But autarchēs,

¹Thévenaz, "Situation de la Raison: essai de philosophie protestante" (Hommage et Reconnaissance,) p. 120

²"Cette possibilité de non-sens," he says, "...est vraiment une libération," (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 173) the reason therefore emerges from the experience, "pas mortifiée mais excitée, appelée à exercer d'autant plus vivement sa réflexion." (Ibid, p. 174. See also La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 46)

³Thévenaz, "Situation de la Raison: essai de philosophie protestante", p. 120

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 173

⁵Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 55

Thévenaz explains, the ambition of the wise men of old, is the will to be self-sufficient (in the pejorative sense of the term); its attitude towards experience is one of masterful domination. "Autonomy" on the other hand, while refusing interference from external authorities, is nevertheless open to experience and contestation.¹ The autarchic attitude is therefore an "inauthentic autonomy" which necessarily lapses into autism and "l'inconscience de soi".² A veritable autonomy however avoids this because it is essentially open; it is characterized, not by an attitude of "criticism", but by a situation of "crisis".³

When thus distinguished from autarchy, it becomes clear why for Thévenaz autonomy is not a question of pure initiative (or, pure project) the way it is for Sartre, for example. It is an initiative in some sense however, because this after all is what the word autonomy implies; the very fact that Thévenaz uses it at all is evidence that he does not dismiss entirely the idea of initiative. In fact he states quite unequivocally: "La raison reste en l'homme une puissance d'initiative et d'autonomie."⁴ Such initiative must however be defined in terms

¹Ibid, p. 155

²Ibid, p. 156

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 184. "La véritable autonomie de la raison se détache sur un fond de crise."

⁴Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 160

of responsibility and vocation; Thévenaz thus talks of "une initiative en condition".¹ Wishing to put special emphasis on the Christian intellectual's responsibility before God, a few years before writing La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, Thévenaz had gone so far as to say: "Chez le chrétien, la responsabilité n'est pas une initiative."² His responsibility, Thévenaz went on to say, is response, obedience: "Elle est toujours seconde en ce sens que, toujours, Dieu a parlé avant nous, a déjà lancé son appel, en ce sens que tout a déjà été accompli sur la Croix"³ Thus whereas the non-Christian's attitude of responsibility gravitates around autonomy, the Christian's attitude gravitates around obedience.⁴ It is clear however that Thévenaz is not wishing to dispense with the notion of autonomy; he would only dispense with it where it is conceived as an absolute initiative. This is evident, not only in the light of his comments in La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, but also in view of some remarks made later in the same article on Christian responsibility: he states that the proper meaning of the autonomy of reason is this "remark-

¹ Ibid

² Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 256

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid, p. 257

able", if not "mysterious", fact that philosophy alone bears the responsibility of determining its own value and the confidence it should have in its own procedures.¹ Clearly he is not repudiating the autonomy of philosophy. Nevertheless, as he will insist in his last work before his death, the initiative that is implied in autonomy "serait réponse et ne pourrait être que responsabilité."²

When autonomy is defined in such a manner, we can see why it is impossible to conceive of reason's relation to experience as reason somehow managing to hang on to its autonomy in spite of the rude shocks that experience brings; the picture is rather reason discovering and exercising its autonomy thanks to experience. Thus, speaking of experience in general, Thévenaz remarks that it is always in response to its shocks that the autonomy of the intellect manifests itself.³ However, in comparison with the "expérience-choc", the preaching of the Cross, all these shocks are merely relative; Thévenaz's very last recorded words make this clear: "c'est l'expérience chrétienne qui rend possible enfin l'autonomie de la philosophie."⁴ This means that, not merely does philosophy retain its identity

¹Ibid, p. 264

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p.160

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 264

⁴Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 171
See also, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 285

under the impact of Paul's gospel, but it becomes more itself; that is to say, it gains a greater awareness of its specificity. Thus, far from eliminating philosophy, as Barth imagines Christianity to do,¹ Christianity invests it with new life. But the Christianity that does this is the Christianity of Protestantism, or more specifically, the Christianity of Barth. Thus not only does Thévenaz contradict Gilson, who argues that Christian philosophy is possible only in Catholicism,² but he contradicts Barth himself, even though, paradoxically, it is his theology that Thévenaz regards as the inspiration, the "chiquenaude", of his philosophy. Whether or not Thévenaz has been faithful to Barth will become clearer as we proceed (and it is the contention of this thesis that he has not betrayed Barth); for the moment though, the point we wish to make is that only within

¹In his article "Philosophie et Théologie", Barth remarks that the philosophical enterprise has been definitively annulled in Jesus Christ. This is so, he insists, because whereas philosophy's orientation is from below to above (de bas en haut), "la voie de Jésus-Christ est ~~sans~~ ^{sans} la moindre équivoque une voie qui descend pour remonter ensuite..." (p. 31) Barth therefore would like to have seen the end of philosophy. J.L. Leuba confirms this when he mentions (in a letter to me) that Barth had once said to Thévenaz: "L'on devrait une bonne fois célébrer les obsèques solennelles de la philosophie en tant que discipline."

²Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 41. See also pp. 26, 35, 37, 62, 71n, 73

Protestantism is it possible for a genuinely autonomous philosophy to arise.¹

Now of crucial importance in Thévenaz's conception of the autonomy of philosophy is that fact that man is not related directly to God.² Thévenaz might sometimes use such phrases as "God accuses the reason of foolishness (folie)"³, but such statements should not be taken literally, because in general he is quite explicit about the indirectness of the relationship.⁴ However, if faith in God implied continuity with the divine, the way it does in mystical theology, then this would mean that man's relationship to God would no longer be indirect; reason's relation to faith would then constitute a direct link with God. But this is the insidious temptation of faith: faith would entice the reason to see it as a form of superior knowledge, a knowledge "face to face".⁵ A. de Muralt calls this,

¹Gabriel Widmer, theologian at the University of Lausanne, declares that Thévenaz's understanding of autonomy is superior to that of Heidegger, Sartre or Jaspers; indeed, he adds, the philosophy of Thévenaz is "the only philosophy that is authentically autonomous." "Un Essai de Philosophie Protestante", (pp. 93-106) in Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, (Lausanne,) II, 1962, p. 101.

²As we say^w in Chapter One, this is of major importance in Barth's thought.

³Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 45

⁴Speaking of the philosophical reason, Thévenaz remarks that "sa condition propre, face à Dieu, est précisément de n'être qu'un rapport indirect." (Ibid, p. 169; see also p. 145f)

⁵Ibid, p. 164

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⁵Ibid, p. 164

"l'idéal séduisant d'une 'vision en Dieu'".¹ Once succumb to this temptation (which is really another form of the divine pretention of reason) and reason's only course would be to capitulate to faith; its autonomy would come to an end and "foi philosophique" or "foi de la raison" would prevail, leaving philosophy to die a natural death, ("de sa belle mort").²

The survival of an autonomous philosophy therefore depends on man's being related to God indirectly. But this indirectness can be maintained only as long as faith is seen in all its humanity, its historicity; as G. Ebeling says: Faith is "quite definitely" exposed to "the vulnerability and ambiguity of the historical."³ In a word, it is the humanity of faith that ensures that our relationship to God is not direct, which in turn ensures that reason remains autonomous. That is why, in the relationship between faith and reason, reason can enjoy

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 55

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 168f. The phrase "foi de l'intelligence" that Thévenaz uses in another place (L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 263), needs to be distinguished from "foi de la raison". Whereas the latter expression refers to a situation where faith has supplanted reason, where, so to speak, the reason believes instead of understanding; the former refers to the intellectual demonstrating his faith by his will "de répondre à Dieu par une résistance intelligente aux tentations de la foi". See also L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 302ff where Thévenaz criticizes the concept of philosophical faith, seeing it as the common enemy of both philosophy and Christianity.

³G. Ebeling, Word and Faith, trans. J.W. Leitch, (S.C.M., 1963) p. 56

the "illumination" (éclairage) of faith without being drawn into its "orbit" (orbite).¹ Faith, properly understood, is no threat to the autonomous reason; philosophy therefore can proceed even under the shattering impact of the Christian experience.

We have seen thus far that the reason accepts the biblical charge of "folie" as its problem, and that it can do so because it is autonomous, or rather, because it discovers its true autonomy in being confronted with the Word of God. Further, we have seen that its autonomy can be maintained only provided that faith is not conceived as "a kind of reason projected into the suprarational",² for then its relation to faith would be one of subordination, which would mean the eclipse of autonomy. It is just as important therefore to conceive of the "humanity" of faith as it is to conceive of the autonomy of reason: both make possible the development of a Christian philosophy.³ Our enquiry must however go a stage further. Having seen that

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 149

²Ebeling, Op. Cit., p. 116

³Thévenaz however insists that "Protestant philosophy" is preferable to "Christian philosophy". It would be artificial, he says, to speak of a Christian philosophy in general. One must begin first with a Catholic or Protestant philosophy and only then go on to consider whether or not one can talk meaningfully of a Christian philosophy in general. (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 248)

philosophy is possible within the context of a Protestant conception of faith, we must now ask how exactly this is achieved. Our question is one concerning method.

3. Phenomenological Reduction and the Radicalization of Philosophy

It is at this point that Thévenaz shows his indebtedness to phenomenology, for the method he uses to inaugurate his philosophy is the phenomenological epoché or reduction.¹ Now the way that Thévenaz uses this method is that he puts in brackets the transcendent source of the "Expérience-choc"; that is to say,

¹In Husserl's philosophy the epoché means the deliberate elimination or bracketing of the contingent and factual so that "the phenomenal residue" might be "rendered more and more emphatically present to consciousness". (Lauer, Op. Cit., p. 27). The epoché, or "putting in parenthesis", is therefore the negative procedure which paves the way for the positive procedure of reduction. The reason for all this is to attain a knowledge that is "scientific" or "apodictic". Such knowledge, which Husserl also calls "absolute", is not possible with regard to what exists, for what exists is contingent. But as far as Husserl is concerned only that which is necessary (i.e., it cannot not-be) can constitute an object of philosophical thought; that is why in the epoché everything relating to the existential is stripped away, leaving only the essential. The aim of phenomenology therefore, as Thévenaz says, is to lay aside all question of objective reality or real content in order to focus attention "sur la réalité dans la conscience, sur les objets en tant qu'intentionnés par et dans la conscience, bref sur ce que Husserl appelle les essences idéales." (Thévenaz, De Husserl à Merleau-Ponty, La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1966, p. 41) Phenomenology therefore is "a doctrine of essences in the framework of pure intuition," (Husserl, quoted in Lauer, Op. Cit., p. 93n28) and it is the function of the method of reduction to bring these essences to light.

he puts God in brackets.¹ This means that the reason refuses to accept the charge of "folie" and instead accepts the possibility, or rather the "impossibility of the impossibility"; this is another way of saying that the reason accepts the accusation of "folie" as its problem. Putting God in parenthesis is therefore equivalent to putting in parenthesis meaning (sens) itself, i.e., the meaning of the world, the meaning of reason. Such an epochē, says Thévenaz, is the most radical possible.² Such radicalism results from the fact that reason now is left without essence; it is neither divine nor diabolical;³ it must therefore create its own essence.⁴ When the phenomenological epoche strikes this deep, that it brackets the very meaning of the reason, it becomes clear, as Pierre Javet points out, that reduction is no longer merely a "methodological device" but a

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 41. As he explains on p. 65 (Ibid), putting God in parenthesis does not mean putting Him in doubt. A God "in doubt", as Barth has argued, would not be God.

²Ibid, p. 59

³Ibid, p. 121

⁴Such a position explains why Thévenaz refuses a metaphysical "essentialism" in favour of an "existentialism" of liberty. (See A. de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 45nl) This epochē, says Thévenaz, "met en suspens cette soi-disant raison-nature et renvoie le sens du côté de la liberté." (La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 62. See also p. 48)

"lived experience".¹

The "reduction of reason" is therefore the crucial outcome of the "Expérience-choc". However, in explicating the "new" consciousness that results from this reduction, there are other reductions that must be made, if merely for the sake of "methodical prudence."² Firstly, everything that has to do with the experience of faith - God, His Word, the Bible, Christ, etc. - is placed "hors circuit"³; in the interests of the purity, the specificity, of philosophy an attitude of "methodical indifference" must be preserved towards all religious dogma; though such indifference, Thévenaz adds, is only "provisional" and must never degenerate into an "indifférentisme systématique et définitif".⁴ Secondly, and on the philosophical level this time, "le monde des vérités et des évidences" is bracketed, not because it is in doubt, but on the contrary, because "il n'est pas en cause et qu'il est, pratiquement du moins, incontestable".⁵ The reason for such bracketing, Thévenaz ex-

¹P. Javet, "Raison Philosophique et Expérience Humaine dans la Pensée de P. Thévenaz", (pp. 153-157) in Studia Philosophica, (Basel) Vol. XX, 1960, p. 157

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 84

³Ibid, p. 85

⁴Ibid, p. 86

⁵Ibid

plains, is to wrench the reason free from the grip of the self-evident, the "cela va de soi". This is what Descartes achieved, says Thévenaz, when by means of the hypothesis of the "malin génie" or "Dieu-trompeur", ¹ he found the way to "mettre en doute l'évidence sans douter de l'évidence".² In other words, while conceding the validity of what was self-evident, he nevertheless freed himself from its domination or "spell" (envoûtement).³ Thirdly, the criteria and methods of procedure of conventional rational criticism too must be placed in parenthesis. If what is known through demonstration and self-evidence is put in brackets, then the same must be done, Thévenaz argues, to the methods whereby such knowledge is achieved.⁴ And fourthly, the great philosophies of past and present must likewise go into parenthesis. In general however, Thévenaz admits, the history of philosophy is invaluable to the philosopher, shattering naive conceptions and opening up new vistas of reflection, but it is when some philo-

¹See Descartes' Première Méditation. Perhaps, Descartes suggests, there is some all-powerful God who brings it about "que je me trompe...toutes les fois que je fais l'addition de deux et de trois".

