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**ENCOUNTERING GOD IN THE  
THEOLOGIES OF  
PAUL TILLICH AND KARL RAHNER**

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Widely regarded as the most influential theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner are existentialists rooted in the tradition of classical German idealism.<sup>1</sup> Although they come from two different religious traditions, both of them are principally interested in the interrelationship of humanity and God. In this paper I explore that interrelationship as it is reflected in Paul Tillich's ontological approach and Karl Rahner's anthropological one.<sup>2</sup> For both theologians, divine transcendence is at once the ground of being itself and beyond human comprehension, and a matter of ultimate concern, a goal of one's life quest. This transcendence is manifested in a person's yearning for truth

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and meaning in life. Since for both theologians a person's existence cannot be divorced from God, they start by positing a natural relationship between God and the human subject. While both view philosophy as a means to discover the truth, both also hold that this truth rests in the Christian revelation of God. A key question for each is "How does the question of God arise and come into being?" While Rahner approaches this question by positing that we are metaphysically constituted, and applies the principle of transcendence, Tillich understands our relationship to God in the context of existential crisis and applies the method of dialectics. Moreover, Tillich's emphasis on the ontology of the world contrasts with the central role of human pre-apprehension in Rahner. I contend that while both theologians situate the question of God in the context of human experience, differences in their principles and methods lead them to markedly different conceptions of God and the world.

#### **Tillich and the Ontology of the World**

Paul Tillich was born in 1886 in a Germany suffused with Romanticism. In Tübingen, Halle, and Berlin he studied the philosophy of Fichte and Kant, and was deeply influenced by Martin Heidegger's existentialism, in which he sought to synthesize the philosophical and theological legacies of Hegel, Schelling, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.

The goal of Tillich's theology is to make Christianity comprehensible to skeptical people from a non-religious background. Believing that theology has an obligation to address itself to the contemporary mind, he reinterpreted traditional issues of systematic theology in the light of historical-cultural context (situation) and Christian message (truth).<sup>3</sup> He founded his theology on the interrelationship between these two axes and called it the *method of correlation*. His approach is apologetic and seeks to satisfy two overarching needs: the need to clarify the truth of the Christian message and the need for every generation to interpret that truth. For Tillich, eternal truth and the historical context of our human existence are only "in affect" when they are delicately correlated; if they are not correlated, they cease to function.<sup>4</sup> He believed that by correlating existential and theological analysis one is able to overcome the

limitations of discussions caught between fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy on the one hand, and liberalism and humanism on the other.<sup>5</sup>

In searching for the “ultimate concern” of philosophy, Tillich draws principally on the Bible, but he also enlists works of theology, philosophy, church history, and the history of religion. For him the content of revelation does not change, but the understanding of it does. It changes in accordance with how it is received existentially, through the medium of experience. The heart of Tillich’s theological method is the advent of Christ as an experience. If Christian theology is based on the unique event of Christ, and this event is existential in that it derives from experience, then experience becomes the medium through which we receive theological insight.

Tillich is labeled an existentialist: he examines the human predicament and attempts to answer existential questions. He claims that there are two principles in the discipline of theology. First, the object of theology is that which concerns us ultimately or unconditionally (*das, was uns unbedingt angeht*).<sup>6</sup> Second, a statement is theological only if it deals with its object insofar as it is a matter of being or non-being for us.<sup>7</sup> Tillich’s theology is characterized by the coordination of two methodological poles – apologetic and kerygmatic – that determine every possible existential situation.

Tillich saw no conflict between philosophy and theology. He claimed that both disciplines must be pursued to reach truth. However, he also claimed that they have no common basis and cannot be confused. It is the task of philosophy to formulate those existential questions which explain the content of Christian faith and the task of theology to answer them. Philosophy and theology both ask questions of being, but where philosophy deals with the *structure* of being, theology deals with its *meaning* for human beings.<sup>8</sup> They are two poles in the same circular process of questioning and answering.<sup>9</sup>

As Jesus Christ is the New Being that is our only answer to the question of our existential human situation, the present situation of humanity – what Tillich defines as culture – must be the starting point of any attempt to make theology relevant. Applying his *method of correlation*, Tillich engages with the challenges of culture and ventures

to adapt his theological answer to the historical situation they arise from.

