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Dualism and Mediation: Parallels in German  
Literature and Theology from 1910 to 1925.

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### Summary

The thesis attempts to provide a detailed discussion of certain aspects of a field which has been largely ignored in literary and theological histories of the early twentieth century. By means of a close analysis of individual writers and theologians it traces the emergence of a dualistic outlook which draws a sharp division between God and man, the soul and the world. In the case of the creative writers, this dualism not only permeates the ideas and themes contained in their work, but strongly influences their imagery and style. The fifth and sixth chapters endeavour to show that the religious dualism in question is the outcome of a complex interplay of social, political, intellectual and religious factors. The final two chapters examine the ways in which both writers and theologians attempt to overcome the problems discussed in the first part of the thesis. Barth and Bultmann share an a-historical view of a Christ who provides a paradoxical mediation between God and man, and this view is shown to have been prefigured in the works of Trakl and Rilke, both of whom turn to the poetic image as an intangible form of mediation between a comprehensible and an inexpressible dimension. The mediation explored in each case stems from a similar response to the problem of history, and from the attempt to point to an unassailable area immune from the relativising processes of time. Finally, suggestions are made as to how the conclusions of the analysis can be applied more broadly to the literature of the period.

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### Declaration

The discussion of Georg Trakl's poetry in sections of the third and eighth chapters contains, in an adapted form, some points already made in my M.A. dissertation 'Religious dualism and aesthetic mediation in the work of Georg Trakl', which was submitted to the University of East Anglia in 1974 and subsequently appeared in a shortened version in the journal Orbis Litterarum, 32 (1977), pp.229-46.

### 1. The theological and critical background.

In his account of the development of Protestant thought in the nineteenth century Karl Barth considers it necessary to devote an entire chapter to the work of Novalis before moving on to discuss the theology of Schleiermacher and his successors.<sup>1</sup> Barth deals not only with 'Die Christenheit oder Europa' but with the poet's 'Hymnen an die Nacht' and 'Geistliche Lieder', and thus clearly reflects the belief that an understanding of Schleiermacher is incomplete without some knowledge of his literary contemporary. His intention is to trace 'die Linie von Novalis über Schleiermacher zu Troeltsch'.<sup>2</sup> The same awareness of the importance of studying theology and literature side by side is also apparent in certain literary historians of the Romantic period. Kluckhohn, for example, in Die deutsche Romantik, constantly turns to Schleiermacher in order to illustrate aspects of Romantic thinking in the same way as he refers to Schlegel, Novalis, and other literary figures.<sup>3</sup> Neither is it unusual to find this consciousness of an inter-relationship between literature and theology in works which treat other historical periods. It would, indeed, be difficult to study German writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without taking into account the genesis and influence of the Reformation; this is in fact taken for granted to such an extent that one would not consider referring to the many histories of sixteenth-century German literature which include an account of theological or ecclesiastical developments as 'comparative'.

It is surprising, therefore, that this type of approach has still not established itself in histories of early twentieth-century thought, whether written from a literary or from a theological perspective. This situation cannot be justified by maintaining either that theological developments were less significant at this time than they were a hundred years earlier or that religious themes, questions and allusions were less prominent in the works of German authors from this period than in those of their Romantic predecessors. In fact, between the years 1910 and 1925 revolutionary changes were taking place in a German theological tradition which had already not only made a large impact upon the cultural climate of its own country but had achieved a world-wide reputation. The questions posed by German

liberal Protestants throughout the nineteenth century had soon become universally normative, and the reaction against this movement sparked off by Karl Barth and his colleagues towards the end of the First World War likewise spread far beyond the borders of Germany itself. Clearly the church at this time could not boast the influential role it possessed in the age of the Reformation, but on the other hand developments in theology were by no means confined to a scholarly minority. By 1910 many of the ideas of liberal Protestantism had been able to permeate through to clergy and laymen alike, and this was partly due to the influence of best-selling books such as Harnack's Das Wesen des Christentums.<sup>4</sup> The journal Die christliche Welt was also a significant medium in this process; with its contributions from most of the leading theologians of the time, it had in the first instance been directed towards the more educated strata of German Christians, but, as Karl Kupisch points out, 'in kurzer Zeit entwickelte sie sich zu einem repräsentativen Organ der christlichen Welt in Deutschland'.<sup>5</sup>