²Quotation from Henri Gouhier in L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 125

³See Thévenaz's discussion of this subject, "L'Evidence et le Statut Métaphysique de la Vérité (pp. 125-146) in L'Homme et sa Raison I.

⁴Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 88

sophical system or other becomes overbearing, or when the history of philosophy as such exerts too great an authority, that bracketing must be applied to all "cette puissance inerte".¹

The preceding are the principal reductions which Thévenaz envisages. Their importance, he says, is that they leave the way clear for the explicitation or elucidation of the "conscience de soi" that results from the "reduction of meaning". Such a procedure, says Javet, constitutes a shift from phenomenological reduction to reflexive analysis.² The aim now is to achieve a subjective knowledge of the subjective, i.e., a knowledge of the self which does not entail "dédoublement"; in other words, the reason seeks to understand its experience of being "in condition", "exposed", not from without, but from within, by participating fully in it. Such knowledge, says A. de Muralt, "permet de connaître le sujet sans 'objectiver' sa subjectivité, c'est-à-dire, sans la détruire; il garantit donc la fidélité de la connaissance."³ The starting point of

¹Ibid, p. 89

²Javet, Op. Cit., p. 154. As we noted earlier, Thévenaz's affinities are with reflexive analysis rather than with phenomenology (See p. 18)

³de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 111

this self-knowledge is a consciousness of ignorance or an embryonic self-awareness (*conscience embryonnaire de soi*), as Thévenaz calls it. Such consciousness is initially implicit, but the task of philosophy (or more particularly, metaphysics) is to make it explicit. Bernard Lonergan calls this the "mediation of immediate knowledge": "immediate knowledge in its immediacy will not do," he says, "for simply to assert the evidence of one's fundamental metaphysical views only provokes the answer, quod gratis asseritur, gratis negatur."¹ Mediation therefore, or explicitation, in the context of Thévenaz's thought is the task of a consciousness that finds itself in a state of aporia, i.e., perplexity, induced by the charge of "folie". As the explicitation proceeds, more and more the aporia loses its character of "insoluble problem"; instead, says Thévenaz, the aporia becomes "condition": it is this transition from the "conscience d'aporie" to the "conscience de condition" that constitutes "la radicalisation de la philosophie".² Consciousness of condition therefore becomes the criterion of philosophy; in fact, says Thévenaz, man only succeeds in defining philosophy

¹B. Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon", (pp. 199-219), in Coreth, Op. Cit., p. 200.

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 127

to the degree that he becomes conscious of his condition.¹
 But can we define this condition more precisely?

As we have said, this condition is one of aporia; that is to say, the reason finds itself in ^{an} ~~an~~ impasse. (a/poros - without a passage or way) This gives rise to a sense of limitation - a novel situation for a reason that once considered itself divine. This concept of limit is very important in Thévenaz, but as Ricoeur points out in his preface to L'Homme et sa Raison (p. 18), to appreciate Thévenaz's understanding of "limit" it is necessary to distinguish two possible meanings of the word. On the one hand, it could mean the frontier of some inaccessible kingdom, the barrier to some unknowable beyond: such is the view, says Ricoeur, behind the one of Neoplatonism or the unknowable God of Herbert Spencer. This is not the view of Thévenaz. On the other hand, limit can also refer to the "confines of the human", a position which corresponds to that of Kant who reduced all reality to the phenomenal, thus situating it "on this side" (dans l'en-deçà), i.e., on the side of the human rather than of the divine. The limitation of reason therefore simply means its reintegration into man;² the reason now can only be human;³ or even more

¹Ibid, p. 149

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 122

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 157

simply, "l'homme est raison".¹ In this perspective a "metaphysics of the object" is out of the question because, says Thévenaz, it amounts to nothing more than sheer escapism.² What must be developed therefore is a "metaphysics of the mind", a metaphysics "vers l'intérieur". Such a metaphysics, Thévenaz insists, no longer takes flight towards the beyond, but rather sharpens "notre conscience d'homme" and permits us "de prendre conscience plus nette et plus claire de notre condition humaine".³

What Thévenaz therefore basically means by the conversion of reason is that it experiences conversion from its autism, its divinity, to "conscience de soi", to a "conscience de la condition humaine". Of course, under the conditions of existence, there can be no question of absolute lucidity about oneself, about one's condition; there always seems to be some pocket of resistance to a thoroughgoing radicalization of philosophy. As we shall see in Part 3, autism survives even in the most "enlightened" philosophies. That is why philosophy must be characterized by contestation and self-criticism, why

¹Ibid, p. 175

²Thévenaz, "Métaphysique et Destinée Humaine", in L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, pp. 37, 43

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 237

for example philosophy cannot stop at being metaphysics but must become a "metaphysics of metaphysics".¹ Such a formula merely points to philosophy's need to become more radical, more true to experience, more true to itself; but above all - and this is the essential point in Thévenaz's concept of the deabsolutized reason - it points to the fact that philosophy (or metaphysics) has been cast out of heaven and now finds itself on earth "à hauteur d'homme". No longer dwelling in eternity "dans la bonne compagnie des intelligibles...elle descend dans la rue, couche sous les ponts, elle redevient un peu l'Eros va-nu-pieds du Banquet".² The conversion of reason is the humanization of reason.

III. THE CRISIS OF PHILOSOPHY

Thévenaz is of the opinion that the conversion of reason, its reduction "à hauteur d'homme", has taken place to a large extent in the history of philosophy. He deals with this theme throughout his writings, but gives it special prominence in

¹Kant, in a letter to Markus Herz. Thévenaz notes that other philosophers in similar fashion, have talked of "philosophie de la philosophie" (Jean Hyppolite), "phénoménologie de la phénoménologie" (Merleau-Ponty), "dialectique de la dialectique" (Jean Wahl). Such "redoublement" he says "n'est pas une 'élévation' à la puissance, mais cette 'descente aux enfers' de la connaissance de soi-même". (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 237)

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 175

such articles as "La Philosophie sans Absolu"¹, "Dieu des Philosophes et Dieu des Chrétiens"², and, with the modern period in mind, in "Les Révolutions Philosophiques du XX^e siècle".³ A detailed study of his analysis would fill a book; we shall therefore concentrate on two pivotal philosophers, Descartes and Kant, to see to what extent they reflect the conversion of reason. We shall make only occasional references to others who, consciously or unconsciously, have allowed the Christian experience to influence their philosophy.

We begin with Descartes, not only because he is chronologically prior to Kant, but because of his importance, if not centrality, in the thought of Thévenaz. Thévenaz implicitly acknowledges this fact when he refers to Descartes as "Maître plus que jamais incontestable (bien que contesté) de la pensée moderne."⁴ This is not mere lip service, for not only are his writings impregnated with reflections on Descartes, but his own spirit is clearly akin to that of Descartes, especially in its relentless quest for a beginning in

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, pp. 187-206

²Ibid, pp. 309-325

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, pp. 99-120

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, Introduction, p. 8

philosophy, an absolute "point de départ".

The origin of this philosophical radicalism in Thévenaz, as we have seen, is the "Expérience-choc" of Calvary. Now it is the contention of Thévenaz that it is the same "Expérience-choc" that lies behind the radicalism of Descartes. In Descartes' theology, God is the Creator of the eternal truths. But if this is so, "il peut en principe me tromper, et je ne suis plus assuré d'emblée même des évidences les plus certaines".¹ Hence Descartes' "expérience métaphysique d'une absence éventuelle de toute certitude".² This is Descartes' famous hypothesis of the "malin génie" (already noted), a hypothesis that expresses a doubt so radical that the reason itself enters a state of crisis. It is such radicalism that leads Thévenaz to assert that Descartes was the first in 1600 years "à prendre au sérieux l'exigence chrétienne que l'Epître aux Corinthiens formule à l'égard de la philosophie".³

Now in thus exposing himself to the "morsure" of the Christian message, Descartes breaks away from the fateful legacy of Greek philosophy. The crisis of the "malin génie" would be

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 319

²M. Barthélémy-Madaude, Introduction (p. 36) to Descartes' Discours de la Méthode, (Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1959)

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 297

something quite foreign to Greek reason, as our discussion above (See pp. 65ff) will have made clear; it could never occur to a reason that considers itself divine. That is why, says Thévenaz, to a Greek or to a Scholastic, it would have appeared "un blasphème ou une plaisanterie métaphysique."¹

To Descartes however it is no joke or simple "jeu de l'esprit" (as H. Miéville for example insists it is);² how can it be, asks Thévenaz, when "la raison humaine est secouée jusque dans ses fondements par la radicale mise à l'épreuve qu'implique l'intervention du malin génie"?³ Of course, the flippant manner in which he presents this hypothesis (Let's pretend there is a great deceiver...), the apparent casualness of this "invention", might seem to suggest a lack of seriousness, a mere "jeu d'esprit". But Descartes himself warns against such an interpretation ("non point par inconsideration ou légèreté..." (Première Méditation)); besides, how could it lack seriousness when, as Thévenaz points out, the whole Cartesian metaphysics depends on it, when the cogito itself proceeds directly out of it!⁴ No! says Thévenaz, "sa feinte est

¹Ibid, p. 297

²"ce doute 'hyperbolique' auquel il s'essaie, n'est pas qu'un jeu de l'esprit" (Condition de l'Homme, Librairie Droz, Genève, 1959, p. 218)

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, Ip. 164

⁴Ibid, p. 127nl. See also Socrates' "ironical jesting" (Kierkegaard) after having been condemned by the Athenian court: "I certainly never thought that the majority against me would have been so narrow." (Apology, p. 36a). Such lightness of tone can hardly be taken for a lack of seriousness!

sérieuse et sa métaphysique aussi."¹

The "malin génie" is therefore that phase of the Cartesian doubt which is "proprement métaphysique".² Now the "properly" metaphysical, or the "properly" philosophical for Thévenaz occurs wherever there is "conscience de soi" or "transcendance vers l'intérieur": such knowledge can never be simply a question of "seeing"; it must also involve "willing". That is, Thévenaz insists, why a genuine philosophical reflection involves both "discovery" and "creation" and why the ethical or practical attitude is inseparable from contemplative or theoretical knowledge.³ Self-knowledge, in a word, is therefore the criterion of metaphysics. Kant in fact made this very observation: "Metaphysik ist nicht Wissenschaft, nicht Gelehrsamkeit, sondern bloss der sich selbst kennende Verstand."⁴

Now when the metaphysical is thus defined, it can be seen why, in moving from methodical to hyperbolic doubt, Descartes has moved the discussion on to a "new plane", the metaphysical.⁵

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 154

³Ibid., p. 47

⁴Quoted Ibid., p. 146

⁵This is the precise point, says Thévenaz, "où le mathématicien-physicien Descartes devient métaphysicien, où le doute méthodique du savant devient le doute hyperbolique du métaphysicien." (P. Thévenaz, "Du Relativisme à la Métaphysique", leçon inaugurale à l'École Polytechnique Fédérale, Zurich, 21 November, 1947, p. 10)

In the former doubt, what is sought is objectivity; the subject as such does not come into consideration at all. Reason here is an instrument, "un oeil braqué qui voit sans se voir lui-même, qui doute de tout sans douter de lui-même."¹ The aim is to establish a perfect adaequatio rei et intellectus which, as Thévenaz puts it, amounts to a loss of self in the evidence ("se perdre dans l'évidence"). Where there is "hyperbolic doubt" however the evidence loses its "natural" correspondence to reality; it still retains its quality of evidence, Thévenaz insists, but now "il n'y a pas immédiatement réalité là où il y a évidence."² In thus putting in question the evidence, though without doubting it, Descartes has, by a metaphysical "coup de force", deabsolutized the evidence, thereby assuring reason's liberty or autonomy in relation to it.³ The question of truth now has to be posed in a quite different manner. Adaequatio rei et intellectus will no longer do; instead, truth will have to be conceived as self-authenticating, index sui (Spinoza). What this means is that truth now comes to share in man's condition of contingency, a fact which places the being or ontological value of knowledge

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 132

²Thévenaz, "Du Relativisme à la Métaphysique", p. 11

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p.133

on the same plane as the being of man. This is what is meant by the "crisis of truth" ("crise de la vérité"). Naturally it implies a "crise de la conscience de soi"; and thus a "new dimension" opens up "within the reason", a dimension of relation to self.¹ Thanks to the "extravagant" hypothesis of the "malin génie", there is no longer any "metaphysical screen hiding the reason from itself;"² There is no longer any alienation of the self;³ A genuine "conscience de soi" at last is born.

In Descartes therefore, according to Thévenaz, there takes place a real conversion of the reason, thanks to Christianity! In view of the fact that the ontological value ("valeur d'être") of knowledge, like that of man, is now seen as contingent, and since the veridical value ("valeur de vérité") of knowledge depends on its ontological value, it follows that human knowledge and human reason become finally truly human.⁴ Thus, in spite of Descartes' resorting to the divine guarantee in order to establish the veridical value of the evidences of his reason (a "philosophical inconsistency", according to Thévenaz,⁵ the essential Cartesian insight remains unaffected, viz. the reduction

¹Ibid, p. 134

²Ibid

³Ibid, p. 155

⁴Thévenaz, "Valeur de la Connaissance Philosophique", in L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, p. 182f

⁵Ibid, p. 182

of reason's ontological value "à hauteur d'homme": and, as we have seen, where there is "humanization" of reason, there is conversion.