### **Encountering God**

Tillich's understanding of ontology and the ground of being was highly influenced by his experience of World War I and World War II. His encounter with human despair and the complicity of political and religious institutions in waging war made him question the traditional concept of God.<sup>10</sup> War qualified his idealism; it prompted him to leave the confines of abstract thought and confront actual lived situations.<sup>11</sup> Our lived existence is negative and estranging for him: the threat of death is constant, and existence becomes fraught with anxiety. The question of being – the ontological question – is produced by the shock of nonbeing, the shock of confronting our mortality. In his analysis of the human predicament in light of the threat to human existence, we can appreciate Tillich's existentialism.<sup>12</sup> The awareness of our nonbeing moves us to desire knowledge and this movement is essential to Tillich's understanding of the divine-human encounter.

Tillich perceived our human existence as constantly threatened by finitude and nonbeing, with the result that we feel meaningless and even sinful. His ontological analysis is influenced by Heidegger: since we are not ourselves the source of our own being, we are endlessly threatened by nonbeing.<sup>13</sup> The ever-present threat of nonbeing leaves us anxiously questing for knowledge and truth. This dynamic of nonbeing and being demonstrates Tillich's use of dialectical methodology. Our experience of, and resistance to, the constant threat of non-being also awakens us to the power of being. For Tillich this power is God. God is our Essence, our ground of Being, and the depth of our reality. God's essence thus includes the principle of our potential unity with God. To demonstrate this dynamic, he refers to the biblical Fall from grace. This was a fall from essence to existence; it entailed the loss of human beings' essential nature—what he calls our "dreaming innocence." The Fall is the preeminent symbolic narrative of the loss of our essential unity with God, of our estrangement from God. Re-uniting with God involves the recovery of our essential humanity, the "essentialization" of our fallen existence.

Our experience of estrangement is not a radical separation from God. We are connected to our real essence, but because of the Fall we are situated in a state of anxious turmoil between the emptiness of nonbeing and the fullness of being. We understand that the Fall has not completely separated us from that fullness, and that our *telos* is to become what God intended us to be – what, before the Fall, we in fact were. Nonbeing, then, becomes for Tillich the negation of that being which truly is.<sup>14</sup> The anxiety occasioned by our awareness of nonbeing both stimulates a desire to actualize that potential and makes us unable to do so. This “double movement” leads us to despair.<sup>15</sup> We understand that our essence is retained in our existence, because in our existence we are aware that we both belong to God and are separate from God. Our existence is therefore a dialectical experience, a question whose answer includes a “no” and a “yes” alike.<sup>16</sup> It is suspended between the poles of being and nonbeing, and its suspension becomes the source of a frustration and anxiety that is inherent in our cognition. While the tension between nonbeing and being can never be fully overcome, humanity holds the potential for sublimation (*Aufhebung*). In the language of dialectics, the “yes” and the “no” form a never-ending discussion that must be continually pursued in order to reach truth.<sup>17</sup> Tillich believed that since our motivation to find truth is our ultimate concern, we already enjoy an authentic relationship to that truth.<sup>18</sup> The questions we must ask are: How, as fallen creatures, are we capable of progressing toward truth? How are we able to attain an awareness of God?<sup>19</sup>

Tillich contends that if God did not become human, humanity would not be able to ask the question of God. Tillich’s revelatory answer to our deprived existence in the quest for truth is Jesus Christ. In other words, without the incarnation we could not receive God’s self-revelation. Christ is the only being who ever presented essential finitude without sustaining any disruption associated with the Fall. In Christ God is present to us in our essential structure in a dialectical way: lost in the Fall and retained through Christ. The incarnation balances the poles of being and nonbeing perfectly, and as a result, revelation becomes a necessary condition for our redemption. Since we are never really apart from our essence, we naturally experience a quest for reintegration, for “essentialization,” and for God.<sup>20</sup>

