



*Ontologically, language and Dasein are mirrors for each other, we can see what our acts of thinking-being are by their expression in language, and we can understand language by an awareness of our acts of thinking-being. Dasein is a thinking that is a being, as language is a thing that is a thought.*

*~Robert P. Scharlemann*

## 7. Note on the Definition of "Theology"

The difference between religion and ideology is seen not only at the ontological level, in the structures that prefigure and determine existence prior to all factual symbol systems, but also in the theological language that takes up and elaborates the existential polemic. In order to present this difference as a tension which can seek faithful expression in theology, however, a sufficiently comprehensive definition of "theology" is necessary. While there may well be as many understandings of theology as there are theologians, it is still possible to evolve a sense of the term which does justice to common usage and yet grants the latitude for theology to bring both religion and ideology to language. If "theology" is to receive authentically inquisitive thematic attention, however, it is methodologically necessary to disrupt the tranquilized understanding of the they-self, which either does not care what theology is or is already satisfied that it knows what theology is. The they-self is disrupted by calling its ideology's "theology" into question in the course of a hermeneutic investigation.

Despite differences in definition, all understandings of theology belong to the *tradition* of theology. One of the traditional formulations of the definition of theology is "faith seeking understanding," a translation of the Latin *fides quaerens intellectum*. This phrase has been chosen because of its prominent place in the tradition and, by implication, in our ontology of theology. It has already determined understandings of theology for generations by giving the words; what these words say in the present situation, however, is a matter of interpretation. For clarity, a general interpretation of "theology" is called for prior to the rudimentary ontological analysis of the four situations of the theology suggested below.

In the opening pages of a discussion of Anselm's proof of the existence of God, Karl Barth finds it apposite to discuss Anselm's understanding of the phrase *fides quaerens intellectum*. Barth's treatment is especially useful as a reference point which gives a traditional conception of the formula that spearheaded scholasticism. Anselm clearly thought that the rational path of theological thinking had two purposes, to prove theological propositions by reason and to make people happy that reason was able to do these things. This, says Barth, is what faith wants. Barth argues in Anselm's name against the idea that rational proof was a substitute for faith or that faith

could be created by such exhibitions. Reason is no more a matter of necessity for faith than God is governed by necessity, Barth's Anselm says.

Barth's position is set forth when he writes, "It is my very faith that summons me to knowledge."<sup>1</sup> The knowledge that Barth is speaking of is knowledge of God, which is problematical but possible wherever traditional metaphysics reigns. Within that framework, there can be posited a correspondence between the thinking of one who is led by grace faithfully to seek God and the Being of God, which is held to be both knowable and incomprehensible. Theological knowledge is true because it is an expansion of the creeds; if it questions them or denies them, then it ceases to be faithful and loses its claim to truth, reports Barth. Even though theological statements may be true, they are not final truth for Anselm, if for no other reason than the incommensurability of imperfect human knowledge and the perfect God. In Anselm's view, God decides what shall be revealed and what shall stay concealed at any given time.

Like the Heideggerian divinities, Anselm's God is not to be found initially present-at-hand. Writes Barth with a sympathetic assurance whose ontic basis is not readily apparent to the reader, "This remoteness is clearly an objective remoteness of God himself — God is absent, he dwells in light inapproachable."<sup>2</sup> What Anselm wants is for this absent God to show himself to thought and guide it to truth.

We see in this attitude something different from the worn caricature of the confident, calculating, Scholastic system-builder, but when all is said and done, correction of the old stereotype turns out to be mostly a matter of incidental interest. The belief in divinely guided reason as the way to truth determines that the results of an Anselmian meditation will look very nearly the same as if autonomous reason alone had built the metaphysical system; reason will have performed about the same operations on the same creeds and the joy at glimpsing the truth of the faith, even if it be recognized as a partial truth, will also probably be about the same. Even more radically than Aquinas, Anselm's faith in the God who reveals gives him faith in an *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. This *adaequatio* operates as the basis of systematic theology from Origen onward. As Heidegger summarizes it, preserving much of Anselm's basic outlook, in his early essay, "Phenomenology and Theology,"