Now as regards Kant, it is possible to show a similar conversion of the reason to the human and the contingent. His style of philosophizing is quite different from Descartes', more involved and less dramatic, yet as far as the dedivinization of reason is concerned it is just as effective. Instead of fabricating an all-powerful "malin génie" to challenge the evidences of reason, Kant develops the transcendental method, whose function, Thévenaz maintains, is not unlike that of Descartes' "great deceiver": with Kant "il s'agit aussi d'une question portant sur une évidence, de la mise en question d'une vérité pourtant indubitable (la vérité de la physique newtonienne qui ne fait pas l'ombre d'un doute pour Kant)"¹ Now what the transcendental enquiry shows is that the possibility of scientific knowledge, of rational necessity, derives, not from the thing-in-itself, but from the structure of the knowing subject. The "Ding-an-sich" therefore becomes a limiting concept (Grenzbegriff) instead of an absolute reality, capable of being known by metaphysical speculation. In fact, says Windelband, the conception of the thing-in-itself

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 135n3

"can no longer be the object of purely rational knowledge, it can no longer be an 'object' at all".¹ What has occurred here, says Thévenaz, is the deabsolutisation of the object, for no longer is there "un accord naturel et indiscuté entre la raison et l'être en soi";² henceforward there exists "an unbridgable gulf" between human understanding and ultimate reality.³

There is a difficulty however connected with talking at all about ultimate reality or the absolute, even as a "limiting concept", in view of the fact that in the Kantian perspective all reality is seen as phenomenal; but, as Kant himself says, the "Ding-an-sich" or the absolute is still capable of being thought, even though it cannot be known.⁴ Kant's merit therefore, according to Thévenaz, is to have "derealized the absolute without suppressing it" ("déréaliser l'absolu sans le supprimer")⁵ To suppress it altogether would be to lapse

¹W. Windelband, A History of Philosophy, Vol. II, trans. J.H. Tufts, (Harper, New York, 1958) p. 547

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 222

³P. Thévenaz, "La Critique comme Métaphysique de la Métaphysique", (pp. 217-248) in Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, (Tome VI, Lausanne, 1956). Traduction de trois leçons données en allemand au Cours d'été de la Fondation Lucerna, en 1950. Trad. L. Graz et P. Javet, p. 240

⁴Windelband, Op. Cit., p. 548

⁵Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 197

into relativism; to retain it in the old framework of classical metaphysics would be to incur alienation;¹ its retention therefore can only be as a "Grenzbegriff", hence as a structural element of our knowledge.

But does such deabsolutization of the object really escape relativism? Does it mean the end of metaphysics? On the contrary, says Thévenaz, for out of Kant's "Copernican revolution" there issues a metaphysics of the Subject, a metaphysics of "this side" (l'en-deçà) rather than of the "beyond".² Metaphysics is now tied to experience, to phenomena; the only metaphysics now possible is a "metaphysics of phenomena" (Windelband).⁴ According to Thévenaz this is the direction of an authentic metaphysics.

Metaphysicians such as E. Coreth however disagree with Thévenaz's assessment of Kant. Coreth talks of Kant as enclosing thinking in a "mere 'metaphysics of subjectivity'"³; his error, Coreth continues, was to stop at the "finite subject" and not go beyond to the "absolute horizon of validity",

¹"Si la chose en soi, ou Dieu, l'Etre suprême, étaient considérés comme des êtres absolus, ce seraient eux qui aliéneraient l'homme; l'homme se perdrait en ces absolus qui sont faux dans la mesure où l'on croit pouvoir leur attribuer une réalité indépendante." (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 197)

²Ibid, p. 222f

³Coreth, Op. Cit., p. 24

⁴Windelband, Op. Cit., p. 546

the horizon of being: the result was that "he eliminated all possibility of metaphysical knowledge."¹ Thévenaz however defends Kant on the grounds that his critique of reason arose against a background of crisis;² it is this fact, says Thévenaz, that makes of Kant a "great metaphysician":³ his philosophy, like that of Descartes, is "proprement métaphysique".⁴ Metaphysics therefore for Thévenaz is not a question of a knowledge of Absolute Being, as it is for Coreth, but rather a question of a self-knowledge based on the crisis of reason. Where metaphysics is characterized by such crisis, there we have conversion or deabsolutization of reason. And that is why, says Thévenaz, the critical (or rather, crisis) philosophy of Kant affords us "un grand exemple de désabsolutisation".⁵

¹Ibid, p. 37

²Thévenaz shows this by quoting several phrases from Kant's preface to the first edition of his Critique of Pure Reason, which clearly reflect a state of crisis. Kant talks for example of certain questions as "transcending all its (i.e., the reason's) powers" and of the resulting "perplexity". (E. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. N.K. Smith, Macmillan, London, 1961, p. 7) He also talks ~~of~~ reason as being "at variance with itself" and because of "misunderstanding" coming "into conflict with itself". (Ibid, p. 10) All this, Thévenaz says, "indique nettement la crise de la raison et non pas la splendide assurance de celui qui entreprend une autocritique de la raison." (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 176)

³Ibid, p. 178

⁴Ibid, p. 135nl

⁵Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 114

Following Descartes and Kant, modern philosophy has become increasingly radical, in the sense that human knowledge has become more and more integrated into the human condition. The English empiricists of the 18th Century; Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the 19th; Marcel, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre in the 20th - all have contributed to the dethronement of divine reason and to the discovery that philosophy's true patria is not eternity but time, that its proper perspective is not sub specie aeternitatis but sub specie durationis. Another symptom of this "revolution" is the rejection of the system in favour of the method; consequently, "ce qui compte en philosophie, c'est le philosopher, la réflexion en acte, plutôt que le système, la question plutôt que la réponse, l'ébranlement plutôt que l'apaisement de l'esprit, l'entrée dans l'histoire plutôt que l'éternité de la vérité."¹ All this points to the fact that the emphasis in philosophy has shifted from the truth itself to the search for truth; summarizing this new outlook is the declaration of Kierkegaard that "subjectivity is truth".²

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 101

²Some modern philosophers deplore this trend, such as the Swiss Fernand Brunner, who asserts that "la recherche de la vérité constitue...une séduction de l'intelligence, qui la détourne de la vérité." (F. Brunner, "De L'Unité de la Vérité", pp. 132-165, in Philosophie und Christliche Existenz, Festschrift for H. Barth, Basel, 1960. p. 157. See also p. 162) In opposition to such a trend, Brunner would restore the Augustinian perspective which conceives of the divine itself as the proper

Perhaps one of the most dramatic evidences of the radicalism of modern philosophy is its insistence on the "death of God". Thévenaz however distinguishes the "existential" atheism of a Nietzsche or a Camus from the sober, rationalistic atheism that asserts, abstractly, the non-existence of God.¹ The latter atheism, says Thévenaz, is much like a verdict given at the close of a trial; the former, on the contrary, is a "drame vécu": It is the experience of a Frederic Myers who wrote after his meeting at Cambridge with George Eliot (once an Evangelical believer, but now without faith):

"and when we stood at length and parted, amid that columnar circuit of the forest trees, beneath the last twilight of the starless skies, I seemed to be gazing like Titus at Jerusalem,

object of thought; clearly, in such a view, truth itself is known directly. This does not entail the divinization of reason, Brunner insists; on the contrary, "*l'intelligence humaine ...renonce à elle-même en s'élevant à l'idée de l'intelligence divine.*" (*Ibid*, p. 137. My italics) For Thévenaz, however, such self-effacement on the part of reason does not make it any less divine; that is why, as far as he is concerned, Augustine "reste bien un philosophe grec qui ne connaît de raison que divine". (*L'Homme et sa Raison* I, p. 281) Thus in spite of the many praiseworthy elements in the Augustinian synthesis of philosophy and theology (*Ibid*, p. 280ff), it is basically unqualified to act as a criterion of the specificity of philosophy. The quest for truth, rather than its possession, therefore remains a valid expression of the deabsolutization of reason.

¹p. Thévenaz, "L'Athéisme Contemporain: Camus et Sartre", (pp. 337-356), in La Revue de L'Evangélisation (Paris), Dec. 1952.

on vacant seats and empty halls - on a sanctuary with no Presence to hallow it, and heaven left lonely of a God."¹ Myers' description here of the "death of God" does, unfortunately, have a touch of Romanticism, of sentimentality, which is clearly absent from Nietzsche's famous passage that talks of the coldness of the encroaching night and the decomposition of God.² Thévenaz thus says of Nietzsche's "Dieu mort": "[11] exprime et résume l'effort de tout un siècle depuis Kant pour dissocier la liaison séculaire de l'homme et de l'absolu et consommer la fin des 'arrière-mondes'. C'est bien l'acte de décès de l'absolu que Nietzsche rédige en paroles de feu dans Le Gai Savoir."³ What has happened therefore in modern philosophy, Thévenaz maintains, is that it has gone beyond even Descartes in opting for a thought without guarantee,⁴ a thought without a "Dieu-fondement"⁵. But this is no lapse into subjectivism and relativism, Thévenaz insists; it is simply

¹Quoted by A. Edinborough in a review of the works of George Eliot in Saturday Night, Feb., 1969.

²Kaufman, ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, p. 105

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 202

⁴Ibid, p. 298

⁵Ibid, p. 299

a recognition that the reason "est un acte purement humain et autonome par lequel l'homme prend conscience, dans la crainte et le tremblement, qu'il a lui-même à donner son fondement à sa pensée, en l'absence de tout recours transcendant."¹ The autonomy, the humanity, of reason: this is the theme of modern philosophy (or at least of that branch of philosophy which asks itself the metaphysical question concerning the ontological status of reason and of knowledge); this is its attestation to the conversion of reason.

Now, as we have said before, the conversion of reason, as Thévenaz understands it, is the result of the "Expérience-choc" that Christianity brings. In fact Thévenaz goes so far as to say that without Christianity the West would never have brought to maturity "this Socratic embryo of a properly human philosophy."² It is doubtful, he says, "quand on voit qu'un Platon et un Aristote se sont hâtés de rediviniser la philosophie, chacun à leur manière, et que, même après des siècles de christianisme, cette tendance renaît sans cesse."³ The modern phenomenon of secularization (and this includes what Thévenaz calls the "laïcisation de la raison"⁴) is therefore

¹Ibid, p. 300

²Ibid, p. 284

³Ibid

⁴Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme" (pp. 129-137) in Verbum Caro (Neuchâtel), 1950, p. 132

the result of Christianity's presence in the world. This is Bonhoeffer's view too, according to G. Ebeling: "the Christian faith has a causative share in the modern process of secularization"; radical secularization "was possible only on Christian ground" and is in fact "the working out in history of what the Christian faith itself implies for our relation to the world, viz. - the denial of the world's divinity."¹ Theoretically, the argument concerning the causal relationship between Christianity and secularization is convincing; but historically, there is perhaps a little less certainty. Widmer therefore asks: could it not be that the "scientific spirit" has contributed historically to this process? Or the "successive crises of language"?² No doubt there is justification in these questions, but what is important after all is that from a Protestant viewpoint the secularization or dedivinization of the world, of man, of reason, is required not only logically but spiritually.

Thévenaz's critique of philosophy is therefore based on the criterion of dedivinization: his praise or blame of a philosophy is determined by the degree of its fidelity to the deabsolutizing impact of Christianity. So far, we have men-

¹Ebeling, Op. Cit., p. 135

²Widmer, Op. Cit., p. 104

tioned the philosophies of Descartes and Kant, and modern philosophy in general, and we have seen how in all of them there is evidence of the conversion of reason. Actually, Thévenaz expresses a genuine optimism as to the state of philosophy at the present time: "la conscience et la lucidité avec laquelle la raison se voit dans la philosophie contemporaine est infiniment supérieure à ce qu'elle était au temps de Descartes, de Saint Thomas ou de Platon."¹ Nevertheless, despite such general approval of modern philosophizing, Thévenaz sees the need for an even greater radicalism.

Descartes stopped short of a true radicalism by seeing in the veracity of God a guarantee of man's clear and distinct ideas. By thus introducing a deus ex machina, Thévenaz contends, Descartes reverted to the Greek solution of a divinized knowledge.² Kant likewise failed to go far enough; in spite of everything, says Thévenaz, there is not a genuine deabsolutization of the subject in Kant, "puisque rien ne peut entamer ou contester le sujet en tant que fondement de l'objet et de l'objectivité": the a priori forms are in other words

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 20

²Thévenaz, "Valeur de la Connaissance Philosophique", L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance, p. 182. See also L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 136

a new absolute.¹ Thus in the case of both Descartes and Kant, the rationality and the meaning of the world are not really in doubt or in question.² And with Husserl too there is a similar absence of real upheaval (ébranlement). In spite of his talk of "crisis" (as for example in his Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften, 1936), there is no real crisis of the reason as such in his phenomenology. The transcendental consciousness³ has no room for "attention à soi"; it is all "intention vers l'objet"; its movement is "centrifugal" whereas, according to Cartesianism, the consciousness is above all "concentrée et centripète".⁴ Husserlian transcendentalism is therefore not so much a "prise de soi" as a "reprise du monde";⁵ it therefore fails to attain a genuine radicalism (since for Thévenaz, as we have already noted,

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, pp. 115, 117.

²Ibid, p. 48

³The transcendental, Thévenaz explains, is simply another name for the constituting intentionality of consciousness (De Husserl à Merleau-Ponty, p. 47) According to this theory of "intentional constitution" or Sinngebung, being can be absolute (and thus an object of "science") only if it has been constituted by the reason; in other words, there is no other source of apodictic givenness than transcendental subjectivity. (See Lauer, Op. Cit., p. 30f)

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 157. See also p. 107ff

⁵Ibid, p. 158

the radical is marked above all by "conscience de soi"): "le transcendantalisme trahit par essence...un défaut de radicalité. Pour les transcendantalistes - on le voit chez Kant comme chez Husserl, mais on le voit également dans l'ontologie de Heidegger qui prétend pourtant corriger Husserl sur ce point - la raison humaine échappe toujours, malgré tout, à une réelle et radicale mise en question."¹ On this point at least, says Thévenaz, Descartes with his "malin génie", is far more radical than Husserl! In other modern philosophers as well, such as Sartre (with his conception of absolute liberty) or Jaspers and Heidegger (with their tendency to divinize language),² Thévenaz assails a lack of radicalism, of deabsolutization. Why this continual renaissance of absolutes? Thévenaz asks. Why is it that deabsolutization is never pushed through to the end? "C'est qu'il n'y a désabsolutisation véritable que si l'homme prend conscience de son humanité comme limitée et mise en question."³ All the contemporary "contestations" in philosophy are therefore nothing more than "demi-démarches..