Humanity's disruptive existence stands in a dialectical relationship with God, a relationship that involves the human spirit in a constant quest for truth. Tillich's entire theology revolves around the conflicted relationship between our disruptive existence and our quest for a solution to our existential dilemma.<sup>21</sup> The yearning to overcome the threat of nonbeing and return to our essential nature forces us to ask the question of our ground of being, our ultimate concern. In other words, the question of our fallen nature initiates the question of God.<sup>22</sup> Such questioning is not optional.<sup>23</sup> The divine-human encounter lies in a person's constant drive towards self-transcendence, a movement toward truth that occurs because of our separation from our essential nature.

Jesus Christ has given us the potential to pursue a dialectical overcoming of the threat of nonbeing.<sup>24</sup> Jesus reveals our essential humanity, our capacity for self-transcendence. Jesus is the medium that reconciles our conflicted existence. Tillich writes: "A new reality has appeared in which you are reconciled. To enter the New being (Jesus) we do not need to show anything. We must only be open to be grasped by it."<sup>25</sup> The ontological question is both universal and necessary. We *must* ask. We cannot avoid it. We are compelled by the uncertain state of our belonging to being and our separation from it.<sup>26</sup> The existential experience of the threat of nonbeing leads us to our ultimate concern, which is God.

### **Karl Rahner and Theological Anthropology**

Karl Rahner was born in Freiburg, Germany in 1904. At the age of 18 he joined the Society of Jesus and remained a Jesuit all his life. The order's teachings stimulated his interest in theology and philosophy.<sup>27</sup> He was affected by the spirituality of Ignatius Loyola (especially Ignatius's capacity for "finding God in all things"), the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas and the transcendental method of Immanuel Kant. The Nazis' suppression of theology made Rahner leave Germany for a position at the Diocesan Pastoral Institute in Vienna. When the Gestapo again threatened his teachings, he continued to assist people with his pastoral and academic writing. He wanted to contribute to a renewal of Catholic theology, and was especially critical of the

Church's role vis-à-vis fascism, which he feared would drive people to reject the Church.<sup>28</sup>

Asking, "What does God mean for the modern person?" Rahner strove to reinterpret theology in the light of modern thought.<sup>29</sup> His work was motivated by two goals: to make theology intellectually respectable and to make it serve the broadest interests of Christian faith and life. Like Kant, he starts with the human subject and the possibility of knowledge. He examines the human experience of knowledge as the experience of absolute and limitless transcendence. His method combines philosophy and cultural analysis to look at the world from an existentialist perspective.

Referred to as a transcendental Thomist, Rahner was deeply influenced by Aquinas's theology and in particular the notion that all knowledge has *a priori* conditions of possibility.<sup>30</sup> Prompted by Kant, he asks, "Is it possible to know what is ultimately real?" Inspired by Aquinas, he asks, "Is it possible to gain knowledge of the non-sensible God?" Departing from Kant's ontology and his axiom that all human knowledge necessarily refers to sensible intuitions, Rahner wants to interrogate the possibility of metaphysics. He sees the ability to reach ultimate truth through what Aquinas calls *excessus* (excess), which is nothing more than the condition that makes it possible for humanity to experience the world.<sup>31</sup> For Rahner *excessus* represents preapprehension or *Vorgriff*, the unthematized grasp of the "Infinite Horizon" that is God before it is thematized in words and images. There is an interrelationship in his method between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and experience. The theologian Karl-Heinz Weger notes that for Rahner "the term *a priori* points to something in man that is already present and previously given, something, in other words, that has not simply been acquired on the basis of experience."<sup>32</sup> All knowledge, however, is *a posteriori* knowledge, because without *a posteriori* experiences, the person inhabits nothing that can be known about his/her *a priori* constitution. The *a priori* constitutes our ability to transcend *a posteriori* experiences, which are the reality of everyday experiences in the world. The *a priori* aspect of our knowledge is not constituted by *a posteriori* reality.<sup>33</sup> We can only experience what we do because we always see our world in the light of a transcendental *a priori*. Rahner presupposes within human nature the *a priori* grasp of

being itself within which metaphysical objects can be known.<sup>34</sup> He seeks to demonstrate that this human *a priori* brings about a person's fundamental experience of God.

Rahner insists on the transcendental nature of human existence while always keeping the historicity of finite existence in mind. In his conception, the human being is historical precisely as a transcendent subject.<sup>35</sup> Asking what human existence is in itself, he argues that while human experience may give answers, it cannot by itself make human existence intelligible. Finite human beings are present to themselves as a question and as such open to endless possibilities.<sup>36</sup> The moment we become aware of our finitude, we have already surpassed it.<sup>37</sup> We become aware of God as the Infinite Horizon of our consciousness. By starting with what Weger calls "modern man's actual experiences," Rahner's methodology breaks with traditional Catholic theology.<sup>38</sup> He makes anthropology the beginning of his theology.

### Encountering God

For Rahner, human beings are metaphysically constituted to question who they are, and the mystery of who we are leads naturally to the mystery of God. As a transcendental Thomist, Rahner begins by positing that at the center of human nature is a longing for knowledge of the utterly mysterious One. Our desire for truth shows that human nature is capable of being raised to the supernatural order; we can reach the infinite because we inhabit the potentiality of doing so. Our desire for truth stems from our natural inclination to our ultimate end. The quest for truth is, paradoxically, both the meaning and the aim of human life.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to Kant, transcendental Thomism insists that the mind can grasp the noumenal as well as the phenomenal. Transcendental Thomism and Rahner both affirm that in a person's judgment there is an active participation in being: in my understanding, I become present to myself.

With this, Rahner makes a shift from epistemology to ontology, beginning with the human subject as an existential unity that is simultaneously historical and transcendental. What is fundamental to human nature, he asserts, is *that one asks (das man fragt)*. To be human is to question. Human beings are self-transcendent by their very nature.



In all knowledge there is a pre-apprehension or *Vorgriff* of being that affirms absolute and infinite being.<sup>40</sup> Rahner asserts, "Man is a transcendent being insofar as all of his knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of 'being' as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinite of reality."<sup>41</sup> Rahner argues that the possibility of encountering God is conditioned by the human transcendental experience.<sup>42</sup> In every act of knowing the *a priori* transcendental experience is a self-possession and a non-thematic awareness of God. The question of what it means "to be" cannot be reduced to empirical terms, as the supernatural orientation towards God is empirically constitutive of human nature.<sup>43</sup> Because the dynamic of self-transcendence constitutes the fundamental aspect of human nature, humans are existentially oriented toward "the more": we question, yearn, and hope, always reaching beyond our present experience and always exceeding the limits of our existence.<sup>44</sup> Human beings have instilled within themselves a supernatural orientation, a desire for God. The *a priori* shows that we are constituted for knowledge of metaphysical objects, but always through the experience of the *a posteriori* world of sense imagery. One experiences more than oneself because of the potential of an *a priori* transcendence that is superior to all concrete categorical experiences.<sup>45</sup>

Human beings are present to themselves as subjects.<sup>46</sup> We strive constantly in a quest to understand who we are, which naturally leads us to place everything into question. Each answer or achievement never fully satisfies; it simply provokes a new.<sup>47</sup> This human capacity and the human need to put everything into question affirms the possibility of an infinitely expanding horizon.<sup>48</sup> The subject's self-consciousness is pre-reflective and pre-conceptual, in constant anticipation of and openness towards infinite reality, the horizon of all knowledge and freedom.<sup>49</sup> As subjects we are, in essence, the question that rises up before us, empty but inescapable, which can never be settled and never adequately answered until we are united with God.