¹Ibid, p. 164

²Jaspers has said for example, "Les paroles sont portées par la transcendance"; Heidegger has gone one better and said, "Le langage est la demeure de l'Etre." (R. Schaerer, Op. Cit., p. 174)

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 204

qui oublient de se mettre elles-mêmes en question;"¹ any "conversion" that might have taken place in philosophy has been less a conversion of reason than a conversion to reason.² What is needed therefore is "contestatation" that is contested even while it contests!³ Anything less is surrender to a divine reason, a "raison glorieuse" (Mehl); but the condition of reason, Thévenaz insists, is its humanity, or more specifically from the Christian viewpoint, its sinful humanity. In this direction, and this alone, lies a genuine philosophical radicalism.

Several critics though have questioned the meaning and possibility of the kind of radicalism Thévenaz envisages. Is it really possible, they ask, for the reason to be totally exposed, radically "mise en question"? One of these critics, Henri Miéville, talks quite bluntly of "l'impossible mise en

¹Thévenaz, De Husserl à Merleau-Ponty, Preface by Jean Brun, p. 10

²Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 166

³Thévenaz, De Husserl à Merleau-Ponty, p. 11. Thévenaz beautifully illustrates this "self-contesting contestation", when in regard to his own quest for radical foundations, he writes: "Peut-être même la recherche passionnée du fondement radical serait-elle liée à une raison inconsciente d'elle-même, s'imaginant être un point de vue divin sur le monde..." (La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 128)

question de la raison par elle-même".¹ With the same polemical motive, he argues that the real significance of Descartes' "malin génie" is that it shows "l'impossibilité où nous sommes de mettre la raison hors circuit sans nous condamner...à ne plus penser."² The "directive norms of reason" cannot therefore be conceived, as they are in Thévenaz's philosophy, as contingent or subject to historicity, for they have a character of "necessity", of "transcendence", and therefore utterly surpass "tout le phénoménal, tout le contingent."³

¹H. Miéville, "Autour de Pierre Thévenaz," (pp. 1-10), in Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, Lausanne, 1962, I, p. 4. Miéville presented this paper at a symposium held by the Vaudois group of the Société Romande de Philosophie in May 1961. One of the speakers, Maurice Gex, stated quite flatly: "La raison constituante...ne peut jamais être mise en question, puisque c'est elle qui met toutes choses en question." (Ibid, p. 1n1) R. Schaerer is expressing the same basic criticisms as Miéville and Gex when he opposes Thévenaz's interpretation of Thales' fall into the well. Thévenaz saw this fall as symbolizing the total fall of philosophy; such a fall was the very condition of philosophy. For Schaerer however Thales' fall has significance insofar as it refers to a norm which precedes it, both ontologically and chronologically: "La chute n'eût rien produit", says Schaerer, "si elle n'eût été que chute...La chute n'est rien sans la valeur qu'elle pré-suppose et le relèvement qu'elle suscite." (Schaerer, Op.Cit. p. 181) For Thévenaz therefore it is "Thalès chu", for Schaerer, "Thalès trébuchant". Schaerer's view, as we can see, is a clear challenge to Thévenaz's conception of the "crisis" or radical "exposure" of reason.

²Miéville, Op. Cit., p. 220

³Ibid, p. 221

In reply to such a critique, Thévenaz protests that it is a "misunderstanding" to suppose that a reason in crisis is no longer able to perform its critical function.¹ What better example of the crisis of reason is there than Descartes' experience of metaphysical doubt? Here was a situation where even such self-evident truths as $2+2=4$ were put in question. But far from putting an end to all thought, it provoked Descartes into searching ever more earnestly for the aliquid inconcussum, the unshakable foundation; it drove him into formulating the cogito ergo sum, Descartes' supreme model for the clear and distinct idea. In discovering the uncertainty therefore of its ontological foundation, the reason, far from losing heart, finds itself renewed, strengthened.² Nothing encourages philosophizing more, says Thévenaz, than to learn that the most solid assurances are unfounded; in fact, he goes on to say, there is no need whatever of assurance in order to philosophize!³

Miéville, influenced as he is by the rationalist idealist tradition (Kant, Fichte, Hegel) could hardly be sympathetic to such a position. Rather than a reason without assurance, a philosophy without absolute, he envisages "une vie de l'es-

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 174

²Ibid, p. 180

³Ibid, p. 293

prit autonome dilatée aux dimensions de la pensée universelle."¹ It is natural therefore that, from his panentheistic point of view,² he should consider Thévenaz's position as leading inevitably to a "sceptical relativism".³ Miéville's critique is a critique in the name of rationalism. Thévenaz however insists that his view of a reason "à découvert" is the basis for "un rationalisme plus vrai".⁴ His reason for saying this is his obstinate conviction that the sine qua non of philosophy is "conscience de soi" which, as we noted earlier in our discussion on the divine reason, can only arise in the crisis of an encounter with "another". Philosophy therefore is inseparable from crisis; in fact, says Thévenaz, philosophy is crisis.⁵ From this perspective, the enterprise of a Mié-

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 79. See also pp. 17ff where he discusses Miéville's philosophy under the heading, "La Raison contre la Foi".

²A. Reymond rightly describes Miéville's position as a "religious panentheism". (Reymond, Op. Cit., p. 418) A. de Muralt, on the other hand, prefers the description "spiritual rationalism".

³Miéville, "Autour de Pierre Thévenaz", Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison II, p. 152

⁵"par nature, la philosophie est crise, question ouverte, question qu'aucune réponse ne tranche une fois pour toutes..." (Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 185.) See also p. 174 where he writes that reflection becomes "properly philosophical" the moment that "la réflexion de la raison sur elle-même est poussée jusqu'à la crise de la raison". See also pp. 170, 179ff.

ville must be seen as another example of a philosophy refusing to take seriously the Pauline charge of "folie"; what other conclusion can we come to when we are told that reason must be considered "la délégation d'un Pouvoir transcendant d'universelle médiation qui joue en l'esprit humain"?¹ Against such a position we must assert the validity of a philosophy that finds its assurance, not in the autism of a divinized reason, but in the crisis of a reason hearing that "the wisdom of the world is 'folie' with God". The quest for certainty where there is uncertainty, for assurance where there is unrest: this, Thévenaz asserts, is the condition to which philosophy is "condemned".²

We must now briefly examine one more question before turning to Chapter Three. We know now that in order to become itself philosophy must arise like a phoenix out of the ashes of crisis. But where does it get the strength to make such a recovery? To be very specific: how, after being most profoundly shocked by his encounter with the thought of Barth, does Thévenaz succeed in asserting his philosophical autonomy? Leuba is of the opinion that in the final analysis Thévenaz does not succeed in showing positively how the reason is able

¹ Miéville, "Autour de Pierre Thévenaz", p. 7

² Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, *ib.* 303f.

to recover its autonomy. It is true that Thévenaz does not develop in any detail the how of this recovery; he is more concerned with asserting that such a recovery does in fact take place. The phenomenological reduction carried out by the reason does not really answer our question, for the epoché is after all merely a method, a device; what concerns us is the act of reduction, the act of recovery. How is it that even when standing on the very brink of the "abyss of insanity", the reason yet "garde son sang-froid, reste sobre et ne connaît pas de vertige"?¹

Thévenaz hinted at an answer on several occasions, especially in his references to the "promise" which is implied in the "Expérience-choc". All human values, he explains, are judged by the Cross of Christ; but the Cross is not only judgment, but promise too: that is why these values (which of course include the reason) which are nothing in themselves, "can at the same time become everything, in hope", and why the reason can become the place of response and of responsibility.² Again, in his discussion of the Christian intellectual's responsibility, he states explicitly that it is "grâce à la promesse"

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 60

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 250

that the understanding can "par ses propres forces, répondre, c'est-à-dire prendre une nouvelle confiance en elle-même."¹ The possibility of recovery therefore lies in the fact that there is hope (for where there is promise there is hope). How else can we explain the élan, the vitality, of his philosophizing? How else explain his "smile"?² But this smile, this élan, this assurance, does not mean, as Schaerer suggests, that Thévenaz was on the way to developing a "metaphysics of assurance."³ Such a development could only have been possible on the basis of an inconsistency, a volte-face; the Christian

¹Ibid, p. 265

²René Schaerer says of Thévenaz's smile: "Tel est peut-être le problème central"! Does a "philosopher of insecurity", Schaerer goes on to ask, have the right to present to the world a smile of a Christian when his philosophy postulates a radical separation of the truths of faith and the truths of reason? Or inversely, has this philosopher the right to posit a radical separation of faith and reason while presenting to the world a smile that reunites them and that transfigures the defeats of the understanding into assurance and victory? (Schaerer, Op. Cit., p. 166) Schaerer misrepresents somewhat Thévenaz's position in talking of a radical separation of faith and reason, but for the moment this is beside the point; what is important is his remark that there is something curious and apparently inconsistent in the fact that a philosopher can smile even while promulgating what Thévenaz himself calls a "metaphysics of insecurity". We can understand this smile however if we see it as an "eschatological smile", a smile of hope.

³Schaerer, Op. Cit., p. 184

philosopher's "condition de créature pécheresse"¹ could never allow such a development. For Thévenaz, a "metaphysics of assurance" would be a theologia gloriae, i.e., a philosophy presuming to enjoy a vision of God "face to face". Having said this however, we also have to recognize that Thévenaz's philosophy is a philosophy "before God", and we therefore have to ask with Ricoeur "si et comment le 'devant Dieu' fait encore partie de cette réflexion philosophique en tant que philosophique".² Thévenaz showed that he was aware of this problem, as Ricoeur points out, when he talked of the need to go ^beyond the Pascalian distinction between the god of philosophy and the God of the Bible; Protestantism cannot remain there, he says; indeed, "il n'est nullement exclu que dans le cadre de la foi chrétienne une philosophie soit possible et même requise, et que comme toute philosophie elle ait à parler aussi de Dieu".³ But does this mean a "metaphysics of assurance"? Clearly not, as his last recorded writings indicate. Near the end of his La Condition de la Raison Philosophique he asks the question: is the deabsolutized reason indifferent to God? Not at all, he replies; nevertheless -

¹Thévenaz, "L'Athéisme Contemporain: Camus et Sartre", La Revue de L'Evangélisation, p. 349

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, Preface, p. 23

³Ibid, p. 310

and this is what we must take special note of - "sa condition propre, face à Dieu est précisément de n'être qu'un rapport indirect"! ¹ Indirect relation: this is Thévenaz's final word on the matter, proof that he never envisaged, nor was on the way to constructing, what Schaerer calls a "métaphysique de l'assurance". Owing to the indirectness of the relation to God (an aspect of His judgment) the philosophy of a Christian believer is necessarily characterized by an iconoclastic attitude towards all forms of "divine reason"; but because of the fact that there is a relation at all to God (an aspect of His promise) this philosophy will express hope and will therefore have a positive aspiration towards truth. If Thévenaz had not believed this he would not, as Ricoeur points out, have written those enigmatic lines about "l'éternité retrouvée" that come at the end of his article, "Révolutions philosophiques du XX^e siècle": "L'éternité est morte, vive l'éternité! Rimbaud l'a dit:

Elle est retrouvée.
 Quoi? - L'Éternité.
 C'est la mer allée
 Avec le soleil."²

¹Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 169

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, II, p. 120

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A PROTESTANT PHILOSOPHY

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In Chapter Two we talked of a philosophy that finds itself in a state of crisis thanks to its encounter with Christianity (in its Protestant form); such precisely is what Thévenaz means by "Protestant philosophy". In this chapter, however, we shall be considering this philosophy, not so much as it is in itself, as regards its own particular structure, but in its relation to other possible ways of conceiving the relationship between faith and philosophy. In other words, we shall be examining Thévenaz's Protestant philosophy in the context of the debate concerning faith and reason, theology and philosophy.

I. EXCLUSION

We begin by asking whether exclusion is a tenable solution to our problem. Thévenaz thinks not and contends that Protestantism and philosophy are quite capable of being reconciled; "Protestant philosophy", in his view, is far from being a "round square".¹ But what philosophy precisely does

¹cf. Gilson's argument for the validity of the concept of "Christian philosophy". (The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, especially Chapters I and II; cf. Christianisme et Philosophie, especially Chapter IV, "Théologie et Philosophie".) Gilson's approach to the question is historical; i.e., he shows that the history of philosophy has been fundamentally modified by Christianity, and argues that there must consequently be some validity to the concept of philosophia christiana. (The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 18) His basic contention is that it is possible for revelation to assist the natural reason without making it any less "un exercice rationnel" and without

he have in view when he envisages a Protestant philosophy? If "compatibility" is to be asserted against "exclusion", then surely it is important to have the answer to this question! Such a question must inevitably arise, because it is obvious that just as there are different forms of Christianity, so there are different kinds of philosophy. For example, if we glance at the history of thought we see the following situation: "Les Pères Apologètes du II^e siècle entendaient par philosophie le vague syncrétisme 'philosophico' - religieux propre à la période hellénistique. Saint Augustin pensait à une philosophie fortement structurée: le néoplatonisme. Pierre Damien au XI^e siècle entendait la 'dialectique', c'est-à-dire la logique formelle aristotélicienne. Saint Thomas pensait à Aristote physicien et métaphysicien. Luther à la scholastique du XV^e siècle, Pascal à Descartes, Kierkegaard à l'hégélianisme."¹ In view of such diversity, Thé-

reducing philosophy to theology (Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 128) Gabriel Marcel too approaches this question historically. His conclusion is that philosophy must be Christian. Christian philosophy, he says, must deal with human existence and it must do so phenomenologically (i.e., in terms of human reaction to reality). Now since men today have been radically affected by 2,000 years of Christian experience, "if we are to describe reality as the actual experience of men today, the description must be Christian." (L. Lynch, Christian Philosophy, C.B.C. publications, Toronto, 1963, p. 25) It is quite apparent however that Marcel and Gilson are using the term "Christian philosophy" differently. As Tillich says, the term is ambiguous and can mean on the one hand "a philosophy whose existential basis is historical Christianity" (Systematic Theology I, p. 27): this clearly is the sense in which Marcel understands it. On the other hand, the term can mean "a philosophy which is intentionally Christian" (Ibid, p. 28) Such, evidently, is the way Gilson sees it. Thévenaz's understanding of Christian philosophy is closer to that of Gilson than that of Marcel but, as we shall see later, there are certain irreconcilable differences between Protestant and Catholic philosophy.