Self-transcendence is made possible because of God's self-communicating grace. Because God has communicated Godself to us, we are beings with a natural transcendence, an absolutely unlimited openness to God. The core of the Christian message for Rahner is that

God has already communicated Godself to us through God's historical incarnation in Jesus Christ. God's self-communicating love is grace. As a complete human being, Jesus fully realized the presence-to-God to which we are predisposed.

We have the opportunity to perceive God the moment we are confronted with our finitude.<sup>50</sup> To seize this opportunity, we must struggle in a quest to overcome our limitations.<sup>51</sup> The nothingness that is correlated with our essential being is the void of our quest, and this void explains why our quest, and our questioning, must go forward. As human beings we seek ultimate truth because its opposite is nothingness. Because we transcend our limitation as soon as we recognize it, we have cause to be hopeful that our quest will be successful.

Although the act of self-transcendence demonstrates that the potential to unite with God is inherent in human nature, we lack, as finite creatures, the capability to actualize this potential by ourselves. For this we depend on Jesus Christ because Christ has actualized the fullness of human nature for us.<sup>52</sup> In Rahner's formulation, while the incarnation of Christ takes away nothing from humanity's autonomy, it is "the unique highest instance of the essential realization of human reality."<sup>53</sup> Both propositions are true: our metaphysical constitution makes it possible for us to hear the Word of God, and the word of God in Jesus Christ reveals to us our very capacity to know. For Rahner, Christology is the beginning and end of anthropology. The idea of Christ is gained from the reflexive coming-into-being of an *a priori* that is found in every human being. It is an idea that leads us to self-knowledge. Karen Kilby makes the point this way: "We can think about Christ in such a way that our understanding of who he is can be thoroughly integrated into our understanding of who we are."<sup>54</sup>

The human being for Rahner is both an historical subject and a subject of absolute transcendence. We seek the highest fulfillment of our being, that which points us toward the Infinite Horizon. The self-transcendence for which God has created us requires that we recognize Jesus as the unique and highest instance of our essential humanity. Knowledge of God is essentially related to the human quest for truth that demonstrates our capacity to transcend the objects of our finite

experience. Transcendental anthropology is based on the idea that the pre-apprehension or *Vorgriff* of infinite reality, our openness to the Infinite Horizon, is already present within us. We must question and this questioning orients us toward the experience of God. Rahner recognizes the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. As human beings we must ask about the *a priori* condition of everything else that exists, and in this questioning we encounter God.

### Conclusion

Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner each theorize the encounter with God along the axis of the human subject. Tillich moves from the ground of being to the subject, and Rahner moves from subject to metaphysics. Tillich starts with the current human situation and makes ontology his epistemology, and anxiety serves as the impetus for the search for meaning. Rahner begins by affirming that the human subject is metaphysically constituted to enter into a quest for the truth of God. While both approach revelation from the perspective of human understanding, Tillich more strongly emphasizes the revelatory ontology of the world. He looks outward to the fallen world that makes us grasp our courage to be and stimulates our longing for God. Rahner puts his emphasis on the subject's capacity for preapprehension or *Vorgriff*. He focuses on the inner self that struggles for self-transcendence and in that struggle reveals God to us.

While both theologians understand that God's presence is evoked by the experience of human limitation, their approaches to and conceptions of God are distinct. Tillich takes seriously the existential reality of suffering, but in doing so, God becomes radically transcendent – to the point that God seems withdrawn from the world. One might object that for Tillich we are not so much experiencing the presence as the remoteness of God. The concept of God becomes more like nothingness than Being itself. Conversely, Rahner sees God as ever-present, but this perspective tends to diminish the existential reality of sin and suffering. It is overshadowed by the mediated immediacy of ever-present God. Rahner contends that God is continually self-communicating Godself to us through the categorical reality that surrounds us. Some people have criticized this position for representing existential reality too optimistically.