¹Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme (Verbum Caro) Neuchâtel, 1950. (pp. 129-137), p. 131 n 1

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¹Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme (Verbum Caro) Neuchâtel, 1950. (pp. 129-137), p. 131 n 1

venaz adds, there can be no such thing as a Christian philosophy which would be the union of philosophy in general with Christianity in general.¹ What philosophy then does Thévenaz have in mind?

In 1942, when he wrote his article "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", (In Extremis), philosophy for him meant above all metaphysics.² He thus wrote: "Aujourd'hui de jeunes théologiens vivent intensément leur foi et leur théologie. Quant à la philosophie, grâce au renouveau récent de la métaphysique, elle retrouve plus que jamais sa source et sa raison d'être."³ The only thing missing, he added, is a dialogue between the two, theology (Protestant, Barthian) and philosophy (metaphysics). His position is substantially the same four years later, as we can see from his article "Situation de la raison critique: essai de philosophie protestante". And in 1950, he is still discussing the question of a rapprochement between "metaphysical philosophy" and "dogmatic theology".⁴ In his writings

¹Ibid

²This was the "new" metaphysics of philosophers such as Bergson, Lavelle, Decoster. This is confirmed by his comments on metaphysics made in his inaugural lesson which he gave, also in 1942, at the University of Neuchâtel. See "Métaphysique et Destinée Humaine", L'Homme: Métaphysique et Transcendance.

³Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne", (In Extremis) p. 91

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 245

after 1950, and up till his death in 1955, there is no indication whatever that he abandons the basic position reached in 1942.

Now the fact that Thévenaz insists on the metaphysical character of philosophy, makes the problem of the reconciliation of Protestantism and philosophy all the more acute. Philosophy as criticism, says Thévenaz, is far easier to cope with (from a Christian point of view) than philosophy as metaphysics; it is clear "que le conflit entre la foi et la raison critique est moins aigu qu'entre la foi et la raison qui a des ambitions métaphysiques ou ontologiques."¹ But if it is these "metaphysical or ontological ambitions" that complicate the matter, why not simply suppress them?

This is William Hordern's solution, and that is why he is optimistic about the dialogue between analytical philosophy and theology. Philosophical analysis, says Hordern, "cannot give additional theological knowledge", whereas other philosophies (for example, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Idealism, etc) claim to do so.² Even existentialism, he adds, pretends to supplement theology's doctrine of man and provide questions about existence which theology must answer.³ Unlike these philosophies (and no doubt Hordern would include

¹Ibid

²Hordern, Op. Cit., p. 185f

³Ibid, p. 186

Thévenaz's metaphysics) analytical philosophy is merely a "tool for thought"¹, and the only possible relation between it and theology is one of "conversation".²

Clearly the presupposition underlying Hordern's thought on this matter is that Protestantism's attitude towards philosophy is essentially one of exclusion. Hordern, theologically a Barthian, agrees with Barth that it is impossible to have an absolute dichotomy between philosophy and theology; a theologian inevitably uses certain terms derived from some philosophy or ontology.³ Nevertheless, even while making this concession, Hordern is adamant that theology cannot admit into "conversation" a philosophy taking the form of a "revisionary metaphysics" (Strawson)⁴ or "first philosophy" (Tillich). Thus while Protestantism might have something to discuss with "descriptive meta-

¹Ibid, p. 199

²Ibid, p. 185

³Hordern, Ibid, p. 198. cf. The Humanity of God, p. 92. cf. Tillich, Systematic Theology I: "The Bible itself" says Tillich, "always uses the categories and concepts which describe the structure of experience. On every page of every religious or theological text these concepts appear: time, space, cause, thing, subject, nature, movement, freedom, necessity, life, value, knowledge, experience, being and not-being. Biblicism may try to preserve their popular meaning, but then it ceases to be theology. It must neglect the fact that a philosophical understanding of these categories has influenced ordinary language for many centuries." Any attempt therefore on the part of biblicism to avoid nonbiblical, ontological terms is "doomed to failure". The systematic theologian, Tillich concludes, must be a "philosopher in critical understanding even if not in creative power". (p. 21)

⁴ Strawson makes the distinction between "revisionary metaphysics" and "descriptive metaphysics", though he himself advocates the latter.

physics", a metaphysics which is "content to describe the actual structures of our thought about the world",¹ it definitely excludes a "revisionary metaphysics", a metaphysics which "seeks to provide variant and more adequate structures of thought".² With Thévenaz's emphasis on the element of "conversion" in metaphysics, it is clear that his philosophy goes beyond the merely "descriptive". Furthermore, in its quest for the absolute "point de départ", it shows its "revisionary" character since, as Horderen says, revisionary metaphysics "attempts to go beyond the convictional situation".³ Without a doubt therefore, Horderen would consider the metaphysics of Thévenaz incompatible with what he conceives Protestantism to be.

But is Horderen right in seeing Protestantism as implacably hostile to philosophy as soon as it would assert any metaphysical ambitions? Does the Protestant perspective really condemn philosophy either to oblivion or at best to some ancillary rôle? This certainly might seem to be the case, especially if certain remarks made by Luther are taken at face value, i.e., apart from any historical or systematic considerations.⁴ As we have observed however

¹Horderen, Op. Cit., p. 193

²Martin, Op. Cit., p. 164

³Horderen, Op. Cit., p. 196

⁴Luther: "There is no greater enemy of grace than Aristotle's ethics." (Quoted by Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 415); "Aristotle's Physics is a completely useless subject for every age...It is just a rhetorical exercise,

in our study of Barth, philosophy attracts the wrath of Protestantism (especially in its Barthian form) to the degree that it takes the form of natural theology. As far as Protestantism is concerned therefore, the real problem is philosophy that sees no discontinuity between itself and the divine; it is against such philosophies, and not philosophy as such, that Protestantism should direct its iconoclasm. As long therefore as metaphysics does not become a philosophy of the Absolute, as long as it realizes that its true patria is "l'en-deçà" and not "l'au-delà", there is no reason why there should be any incompatibility between it and Protestant Christianity.

Now if the exclusion of philosophy means the elimination of philosophies of divine reason, Thévenaz would be the first to lend his support to exclusivism. He would not support it however if it means excluding philosophy as such in order to rid oneself more surely of the God of the philosophers; if Protestantism believes this, says Thévenaz, "il se leurre gravement".¹ But not only would

having no value...His works on Metaphysics and the Soul are of the same quality. It is, therefore, unworthy of (Melancthon's) intellect to wallow in that mire of folly." (Luther's letter to George Spalatin, March 13, 1519. Luther's Works, vol. 48 p. 112); "philosophy is the devil's harlot" (quoted in Martin, Op. Cit., p. 18)

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 324

it be deceiving itself, it would also be making a tragic mistake, for, in dispensing with philosophy, it would deprive itself of an "arme efficace dans le combat de la foi";¹ it would deprive itself of its only means of eliminating those "pseudo-philosophical excrescences"² that constantly tend to attach themselves to the doctrine of God. Thévenaz is insistent that this is philosophy's task (philosophy, of course, that is "mise en question par la folie de la Croix"³), and that is why he talks of philosophy as "nécessaire et indispensable au sein même de la foi...un élément essentiel du combat de la foi."⁴ It is such considerations that explain Thévenaz's rejection of "exclusion" as a solution to the question of the relation between philosophy and Protestantism. Exclusion, to be sure, might have the advantage of clarity and "neatness", but a mere lack of ambiguity in a position can hardly constitute a criterion for committing oneself to it. Besides, the choice of exclusion is inevitably accompanied by an element of bad faith because, as we have noted, whether we like it or not, philosophy enters into theology, and the claim to be free of philosophical prejudices is simply indefensible. Philosophical criticism is therefore needed to

¹Ibid, p. 325

²Ibid, p. 321

³Ibid

⁴Ibid, p. 324

bring to light these prejudices in order that it might be seen whether or not they are injurious or beneficial to theology. That is why, says Thévenaz, it is far preferable for the one who believes in the God of Jesus Christ to philosophize "knowingly" and "consciously" than unwittingly to harbour, perhaps even within his very faith, the God of philosophy.¹ Thévenaz can therefore talk of Protestant philosophy as not only "possible" but also "necessary" within Protestantism.²

Consequently, Thévenaz rejects the exclusivist attitude, not only because of the impossibility of having a "pure" theology, free of all philosophy, but because he considers philosophy "an effective weapon in the fight of faith." Besides, the act of exclusion implies a perfect knowledge of what philosophy is. Perhaps one might be able to say with reasonable assurance what this or that philosophy is, or what philosophy is today. But what about tomorrow? Philosophy is constantly changing. There is no fixed definition of it which is valid for all time; "seule parmi les sciences, la philosophie n'a pas de définition fixe. Chaque philosophe en explicitant sa philosophie redéfinit la philosophie. Il n'y a pas de définition préalable de la philosophie..."³ It is clear there-

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 325

²Thévenaz, "Situation de la raison: essai de Philosophie Protestante", p. 122

³Thévenaz, La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 128

fore that there cannot be a definitive severance of philosophy from theology, and that constantly the question must arise concerning their relationship. If there is any exclusion, says Thévenaz, it can only be "preliminary", never "radical and definitive"; in the interests of specialization it will no doubt be necessary to begin with a "methodological independence", but such a measure is only temporary and is in fact the very condition of "une collaboration fructueuse des deux disciplines".¹ The last word on this matter does not therefore rest with that tradition in the Church, classically represented by Tertullian.² Another solution has to be found. Perhaps the answer lies in the direction of "harmonization".

II. HARMONIZATION

Thévenaz refuses "harmonization" just as firmly as he refuses "exclusion". We recognize, he says, "que nulle exclusion réciproque de la raison et de la foi n'est nécessaire,

¹Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", p. 84f

²"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? The Academy with the Church? Heresy with Christianity?...we must seek the Lord in purity of heart...since Christ Jesus there is no room for further curiosity, since the Gospel no need for further research. If we believe, let us not desire to find further belief." Quoted from De Praescriptione Haereticorum VII, in Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy, A.H. Armstrong & R.A. Markus, (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1960.) cf. Gilson's chapter on "The Primacy of Faith" (pp. 3-33) in Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, (C. Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1948.) Here he talks of the "Tertullian family" and explains that the bond uniting all the members of this family was their condemnation of philosophy and their conviction of the complete self-sufficiency of the Christian revelation.

mais qu'en même temps nulle harmonie n'est possible, ni même souhaitable."¹ His reasons for such a summary dismissal of harmonization become clear from his discussion in "De la Philosophie Divine à la Philosophie Chrétienne"² where he shows what a danger harmonization represents for Christian faith, whether it takes the form of syncretism or of eclecticism.

A. Syncretism

The word syncretism comes from the Greek synkretismos (Plutarch) which originally meant a "federation of Cretan cities" united against a common enemy.³ However, by association through popular etymology with kerannymi, "mix", it came to acquire the meaning "amalgam" or "mélange". Thévenaz therefore defines syncretism as "un accord superficiel et inauthentique d'éléments hétérogènes et disparates dont les différences irréductibles sont estompées."⁴ It is precisely such neglect of "irreducible differences" that impels Thévenaz to dismiss syncretism's claim to be a valid solution to the problem of the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Now the Hellenistic milieu in which Christianity arose was to a large extent dominated by the tendency towards syncretism. Throughout the Levantine world, particularly in

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 253

²Ibid, pp. 267-285

³New Catholic Encyclopedia, "Syncretism"

⁴Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 274n1

Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, elements were being taken from the religions and philosophies then current and adopted into one pattern of thought. From the Iranian religion came the cosmic dualism that forms a basic element of nearly all varieties of Gnosticism. From Egypt came elements of the cult of Isis and Osiris; from Babylonia the influence of astrology and the planetary gods; from Syria, Greece and Rome, cultic features of the mystery religions and magic; from Judaism a host of Old Testament figures and many variations on the creation story; and from Greece, again, the philosophical currents of Stoicism and Neo-Pythagoreanism. Platonism too made its contribution, but only through the medium of later popularizations. And finally, Christianity lent to the syncretistic movement the role of the Saviour Christ.¹

In such a climate, says Thévenaz, philosophy was being radically transformed; it was becoming "philosophie du salut religieux et moral"². One might have thought, in view of this, that Christianity would simply have crowned this syncretistic process by absorbing philosophy altogether. But instead, it came as "une puissance purificatrice et clarificatrice",³ purging philosophy of its "compromissions avec la religion"

¹This summary of the components of Hellenistic syncretism is derived largely from the New Catholic Encyclopedia article "Gnosticism".