The conceptions of God and reality that emerge from these two theologians lend themselves to a fruitful comparison, since both create an appreciation for each person's unique experience of God. For each theologian, the experience of God starts with the human subject. Further, each acknowledges that our encounter with the divine is shaped by our cultural context and consciousness. Thus, rather than forcing us to understand God in an absolute or unfamiliar way, they encourage us to look for God within our own cultural and religious context. Moreover, because everyone's encounter with God is considered valuable in understanding the human-divine relationship, their theologies have the potential to speak to marginalized groups within the wider Christian community. Everyone's experience has something important to reveal about God because God reveals Godself uniquely to each person who searches for God.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>German idealism proposed to get rid of the troublesomely concrete subject by immersing it in a general consciousness (Kant) or an absolute universal ego (Hegel).

<sup>2</sup>Ontology asks what it means to be, and anthropology asks what it means to be human. Scholars use "ontology" in regard to Tillich's theology and "anthropology" in regard to Rahner's.

<sup>3</sup>By doing this, Tillich avoids supernaturalism and naturalism. Supernaturalism makes revelation fall into history from above; it must be accepted obediently without regard to the adequacy of human nature. Moreover, it makes God a cause alongside other causes. Naturalism, on the other hand, structures revelation exclusively on the basis of rational human nature. It denies the infinite distance between finite things and their infinite ground. See especially the introduction of the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963).

<sup>4</sup>John P. Newport, *Paul Tillich, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 86.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>6</sup>Tillich himself calls it "the ultimate concern." An alternate translation would be: "that concerns us unqualifiably (or absolutely, or unconditionally)." Tillich's "ultimate concern" echoes Schleiermacher's "absolute dependence." For Tillich, however, Schleiermacher's application of "feeling" was too weak to describe our consciousness of absolute dependence.

<sup>7</sup>Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:14.

<sup>8</sup>Scholars have criticized Tillich for making this distinction. For instance, Douglas Lewis claims that the method by which he relates philosophy and theology is a "logical contradiction": if the two disciplines do not have a common ground and therefore operate in their own realm of discourse, then how can there be any common basis for questioning and answering? He objects: "One cannot raise questions in one realm of discourse and answer them from another." See John Powell Clayton, *The*

*Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 37, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 184.

<sup>9</sup>Jari Ristiniemi, *Experiential Dialectics: An Inquiry into the Epistemological Status and the Methodological Role of the Experiential Core in Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 30. Scholars debate whether Tillich is actually a theologian. Some scholars, pointing to the influence of Heidegger on his ontology, take him for a philosopher.

<sup>10</sup>Newport, *Paul Tillich*, 27.

<sup>11</sup>Tillich asserts, "I nurture German idealism and I do not believe that I can ever unlearn what I learned there . . . I am an idealist if idealism means the assertion of the identity of thinking and being as the principle truth." See Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 60.

<sup>12</sup>The central question for existentialist philosophy is the question that a person asks about herself: What am I? By her nature she is a questioning being, a philosophical creature, and the person, according to existentialism, is the object of every philosophical quest.

<sup>13</sup>Tillich has in mind Heidegger's description of the person as a "being-toward death." The possibility of death at any moment provides us with a negative experience; however, this threat shocks us into an appreciation and new assessment of the positive "givenness of our existence." See Adrian Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 2–5.

<sup>14</sup>Ristiniemi, *Experiential Dialectics*, 78–80. This is in line with Kierkegaard's definition of anxiety (Danish *angst*). Like Tillich, Kierkegaard saw humanity's existence in *angst* dialectically.

<sup>15</sup>This demonstrates Kierkegaard's influence on Tillich. For Kierkegaard, the encounter of "dreaming innocence" is broken because we seem unable to actualize our innermost potentialities. Our essence or spirit does not leave us because the dynamic of finite-infinite constitutes our very existence, but this dynamic creates anxiety, and we end up in despair. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 38.

<sup>16</sup>For Tillich, the world is not the absolute antithesis of the finite realm: the finite is within the infinite, and hence capable of it. See Ristiniemi, *Experiential Dialectics*, 32.

<sup>17</sup>With Kierkegaard, Tillich claimed that we reach truth only when we are infinitely interested. He also claims that revelation is only received in self-surrender. In other words, there must be a total commitment. See his *Systematic Theology*, 1:127.

<sup>18</sup>The New Creation (i.e., God's Kingdom) is our ultimate concern. According to Tillich it should be our infinite passion and the infinite passion of every human being. See his *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 19–24.

<sup>19</sup>Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:13.

<sup>20</sup>Newport, *Paul Tillich*, 89.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>22</sup>Ristiniemi, *Experiential Dialectics*, 104. Tillich echoes Kierkegaard who understood the person to be a subject that discovers her existential and essential relationship to an Absolute Subject, and through this discovery becomes actually what she is potentially—a human being. See Kurt F. Reinhardt, *The Existential Revolt: The Main Themes and Phases of Existentialism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960),

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<sup>23</sup>Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:13.

<sup>24</sup>Here we see that Tillich transcends Karl Barth's insistence on the complete inability of humanity to approach God cognitively. According to Tillich, Barth makes human questions about God impossible. Tillich claims that Barth's method is not dialectical but paradoxical, as both "yes" and "no" come from God and thus revelation becomes one-sided.

<sup>25</sup>Tillich, *New Being*, 19–24.

<sup>26</sup>Thatcher, *Ontology of Paul Tillich*, 16.

<sup>27</sup>Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal Salvation Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>29</sup>Herbert Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Life and Thought* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 51.

<sup>30</sup>Like Anselm's ontological method, Transcendental Thomism illustrates God's existence by showing that in their denial of God people implicitly affirm God: aware of the limited nature of reality, we implicitly affirm in our judgment the possible existence of unlimited reality. See Joseph Donceel, *The Philosophy of Karl Rahner* (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1969), 13–16.

<sup>31</sup>Rahner follows Heidegger's *in-der-welt-sein* – the human experience of the world. The human spirit is both a "being-in-the-world" and a "being-set-apart-and-against-the-world." This is what is meant by *Vorgriff*. My consciousness of being finite rather than infinite reveals that I can stand outside myself and make judgments of myself. When I ask questions about myself, I experience myself as a personal subject. And when I put myself into question, I stand outside myself, transcending myself.

<sup>32</sup>Karl-Heinz Weger, *Karl Rahner: An Introduction to his Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 12.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>34</sup>George Vass, *A Theologian in Search of a Philosophy: Understanding Karl Rahner*, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1985), 1:32.

<sup>35</sup>Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 140.

<sup>36</sup>Karl Rahner, "The Mystery of the Human Person" in *The Content of Faith: The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings*, ed. Karl Lehman and Albert Raffelt, trans. by Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 74.

<sup>37</sup>Karl Rahner, "The Explanation of God Today" in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 2, *Man in the Church*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 155.

<sup>38</sup>Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 15.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>40</sup>Rahner does not speak directly of an awareness of God, but applies the technical term *Vorgriff*. See Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: A Brief Introduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 3.

<sup>41</sup>Rahner, *Foundations*, 33.

<sup>42</sup>Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal Salvation Eschatology*, 124.

<sup>43</sup>Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 120–121.

<sup>44</sup>Gloria L. Schaab, *Trinity in Relation: Creation, Incarnation, and Grace in an Evolving Cosmos* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2012), 293.

<sup>45</sup>Weger, *Karl Rahner*, 50–51.

<sup>46</sup>Rahner, *Foundations*, 26.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>50</sup>Harvey D. Egan, *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 339.

<sup>51</sup>Karl Rahner, "Reflections on Methodology in Theology" in *Theological Investigations, Vols. 11–12: Confrontations*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1974), 11:14.

<sup>52</sup>Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 22, *Humane Society and the Church of Tomorrow*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 109–110.

<sup>53</sup>Rahner, *Foundations*, 218.

<sup>54</sup>Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 16.