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 273

³Ibid, p. 274

and its "prétentions divines".¹ Thus for the first time, "la philosophie est expulsée de l'au-delà, des lieux célestes où circulait le fameux attelage du Phèdre, bannie du monde divin, renvoyée sans façon dans l'ici-bas".² However in effecting this "desyncretization" (a continuing process, one that does not simply occur overnight), Christianity faced a dangerous and delicate task, for somehow it had to get across its message of a salvation that was "tout autre", and the only way it could do this was by coming down to the level of these syncretisms and using their thought forms and their language (koine Greek) "tout imprégnée de ce confusionnisme".³ But in doing this it had to intellectualize its faith, thus giving birth to dogma.⁴

Now while recognizing the necessity and validity of formulating dogma, one must also realize the obvious risks that such a course entails. Once expressed in intellectual form, Christianity finds itself in a sense "de plain-pied"

¹Ibid, p. 273

²Ibid

³Ibid, p. 274

⁴Unlike A. Harnack who considered the development of dogma a falling away from the simplicity of the Gospel, Thévenaz asserts that dogma should not be seen as a perverted or impure form of faith (or of reason). Originally it was the expression, within the syncretistic environment, of a faith that was in its essence anti-syncretist. It became necessary however "de marquer avec toujours plus de netteté et de subtilité le point précis où les voies se séparent entre la foi chrétienne et les spéculations philosophico-religieuses. Le dogme vise à

with the surrounding philosophies; and unless extremely vigilant it might easily yield to the temptation of regarding itself too, as another philosophy. Justin Martyr in fact did just this when he claimed that Christianity was the supreme philosophy, and even Tatian once referred to Christianity as "our philosophy".¹ But is this not a lapse into Gnosticism? If gnosis implies that "les lumières de la foi et celles de la raison s'éclairent mutuellement, s'additionnent simplement",² then the claim that Christianity is philosophy is tantamount to a surrender to the Gnostic outlook. And this remains true even if it is asserted that Christianity is the crowning philosophy.

^p
 Purifier et à sauvegarder la foi, non pas à lui superposer une doctrine. Il est une arme contre l'hérésie." (L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 275) Tillich expresses the opinion that dogma or dogmatics are unusable terms today (in view of the connotations of intolerance and heteronomy that have become attached to them, (Systematic Theology I, p. 32)). There seems no reason however why there should not rather be made an attempt to restore their pristine meaning.

¹"Justin ne dira-t-il pas que le christianisme est 'la seule philosophie sûre et utile'? Tatien, l'apologète anti-philosophe, n'appellera-t-il pas lui aussi sa religion 'notre philosophie'?" (L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 275)

²Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme", (Verbum Caro), p. 135. Such a characterization of gnosis shows that Gnosticism, whether in the broad or narrow sense, (See H. Chadwick, The Early Church, Penguin, 1967, p. 34; cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, "Gnosticism"; cf. R. Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, trans. R.H. Fuller, Fontana Library, 1960, pp. 193ff) is basically syncretistic. Thévenaz's condemnation of syncretism is therefore implicitly a condemnation too of Gnosticism, or for that matter, any form of gnosis whatsoever. Gnosticism's confusion of the realm of faith and the realm of reason follows of course from its anthropology which conceives of man as indwelt by a divine spark descended from the Pleroma, from God Himself.

If such a tendency had prevailed in the Church, Christianity would truly have become a "syncretistic religion" (H. Gunkel) in the pejorative sense that Thévenaz gives it. However, this did not come to be, thanks to the "consciousness of the wholly other" expressed in St. Paul, St. John and in the anti-philosophical Apologists such as Tatian and Tertullian.¹ Furthermore there was taking place in the 2nd century a renaissance of Greek culture in which philosophy was once again becoming cognizant of its specificity. Such a development, Thévenaz says, could only be salutary, for it would tend to repel any tendency on the part of Christianity to claim the title of philosophy "en maintenant devant lui l'image même un peu pâle, d'une philosophie pure et authentique".² The emphasis therefore shifts from syncretism to eclecticism.

B. Eclecticism

Eclecticism, at least in philosophy, was not new. In fact an eclectic process had begun to develop in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. as the Middle Stoa, the Peripatetic School and the Academy moved in the direction of an "eclec-

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 276. In spite of his refusal to join the "Tertullian family", Thévenaz nevertheless acknowledges the validity of his emphasis on the heterogeneity, the "point de rupture", existing between Christianity and philosophy.

²Ibid

tic assimilation" of one another's doctrines.¹ This phenomenon, W. Jaeger explains, was due partly to a reaction against the withering attacks of Sceptic philosophy on all dogmatic philosophy, and against its denial of the possibility of saying anything either true or false. "The Greek mind in a way never recovered from the blow", he says, "but the traditional philosophical schools gradually undertook a strange sort of self-defense by joining forces and concluding a grande alliance to which Platonists, Stoics, Pythagoreans, and (to a lesser extent) Aristotelians made their contribution."² This eclectic process continued on into the Christian era, but became especially prominent in Middle Platonism.³ Thévenaz is thinking of the eclecticism of Middle Platonism or that of the New Academy (represented for example by Antiochus of Ascalon and Cicero) when he asserts that, from the point of view of the specificity of philosophy, eclecticism

¹F. Copleston, History of Philosophy I, 2 (Image Books, New York, 1962), p. 126

²W. Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia, (Harvard University Press, Mass., 1961), p. 42. We see an example of such an alliance in the philosophical activity of Antiochus of Ascalon (died c. 68 B.C.) who revolted against the scepticism of the Middle Academy and preached a "united front" of the positive philosophies against the sceptics and godless Epicureans.

³See Copleston, Op. Cit., pp. 195ff. This movement was represented by such philosophers as Plutarch, Albinus, and Celsus. (This of course is the Celsus who drew the polemic of Origen of Alexandria.)

is decidedly superior to syncretism. For whereas the latter represented the "amalgame d'éléments hétérogènes", the former is "la réunion par juxtaposition de thèses philosophiques conciliables".¹

Christianity's encounter with this "new Hellenism" therefore took place, Thévenaz says, on the plane of eclecticism. The outcome was a Christian humanism which endeavoured to gather all that was best from the different philosophies. Its attitude was that "the spoils of Egypt" were "fair game"! Clement and Origen were the chief advocates of this point of view, but Justin anticipated both of them when he expressed the view: "The truths which men in all lands have rightly spoken belong to us Christians;"² such an utterance, says Gilson, constitutes the "perpetual character of Christian humanism".³ It was the Alexandrians however, rather than Justin, who developed the position that philosophy (and Platonism in particular) acted as a pro-paedeutic leading to Christ. Clement, agreeing with the Stoics that there is a universal reason immanent in humanity, the phronesis,⁴ asserts that philosophy was leading

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 277

²Justin's Second Apology, Chapter 13.

³Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 27

⁴Stromateis VI, pp. 154-155

the Greeks to Christianity just as the law was leading the Hebrews.¹ Origen, a member of a martyr Church, was understandably less sympathetic than Clement towards pagan philosophy and culture, as H. Chadwick points out;² nevertheless he was clearly at one with Clement on this question of the relationship between Christianity and philosophy; he thus wrote: "A man coming to the Gospel from Greek conceptions and training would not only judge that it was true, but would also put it into practice and so prove it to be correct."³ Thus in the case of both Clement and Origen, there is no question of any radical discontinuity between natural and revealed truth. Of course this does not mean that they thought of the human mind in itself as self-sufficient and capable of attaining the full truth; it still needed the Christian revelation for this. Nevertheless, as R. Mehl says: "La révélation chrétienne...le trouve déjà engagé sur la bonne voie."⁴

We can see from this analysis that eclecticism arrives finally at the same position as does syncretism; for in both cases there is continuity between the light of faith and the light of reason. Thus despite the Alexandrian polemic against

¹Stromateis I, p. 28

²Chadwick, Op. Cit., p. 100f

³Origen, Contra Celsum, trans. H. Chadwick, (Cambridge University Press, 1953) Part I, 2.

⁴Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 31

Gnosticism, and its assertion of a "true gnosis" against a false, it seems that the basic premise of Gnosticism remains intact. A major reason for such a defeat, says Thévenaz, is that there was no real confrontation, no real dialogue, between theology and philosophy; philosophy was too feeble for this and consequently faith rode roughshod over it. It played "le rôle de critère de sélection",¹ and then patched together the partial truths that it found; the result, says Thévenaz, was an integration of "truths" that amounted to little more than "a juxtaposition under the patronage of faith".² The danger however of such a harmonization is that philosophy, too weak to really challenge faith, would tend to defuse faith's explosive power by seducing it into becoming a substitute for philosophy. A strong philosophy, a strong reason, is therefore the condition of a vital faith. "Only a theology that does not know the meaning of faith," says G. Ebeling, "can promise itself any benefit for faith from a weakening of reason."³ Alexandrian Christian philosophy therefore marked the triumph of faith over philosophy, of Christianity over paganism; but, as we have seen, this was a Pyrrhic victory: victi victoribus legem dederunt. Therefore in spite of its superiority over syncretism on the pure-

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 278

²Ibid

³Ebeling, Op. Cit., p. 117

ly philosophical plane (as we noted above) eclecticism proves equally inadequate as a key to the problem of "Christian philosophy". The true solution, Thévenaz says, must therefore lie in the direction of "synthesis", though even here, as we shall see, there is danger as long as philosophy and theology are not seen as equal partners in dialogue before God.

III. SYNTHESIS

A. Augustinianism

With Augustine, says Thévenaz, the conditions at last are present for a "veritable synthesis". "Pour la première fois depuis quatre siècles, une forte philosophie et une forte foi s'affrontent et elles s'affrontent dans une même conscience."¹ The "forte philosophie" of course is Neoplatonism, that "last flower of Ancient Philosophy" (Copleston). The reason for its strength lay in the unifying vision of its founder, Plotinus. Reacting against the confusion of the period preceding him, overburdened as it was with "heteroclitite and incoherent elements", he invited man to interior simplification and unification.² What he produced, says Thévenaz, was a "total philosophy" like those of Plato and Aristotle, a philosophy once again "worthy of the name".³ One could "profoundly live" such a philosophy, which explains why it clashed so

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 280

²New Catholic Encyclopedia, "Neoplatonism"

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 280

decisively with Christianity¹ and why it was able to provoke a Christian philosophical synthesis when it encountered the "forte foi" of St. Augustine.

Having come from Neoplatonism to Christianity, Thévenaz writes, Augustine was able to keep vividly in mind the "point de rupture" between the "Dieu connu" of Neoplatonism and the Christian God that the believer "has" or "enjoys" through faith (habere Deum, frui Deo). For this reason, he was able to avoid the "confusionism" and the "disgrace of eclecticism" (Brunschvicg) and attain instead a vital synthesis. Now according to Thévenaz, the absolutely novel element in this synthesis is that the encounter with the God of Jesus Christ leads to the "mise en question" of the God of philosophy without at the same time implying any renunciation of philosophy as such.² Philosophy is transformed however so that faith now becomes reason's "point de départ". This is how Augustine puts it: "Therefore seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."³ In expressing such a view, says Gilson, "Augustine was opening a new era in the history of western thought. No Greek philosopher", he continues, "could have ever dreamt of making religious faith in some revealed truth the ob-

¹From Plotinus to Damascius, says P. Hadot in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, ("Neoplatonism"), Neoplatonism was always anti-Christian.

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 281

³Quoted in Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, p. 19

ligatory starting point of rational knowledge."¹ In such a view faith becomes, not the crown of philosophy, nor its foundation, but rather its "inner light"; or conversely: philosophy becomes "the faith-informed quest of understanding".² This does not mean however that reason is reduced to a state of subordination to faith - which would mean a return to the former tendency to substitute Christianity for philosophy - instead both faith and reason come to bathe in the same "unchangeable Light".

In proposing such a view, says Thévenaz, Augustine becomes the "inventor" of philosophical faith.³ "L'assurance du philosophe repose maintenant sur une foi en la raison."⁴ Thévenaz considers reason "contaminated" however as long as it tolerates any vestige whatever of belief (croyance) or "false" faith.⁵ As he sees it, such toleration constitutes a threat to the autonomy of reason because it implies "abdication" or failure to assume responsibility.⁶ One can therefore understand why Thévenaz expresses misgivings about the Augustinian synthesis.

¹Ibid, p. 17

²Armstrong and Markus, Op. Cit., p. 153

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 294

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid, p. 303

⁶Thévenaz remarks in "Situation de la raison" (p. 120) that responsible action is the deep meaning of the autonomy of reason.

Nevertheless, considering the time in which he lived, Thévenaz is willing to concede that there was perhaps a certain legitimacy then in philosophy's "taking refuge in the arms of the Church and of God".¹ That is why, despite his misgivings, he can still admit the "strength" of the Augustinian position.² He thus talks of it as a synthesis "in spite of everything", and attributes this on the one hand to the strength of Neoplatonism which "saved the Christianity of St. Augustine from philosophical 'confusionism'", and on the other hand, to Augustine's faith which "prevented it from being just another Hellenistic philosophy".³ Since those far-off days, however, philosophy has seen the revolutions of Aquinas, of Descartes, of Kant, of modern existentialism, and through them it has come to learn that something quite different is expected of it.⁴ That is why today there can be no excuse for maintaining a "philosophical faith" (a danger to both philosophy and Christian faith), and why modern attempts, such as those of H. Dooyeweerd and F. Brunner, to restore the Augustinian synthesis of faith and reason can only provoke astonishment.⁵ One would have

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 304

²Ibid, p. 281

³Ibid, p. 282

⁴Ibid, p. 304

⁵H. Dooyeweerd conceives of Christianity as changing not only the "state" of philosophy (as J. Maritain and E. Gilson for example hold) but also its "nature". Dooyeweerd, says

to conclude that they have not taken with sufficient seriousness the Christian experience as expressed by Paul in I Corinthians, for if they had they would have recognized that it entails the autonomy of reason and the end of philosophical faith; they would have seen that "l'exigence de la foi chrétienne et l'exigence la plus radicale de la raison sont associées pour tenir en échec ensemble la foi philosophique".¹

Fidelity to the Christian "expérience-choc": this finally is the standard by which Thévenaz judges the history of philosophy. We have seen how Augustinianism fares under this critique; we must now see to what extent Thomism measures up to this exacting standard.

Freeman, "is not satisfied to use the term 'Christian philosophy' to refer to a Christian state of philosophy. Dooyeweerd would transform the very essence of philosophy into a Christian philosophy, a philosophy which employs religious dogma in its inner fabric." (Freeman, Op. Cit., p. 133) In fact, he even goes so far as to assert that "the Augustinian synthesis between faith and reason is not simply a voluntary choice made by the philosopher, but it is a necessary choice, one which is unavoidable to the non-Christian, as well as to the Christian". (Ibid, p. 57) In the same spirit, F. Brunner envisages the unity of faith and reason in terms of "l'intelligence spirituelle" (F. Brunner, Op. Cit., p. 164) By this, Brunner explains, is meant neither fideism nor rationalism; (Ibid, p. 165) instead, what is aimed at is a perspective that draws its inspiration, not from modern existentialist or phenomenological thought which ultimately are ineffective in the defence of religious truth (A. de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 213), nor from medieval Aristotelianism which limited knowledge to the quiddity of the sensible; (F. Brunner, Op. Cit., p. 143), but from antiquity and the early Middle Ages (particularly Augustine) which saw the "Idea in itself" as the proper object of the intellect (Ibid, pp. 137f, 142f) and which had the "audacity" to combine the understanding and faith in the unity of truth. (Ibid, p. 165)

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 304

B. Thomism

Throughout the period when Augustinianism dominated western thought, there was no duality of faith and reason, nor was there any separation of theology and philosophy. There was only one wisdom, and this lay in the rational understanding of faith. All this changed however with the arrival in the West of Aristotle's philosophy (in Latin translations from the Greek or the Arabic). Again, as in the case of Augustine, the conditions were right for the creation of a genuine synthesis: a strong philosophy encountering a strong faith in a single consciousness. The single consciousness was that of Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican and Doctor of the Church. And what he created was not a synthesis "par fusion" as with Augustine, but rather a synthesis "par distinction".¹ That is, he clearly distinguished between the realm of nature and the realm of supernature, the first being the domain of reason and philosophy, the second that of faith and theology. Such a distinction of course shatters the Augustinian "fusion", but it does so without going to the extreme of Averroism, which sets reason in conflict with faith, though without repudiating one or the other.² Such a position

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, p. 281

²According to Latin Averroism (a philosophical movement originating in Paris in the 13th century) there were many philosophical conclusions that contradicted revealed truth. Unwilling however to call either in question, the Averroists

Aquinas considered "impossible".¹ In his view, "to say that the conclusions of Averroës were rationally necessary, but not necessarily true, was to empty the word 'truth' of all meaning."² Against such a view Aquinas therefore maintains that natural knowledge cannot be contrary to divine revelation because God is the source of both.³ Even in distinction therefore, there is still unity.

Thévenaz's reaction to Aquinas' synthesis is somewhat mixed. On the one hand he praises it for maintaining the autonomy of reason. To take such a position, according to Thévenaz, is to recognize the true import

felt that it was possible, as philosophers, to consider the conclusions of philosophy as "the necessary results of philosophical speculation", and as Christians, "to believe that what Revelation says on such matters is true; thus, no contradiction will ever arise between philosophy and theology, or between Revelation and reason." (Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, p. 57) Such a position was quite understandably seen as tantamount to a doctrine of "double truth". Gilson considers such a designation philosophically though not historically justified: "Not a single one among these men," says Gilson, "would have ever admitted that two sets of conclusions, the one in philosophy, the other in theology, could be, at one and the same time, both absolutely contradictory and absolutely true." (Ibid, p. 58) Gilson's final estimate of the Latin Averroists is that they kept philosophy and Revelation "with a watertight separation between them" because they were like "so many men who cannot reconcile their reason with their faith, and yet want them both..." (Ibid)

¹Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, p. 78

²Ibid, p. 80

³See Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, Chapter VII

of Christianity. He therefore says of the Thomist philosophy: "La philosophie conquérirait donc, par l'exigence chrétienne qui travaillait en elle (my italics), quelque chose d'inappréciable, que la philosophie grecque n'avait pas connu et n'avait eu nul besoin de connaître: l'autonomie de la raison naturelle."¹ Furthermore, he praises it for making such a clear distinction between philosophy and Christianity, a distinction implied by Aquinas' principle that it is impossible for faith and science to be directed towards the same object.² In Thomism therefore, Thévenaz writes, and in the most unequivocal fashion, "la philosophie ne se prend désormais plus pour une religion, ni le christianisme pour une philosophie".³ Despite these positive elements in the thought of Aquinas however, there remains much that is unsatisfactory. If God is still taken to be the source of natural knowledge (see above), then as with Augustine, "Dieu continue à jouer le rôle de fondement et de soutien de l'ordre rationnel".⁴ As with the Greeks therefore, it still goes without saying that "la pensée rationnelle est...dans l'être".⁵ It can be said of Thomism consequently that it "incarnait les assurances

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 295

²Ibid

³Ibid, p. 282

⁴Ibid, p. 295

⁵Ibid

grecques renforcées par le Dieu chrétien".¹ According to Thévenaz, however, rational assurances can neither be naive (as in Greek philosophy) nor founded on God (as in Augustine, Aquinas, and even Descartes with his "divine guarantee" of the veracity of knowledge); the exigencies of philosophy cannot allow this; assurances can only be sought "à l'intérieur de la philosophie autonome"; i.e., they must be philosophically founded.² "Dieu peut tout fonder," says Thévenaz, "sauf une philosophie!"³ In order to be faithful therefore to the Epistle to the Corinthians, it was necessary to surpass the Thomist synthesis. The whole question had to be taken up again ab ovo in order to "extirper de la philosophie tout ce qui de près ou de loin relevait d'une croyance ou s'enracinait dans une foi".⁴ This task fell to René Descartes and to a large extent, as we saw in Chapter Two, he succeeded where Aquinas had failed.

Another approach to the problem of understanding Thomism might be to consider the Neo-Thomist synthesis of faith and reason. (Our chief source will be E. Gilson, but we shall also take into account other, similar points of view, for example that of R. Mehl) Such a discussion will serve as the best introduction to our final section, which will attempt to define and evaluate the Protestant philosophy of Thévenaz.

¹Ibid, p. 297

²Ibid, p. 296

³Ibid

⁴Ibid

As we have already had occasion to note, Catholicism does not go so far as Protestantism in asserting the total corruption of the reason, but it does recognize the severe damage done to it by the Fall and thus talks of it as having suffered a wound grave et acerbum. (Pius IX) Now this wound needs healing and Catholicism goes on to talk of the need of "divine intervention",¹ of a stella rectrix.² Pope Pius IX therefore stated that even though the natural disciplines are founded on their own principles such as the reason knows them, nevertheless "il faut...que les catholiques qui les cultivent aient devant les yeux la révélation divine comme une étoile conductrice".³ Now if the divine revelation, or faith, acts as a "guiding star", does this mean, for example in its relation to philosophy, that it prescribes the "objective direction" of philosophy? No, says A. de Muralt, it means that faith determines its "spirit" and traces its "external limits". In other words, it guides and inspires philosophy, without destroying it (in spite of what Bertrand Russell for example thinks). Let us however take a somewhat closer look at the Catholic position.

The relation of faith to reason is conceived by Catholicism as faith "informing" reason. Now the word "informs"

¹Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 112

²Ibid, p. 140

³Quoted, Ibid

means to imbue, pervade, fill (with a quality, etc.); it therefore implies an immediacy, a directness. A. de Muralt confirms this when he writes: "C'est l'être même de l'intelligence et de la volonté comme puissances naturelles de la créature humaine, que la foi informe immédiatement et ordonne à un exercice divin".¹ Gilson stresses the "immediacy" of this relationship (thereby supporting de Muralt's contention that in Catholicism faith determines the "spirit" of philosophy) when he talks of Christianity descending into philosophy, reforming it "from within" and reviving it;² or when he says that "theological values" enter into the reason of the meditating philosopher.³ In fact he even goes so far as to talk of certain "fundamental principles" (taught by the Church) "impregnating" thought and "informing" it from within "au point de ne plus faire qu'un avec elle, de vivre en elle et par elle, comme une greffe qui tire à soi toute la sève de l'arbre pour lui faire porter ses fruits".⁴ The latter quotation, with its emphasis on the intimacy of the faith and reason synthesis ("comme une greffe..."), makes us understand why Gilson can talk of a "Christian exercise of the reason".⁵ What this means, says de Muralt, is that

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 53

²Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 163

³Ibid, p. 168

⁴Ibid, p. 165

⁵Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 12

the works of the reason can no longer be conceived as "autonomous" but rather as "Christian", though not only "accidentally" simply because they are the works of a Christian, but "fundamentally" "parce qu'elles sont oeuvres d'un chrétien dont tous les actes désormais sont informés, ou du moins illuminés, par sa foi".¹ Faith therefore becomes an "infused virtue"² which informs the reason, by "incarnating itself" within it, thereby becoming existentially identified with it.³

Such intimate identification of faith and reason, it might be argued, would surely be deleterious to either faith or reason, or perhaps to both of them. On the contrary, says Gilson; faith, or the mystery of revelation which it mediates, suffers in no way, it loses none of its transcendence, by being so intimately fused with the existential activity of the reason. The integration of dogmatic truth with philosophy therefore means, not any rationalization of mystery, but a "rationalization of reality carried out by a reason made acquainted with a mystery by faith".⁴ As for the reason, not only is it not harmed by this relationship, rather it is greatly enhanced by it!

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 52

²Ibid, p. 53 n 1

³Ibid, p. 52

⁴Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 484. Gilson illustrates this by pointing out that the philosophy of Aristotle never served to "explain" transubstantiation, but rather to make clear what is required if transubstantiation is to take place.

Philosophy might become the ancilla of theology, says Gilson,¹ in the sense that there is a "real subordination",² but this is a relationship which not only improves the quality of one's philosophizing (as Leo XIII stressed in his Encyclical of 1879, Aeterni Patris), but also saves the philosopher many "costly and sterile experiences".³ Furthermore, revelation aids reason by opening up "transcendent perspectives" (thanks to certain dogmas such as the Incarnation) which can lead to philosophy's unparalleled enrichment.⁴ The debilitas rationis is overcome therefore; philosophy is "saved"⁵ by being brought into this intimate relationship with faith. In being strengthened however, in being saved, the reason remains itself and so does philosophy. Gilson is most emphatic on this point. That is why he talks of the supernatural descending "as a constitutive element" into the "work of its (i.e., philosophy's) construction", but not into its "texture" which, he adds, "would be a contradiction".⁶ He thus maintains the distinction of the orders of faith and reason, even while emphasizing the need for

¹Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, p. 132

²Ibid, p. 135

³Ibid, p. 167

⁴Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 485

⁵Gilson, Christianisme et Philosophie, pp. 141, 154

⁶Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 37

the integration of a "philosophy of nature" and a "theology of supernature" into a coherent system.¹ Hence Thévenaz's designation of the Thomist position: "Synthèse par distinction".

The position of R. Mehl is not altogether unlike that of Gilson. There are certain important differences though. This is clear from his criticism of Gilson who, he says, proclaims the possibility of a philosophy on the basis of the restored or cured nature of man.² One can speak, says Gilson, "d'une nature guérie, d'un homme guéri, d'une raison et d'une philosophie guéries".³ Mehl takes exception to these remarks because they imply that the "new creature" is an "anthropological reality", "une réalité ayant déjà pris sa place dans l'histoire des hommes".⁴ What is missing in such a position, says Mehl, is the eschatological perspective; man is only a "new creature" in hope.⁵ Mehl does however wish to assert that the believer is in some sense a

¹Ibid, p. 423

²Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 144

³Quoted Ibid, p. 145

⁴Ibid, p. 149

⁵Ibid. To the same effect Emil Brunner denies that the assertions of faith are "illuminating". Nevertheless, he adds, "faith knows of a future solution which by the grace of God shines beforehand into the present". (E. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. Farrer and B.L. Woolf, I. Nicholson & Watson, London, 1937, p. 96) Such a position would of course call in question the view of an R.F. Aldwinckle who says: "Our only concern is to preserve for the Christian in philosophy or the Christian exercise of reason the right to introduce illuminating metaphysical ideas from the specifically Christian source..." (R.F. Aldwinckle, "Is there a Christian Philosophy?" (pp. 233-242) in Religious Studies, Vol. 2, 1966/67 p. 240)

new creature, that there is a real renewal of the understanding, thanks to God's grace. This renewal is after all a "living promise"¹ which means that it must in some way affect the present. Mehl is right in seeking to attribute to the believer a real "newness", a real renewal of the mind, since, as he says, "l'homme nouveau est plus réel que l'homme ancien".² A danger however lies in this direction, the danger of coming to see the "new creature" as an "experimental reality",³ such as Gilson does; nevertheless Mehl does seem to avoid going too far in this direction, by stressing the eschatological perspective (thereby excluding any theologia gloriae) and by making remarks such as the following: "ce qui compte réellement pour notre destinée, c'est moins ce que nous sommes dans notre réalité empirique que la parole qui est prononcée sur nous."⁴

Thévenaz lauds Mehl for bringing attention to the eschatological element.⁵ Nevertheless, after indicating the many positive aspects in Mehl's work, Thévenaz reproaches him for failing to do justice to the legitimate demands of philosophy: "après avoir heureusement restaurée les exigences de la foi et de la théologie, il

¹Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 165

²Ibid, p. 177

³Ibid, p. 148

⁴Ibid, p. 151

⁵Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme" (Verbum Caro), p. 133f

n'entend pas faire de même pour la philosophie."¹ If philosophy "leans back upon" or "refers to" dogmatics,² or if there is any question of its "'submission to dogmatics'",³ who can fail to see, says Thévenaz, that "philosophiquement la partie est perdue?...la philosophie deviendra ancilla theologiae et le spectre de la gnose (que justement la reconnaissance de la 'tension eschatologique' et le refus de toute theologia gloriae avaient si heureusement écarté) ressurgit immédiatement"⁴. Thévenaz refers to several other passages in Mehl which make a similar emphasis⁵ and concludes: Does not R. Mehl show his true colours "lorsqu'il souscrit au jugement de Gilson qui écrit qu'un philosophe chrétien est un penseur qui, loin de croire pour se dispenser de comprendre, pense trouver dans la foi qu'il accepte un bénéfice net pour sa raison".⁶ Si la Révélation apporte à la philosophie une intelligibilité supérieure, une 'source plus grande de lumière et d'intelligibilité; si le contenu même de sa philosophie peut être

¹Ibid, p. 134

²Ibid, p. 135. See Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 184

³Ibid, p. 134

⁴Ibid, p. 135

⁵See Mehl, Op. Cit., pp. 20, 25, 183

⁶Ibid, p. 183 n 1

rendu intelligible par la Révélation biblique',¹ ne sommes-nous pas retombés en pleine gnose...?"² Gnosis! This is Thévenaz's final assessment of Mehl's "Christian philosophy" and by implication, that too of E. Gilson. Both fail to achieve a real confrontation between philosophy and theology because both are unwilling to recognize the demands of philosophy. Instead of a synthesis therefore, all that has been achieved is harmonization -at the expense of philosophy! In the long run however, neither philosophy nor theology gain from harmonization or compromise - there can be mutual benefit, there can be true synthesis, Thévenaz insists, only when there is a genuine confrontation. But confrontation is possible only when the demands of both faith and reason are fully recognized. Does Thévenaz himself recognize these demands in constructing his "Protestant philosophy"? Does he really achieve a new synthesis? This is our final question.

IV. A NEW SYNTHESIS: PROTESTANT PHILOSOPHY

In his discussion of the relation between Barthian theology and philosophy, Thévenaz expresses the view that the raison d'être of both theology and philosophy is to strive for "purity".³ In theology this means that the attempt

¹Ibid, p. 26

²Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 135

³Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", p. 82

should be made to reply as fully as possible to the demands of faith; in philosophy, it is the demands of thought or reason that must be satisfied. Now at the time of writing this article (1942) Thévenaz was of the opinion that Barth had in fact brought theology to an unprecedented level of purity. In doing this however, Barth had found it necessary to sever all theology's attachments to philosophy, but in spite of this it is "most likely", says Thévenaz, that Barth has created, whether he likes it or not, "les conditions nécessaires à une collaboration fructueuse des deux disciplines".¹ Perhaps, Thévenaz suggests, this is the meaning one can attribute to those "remarkable" words of Barth: "Die Theologie kann der Philosophie notorisch erst von dem Augenblick an interessant werden, wo sie ihr nicht mehr interessant sein will..."² Thus, by being true to itself, Barth's theology has proved to be a real challenge to philosophy, a "réalité rugueuse", says Thévenaz. Barthianism, he avers, constitutes "la mise en question la plus radicale de la méthode philosophique. Après Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche ou Chestov, Barth est celui chez qui s'affirme

¹Ibid, p. 85

²Quoted Ibid, from "Offenbarung, Kirche, Theologie", (Theologische Existenz Heute), p. 9; 1934, pp. 35-36. cf. Barth's remarks in Evangelical Theology p. 11: "Strange to say, the surrounding world only recommenced to take notice of theology in earnest (though rather morosely) when it again undertook to consider and concentrate more strongly upon its own affairs. Theology," Barth continues, "...will always stand on the firmest ground when it simply acts according to the law of its own being."

le plus nettement aujourd'hui 'la lutte contre les évidences'..."¹ Theology, Thévenaz concludes, has therefore replied in full to the demands of faith and in doing so has opened the door to a new era of dialogue and collaboration. Philosophy too has achieved a high level of purity, thanks to the renewal of metaphysics; so all that remains, says Thévenaz, is to "open the dialogue".²

Thévenaz insists on the term "dialogue" because of its implicit negation of totalitarianism. In genuine dialogue there is mutual respect for the other's independence, but this independence is threatened (in the case of philosophy) when theologians such as Mehl would make dogmatics the "touchstone" of the truth of philosophy.³ On the other hand, the independence or autonomy of theology is challenged when philosophers for example propose to put Jesus on the same plane as the "great initiates", or when they would identify the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the god of philosophy; or when, like L. Brunschvicg, they would substitute a "God of differential equations" for the "prelogical" God of Isaiah and Paul: when philosophy can offer no more than this, it is no wonder, says Thévenaz, that many a theologian returns to his dogmatics, convinced that philosophy is "une

¹Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", p.

²Ibid, p. 91

³Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme", p. 135. See Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 25

machination subtile de l'Antéchrist".¹ The concept of dialogue however counteracts this tendency towards totalitarianism, because it implies what Thévenaz calls "reciprocal autonomy". The problem therefore is to be totally committed without becoming totalitarian.

But what value is there in a dialogue between philosophy and theology? In part five ("Vers une Philosophie Protestante") of his article "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme", Thévenaz points out that this value consists not so much in what one gets from the other, but in what one is refused.² He does not elaborate this point but there can be no doubt that he has in mind the sort of refusal that is implied by the Biblical accusation of folie, or by a philosophical criticism of the believer's claim to possess a knowledge of God that escapes all external criteria. The dialogue of philosophy and theology therefore amounts to "une mise en question réciproque" in which "le regard de l'autre rend chacune plus problématique à ses propres yeux et la ramène ainsi à une plus juste conscience de ce qu'elle est".³ An increased self-awareness, a deeper grasp of their specificity, is the end result of a philosophy entering into dialogue with theology. Each becomes purer through the encounter. But this will lead to confrontation at an even deeper level of sincerity. Thus, what is gained from dialogue is the power to

¹Thévenaz, "Théologie Barthienne et Philosophie", p. 86

²Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme", p. 136

³Ibid

engage even more authentically in further dialogue. Dialogue therefore creates dialogue. This is the value of dialogue.

According to Thévenaz however the dialogue must finally become internalized in a single consciousness, the consciousness of the "believing philosopher". Otherwise, he adds, there never will be a synthesis. This does not mean however that the dialogue now takes place between the believer and the philosopher in us, as though there were two personalities within struggling for supremacy,¹ nor does it mean that there is a conflict between faith and reason as though they were two competing "faculties of the mind" (even though in an abstract discussion of this question it is impossible to avoid giving the impression that they are in fact two such "faculties" in competition). No, says Thévenaz, "Foi et raison ne sont pas deux entités extérieures à moi. En réalité il n'y a que moi croyant et moi raisonnant et, si je suis authentique croyant et authentique intellectuel, c'est chaque fois moi-même tout entier."² Faith and reason, in Thévenaz's view, as A. de Muralt puts it, are "coextensive with the totality of man", diverging only in their intentionality, faith being man's orientation towards God, and reason his focus upon his own consciousness.³ Thus when Thévenaz talks of the dialogue

¹Ibid

²Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 259 cf. 243, and La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 149. D. Bonhoeffer expresses a somewhat similar view when he talks of faith as embracing my whole reality. (meine ganze Wirklichkeit einvernehmend) (Ebeling, Op. Cit., p. 119)

³de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 50

between faith and reason, as though faith were on one side facing reason on the other, he warns that we must avoid seeing ourselves as spectators of a play in which the dramatis personae are faith and reason: "Ces personifications, ces masques ne sont qu'un moyen plastique de nous représenter le drame qui se déroule à l'intérieur d'une conscience d'intellectuel...De me fabula narratur."¹ The problem therefore is not to effect some abstract reconciliation between faith and reason, as though they were exterior to us, but to respond as "believing intellectuals" to the call of God implicit in Paul's condemnation of human wisdom. When the dialogue is thus internalized, says Thévenaz, one comes to understand that these "opposed and irreducible" demands of faith and reason are not the "grasping concern to safeguard one's rights vis-à-vis the other, but a struggle with oneself in the tension between the judgment and the promise of the Cross."² Thévenaz warns that the struggle will be hard, since the responsibility of a Christian intellectual or believing philosopher places him "at a sort of crossroads of temptations and possible betrayals";³ it is one thing therefore to believe in God, yet quite another to believe as an intellectual, i.e., to bring faith within the domain of one's intellectual activity.⁴ What makes this so arduous a task is the fact

¹Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 259

²Thévenaz, "L'Affrontement de la Philosophie et du Christianisme", p. 137

³Thévenaz, L'Homme et sa Raison, Ip. 265

⁴Ibid, p. 257

that this "incorporation" of faith must be achieved without any loss of autonomy on the part of the intellect. That is why Thévenaz insists so vigorously on the autonomy of reason. However, we will remember that autonomy for Thévenaz is to be understood in terms of response and responsibility; that is why this insistence on autonomy is less an assertion of the rights of reason, than an effort on Thévenaz's part to exercise his responsibility when confronted with the demands of the Christian message. It is A. de Muralt's opinion however that this assertion of the autonomy of reason in its relation to faith is governed by the fact that he is basically a Nominalist.¹ For Nominalism, de Muralt explains, there can be no question of the incarnation of faith in the understanding (as there is in Thomism); instead there usually develops a tendency towards fideism, a "fidéisme sans intelligence". (F. Brunner) Thévenaz however avoids such a position by means of his concept of "the unity of faith and reason in a relationship of dialectical mediation",² i.e., a relationship in which there is mutual dependence and independence.³ It is a Nominalist structure of thought however,

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., pp. 58, 60

²Ibid, p. 80

³We see an example of dialectical mediation in Thévenaz's assertion that the reason experiences the "illumination" (éclaircissement) of faith, though without being drawn into its "orbit". (La Condition de la Raison Philosophique, p. 149) Here there is both dependence and independence. Similarly, as regards faith, we see that it can be enriched by reason though without being reduced to a state of dependence. As the reason attains deeper

de Muralt insists, that in the final analysis determines "the dialectical movement of the philosophy of Pierre Thévenaz and its extremely original solution to the problem of the relationship between faith and reason".¹ Our comments above however on "responsibility" and the fact that Thévenaz considers Christianity, or rather the Christian "expérience-choc", to be the source of the autonomy of philosophy, would tend to refute the view of de Muralt. We must therefore see his insistence on the autonomy of reason as, not so much an attempt to assert a philosophical presupposition derived from the Nominalist tradition, but as a reflection of his endeavour to be faithful to his Christian experience.

The Protestant philosophy that we see emerging can now be seen as one that is truly philosophical and truly Christian: it is philosophical because it is characterized by autonomy and inwardness (or reflection); it is Christian because it represents an attempt to elucidate the "conscience

levels of "conscience de soi", it provides faith with "un contenu...un champ où le croyant pourra exercer sa vocation de réponse". (Ibid, p. 150) Nevertheless faith retains its distinctiveness in view of the fact that it is defined as being essentially the expression of man's consciousness of his relation to Christ. (Ibid, p. 133) In this sense, says de Muralt, "la foi n'a rien à faire avec la raison; elle est au sens strict non-raison". (de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 50)

¹de Muralt, Op. Cit., p. 60

de soi" which is born out of confrontation with the Cross of Christ. Such a philosophy is clearly capable of satisfying both Protestants and philosophers. Some philosophers however tend to be wary of any talk of Christian philosophy; they are afraid that philosophy would be compromised by being allied in this way with religious faith. Jaspers and Heidegger for example consider a philosophy "open to revelation" a contradictory concept and a danger to one's Existenz. Tillich likewise contends that a Christian philosophy is a "self-contradicting ideal".¹ His reason for adopting such a position is that he considers a synthesis of faith and philosophy a heteronomous determination by the Church of the direction and limits of philosophy; but such an imposition, he argues, means death to the philosophical erōs. A synthesis is therefore unacceptable because there is "nothing in heaven and earth, or beyond them, to which the philosopher must subject himself except the universal logos of being as it gives itself to him in experience".² However, against such a view, Thévenaz argues that philosophy loses nothing of its autonomy by being open to Christianity, but on the contrary discovers its veritable autonomy in this relationship; and what is more, by encountering "Another" it breaks through its shell of autism and becomes "consciente

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology I, p. 28

²Ibid

de soi", hence more truly itself, more truly philosophical. Protestants on the other hand would tend to fear that faith would be compromised by being brought into synthesis with philosophy. Those Protestants who follow Barth in rejecting all forms of natural theology, are bound to have some qualms about Thévenaz's insistence on the metaphysical character of philosophy; but, as we have already noted, the metaphysics he envisages has nothing in common with the aims of natural theology, seeing that he opposes divine reason and philosophies of the Absolute; besides, the whole philosophical enterprise is clearly compatible with a theology of grace in view of the fact that it was grace, manifesting itself in the shocking words of Paul, that gave it its initial impulse.

Our conclusion then must be that Thévenaz has gone beyond Barth and the Protestant tradition that he represents, though without going against them. Thévenaz has in fact proved that philosophy is possible within the Barthian and hence Protestant perspective. He goes further however than saying merely that philosophy is possible within Protestantism; he insists that it is necessary.¹ Now while recognizing the validity of these assertions, we must nevertheless bear in mind that the project to construct a Protestant

¹Thévenaz, "Situation de la raison: essai de Philosophie Protestante", p. 122; See also L'Homme et sa Raison I, p. 325 where he refers to philosophy as an "effective weapon in the fight of faith".

philosophy is one which is faced with many ^{dangers}~~changes~~ and temptations. Perhaps the greatest temptation of all is to lose sight of what Mehl calls the "existential situation of the Christian philosopher".¹ But what precisely is this situation? It is that the Christian philosopher lives in the time of the Church, in the time of expectation, of hope. In other words, his situation is "eschatological". This means that truth lies, not in our grasp (as F. Brunner for example would like to imagine) but ahead, in the future, and that consequently there must be, as with Paul,² a pressing forward towards the goal "en vue du prix que Dieu nous appelle à recevoir là-haut".³ Only such a perspective, one which exists under the sign of hope, will keep Protestant philosophy from becoming a theologia gloriae; and if it achieves this it will be fulfilling the fundamental aim of Thévenaz's philosophy, which is to be a "philosophy without absolute".

¹Mehl, Op. Cit., p. 198

²Phil. 3:14

³La Bible de Jérusalem

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