Literary periodicals also testify to the fact that the questions inherited from nineteenth-century theology were not restricted to the theological faculties alone. Many of the contributors to Die Aktion, for example, take up the problem of the nature and role of the Christian faith, and a brief comparison of three articles from some of its earlier issues helps to demonstrate the variety of attitudes to this theme. Moritz von Edigy, for instance, writes on the subject of 'Ehrliche Religion' and dismisses any kind of dogmatism that contradicts one's own critical understanding and seeks to force its beliefs upon others.<sup>6</sup> In its place he calls for a religion marked by intellectual honesty and worthy of man's development towards spiritual maturity. In a piece entitled 'Gegen die Abschaffung des Christentums' the editor of Die Aktion, Franz Pfemfert, also expresses a sense of disillusionment with established religious attitudes, but does so from rather a different perspective. Pfemfert argues, with tongue in cheek, that a nominal form of Christianity should be retained, because this is in itself harmless and ineffective, but that one should beware of the dangerous and threatening nature of Christianity as it was practised in New Testament times:

Das wiederum aufrichten zu wollen, wäre ein wildes Unternehmen; es hieße Fundamente umgraben, auf einen Schlag den ganzen Witz und die halbe Gelehrsamkeit des Reiches vernichten, den ganzen Rahmen und Aufbau der Dinge zerbrechen, den Handel zerstören,

die Künste und Wissenschaften mitsamt ihren Professoren auslöschen, kurz, unsere Gerichtshöfe, Börsen und Läden in Wüsten verwandeln.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, an even more radical point of view is put forward by Prof. Dr. L. Gurlitt in 'Der Fluch der toten Religion', who believes that the Christian religion in all its forms has done so much harm over the centuries that a moratorium should be imposed on religious subjects for at least a few decades until the air has cleared.<sup>8</sup>

A similar concern with religious questions, as well as a corresponding range of responses, can be found in the literary genres of the Expressionist period, and especially in the drama. Brust's play Der ewige Mensch, for example, emphasises the possibility of humanity becoming like Christ,<sup>9</sup> while Kaiser, on the other hand, in Noli me tangere, stresses the unattainability of Christ's divine nature to mortal man and, in consequence, man's inability to initiate any lasting change in his own circumstances.<sup>10</sup> Carl Einstein's pessimism, in Die schlimme Botschaft, extends further than that of Kaiser; his Christ asks the question 'Wer kann wen erlösen?', and himself supplies the answer - 'Niemand keinen'.<sup>11</sup>

It is possibly the very diversity of attitudes that has discouraged the majority of critics and historians from attempting to draw connections between early twentieth-century literature and theology. Yet this variety merely serves to reflect the transitional character of this period, for it was one in which the religious beliefs and ideas inherited from the nineteenth century were being challenged and in which alternatives were being sought. The reaction against traditional forms and expressions of Christian belief and the endeavour to replace these with an outlook less remote from the social and intellectual needs of the twentieth century occupied writer and theologian alike, and this common concern resulted in similar developments in their two fields. The present study intends to investigate some of these parallels and to demonstrate that, with reference to the years between 1910 and 1925, an acquaintance with one sphere cannot fail to illuminate and deepen one's knowledge of the other. It will deal with parallels rather than with direct influences because it is neither possible to maintain that the changes in theological thinking in the period in question had any immediate effect on the literature, as was the case in the Reformation, nor can one claim that the theologians were guided by ideas they had

found in contemporary creative writing, as was the case to a certain extent with Schleiermacher. The similarities which nevertheless exist between the two areas must therefore be examined against the background of the religious climate from which they both emerged, and to this end it is necessary to begin with a brief account of some of the developments in nineteenth-century German theology which played a large part in moulding the religious outlook of the years leading up to the First World War.

Schleiermacher's Über die Religion, first published in 1799, also turned to the problem of a Christianity which was rapidly dwindling in popularity among many sections of German society and becoming increasingly removed from any spiritual reality. The aim of this book was, as Rudolf Otto puts it in his preface to the centenary edition, to re-establish the place of religion in the cultural life of his time: 'Es will sie herausführen aus dem Winkel, dahinein man sie verstieß ... Es will die Religion einführen als Ferment und Faktor des Wachsens, Werdens, Entwickelns der neuen Zeit.'<sup>12</sup> Their essentially apologetic nature is borne out by the sub-title 'Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern', for Schleiermacher was motivated by the desire to communicate the Christian faith in such a way that it would be understood by and acceptable to his educated contemporaries. Kant had previously attempted to demonstrate the philosophical validity of religious belief, but in 'making room for faith' he could not avoid a polarisation between belief and knowledge. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, unhappy that religion should have to be located in such a remote and inaccessible dimension in order to be justifiable, rejected Kant's philosophical approach and claimed that the centre of gravity of religious belief lay in the sphere of human feelings. In 'Apologie', the first of his five speeches, he condemns all abstract philosophical attempts to understand religion as misguided, and calls for an examination of the subject which is centred upon the actual religious experience of individuals:

Ich fordere also, daß ihr von allem, was sonst Religion genannt wird, absehend euer Augenmerk nur auf diese einzelnen Andeutungen und Stimmungen richtet, die ihr in allen Äußerungen und edlen Taten gottbegeisterter Menschen finden werdet.<sup>13</sup>

Following on from his conviction, expressed at the end of the same discourse, that religion springs 'aus dem Innern jeder besseren Seele',<sup>14</sup> he maintains that a point of mediation exists

between believers and unbelievers which could form a basis for dialogue. Thus, instead of trying to convince others of the intellectual 'truth' of Christianity, he hoped to persuade them as fellow human beings that it stems from emotional experiences which believer and unbeliever have in common. In the second speech - 'Über das Wesen der Religion' - he therefore addresses himself to those who incline towards the increasingly popular Romantic outlook, and frequently refers to religious feelings in terms of an awareness of the unity between the finite and the infinite: 'und so alles Einzelne als einen Teil des Ganzen, alles Beschränkte als eine Darstellung des Unendlichen hinnehmen, das ist Religion.'<sup>15</sup> Christian beliefs, according to Schleiermacher, by no means contradict these common experiences of mankind but merely bring them into sharper focus. Later in his career, particularly in Der christliche Glaube of 1821, he was to trace all Christian doctrinal statements back to their source in religious feelings: 'auf der anderen Seite aber haben die Glaubenssätze aller Form ihren letzten Grund so ausschließend in den Erregungen des frommen Selbstbewußtseins, daß, wo diese nicht sind, auch jene nicht entstehen können.'<sup>16</sup>

Schleiermacher's anthropocentric approach, which used for its foundation aspects of man's shared experience, is underlined again and again throughout the speeches both in categorical claims about human nature ('Der Mensch wird mit der religiösen Anlage geboren wie mit jeder andern ...') as well as, more extremely, in statements concerning the sacred quality of human life ('Alles Menschliche ist heilig, denn alles ist göttlich').<sup>17</sup> With reference to this basic feature in Schleiermacher's thought many historians of theology have indicated its contrast to the orthodox tradition of the seventeenth century, in which most theologians considered it correct to begin with a discussion of the attributes of God as revealed to man through the Bible. Zahrnt writes: 'Für Schleiermacher stand das fromme Selbstbewußtsein des Menschen im Mittelpunkt seines Denkens', and he goes on to draw a parallel with Copernicus' revolution in the field of astronomy.<sup>18</sup> This comparison might well be exaggerated, or even misleading when one thinks that Copernicus removed the earth from the centre of the universe, yet it cannot be denied that Schleiermacher's reversal of the traditional method of theological discussion profoundly influenced the direction that theology was to take in the nineteenth century.

The work of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) probably reflects this aspect of Schleiermacher's influence the most vividly. Although Ritschl strongly criticised his theological predecessor for his subjectivism in emphasising human feelings, he shared his rejection of metaphysical speculation and his concern to bring the discussion of religion down to empirical realities. They agreed, as Reardon points out in his book Liberal Protestantism, 'that the facts of Christian experience are the theologian's proper starting-point'.<sup>19</sup> In his quest for greater objectivity, however, Ritschl felt constrained to focus his attention upon ethics or, more specifically, upon the tangible changes that Christian belief brings about in a person's moral behaviour and outlook. In Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, his most well-known work, he writes:

Die Rechtfertigung als die Aufnahme von schuldbewußten Sündern in die Gemeinschaft mit Gott, und die Versöhnung als die Richtung des bisher sündigen Willens auf den allgemeinen Endzweck Gottes selbst, ist als Grundbedingung des christlichen Lebens ein nothwendiger Gedanke, um es als möglich zu erkennen, daß das Selbstgefühl sich über die Motivirung und Stimmung durch Naturursachen erhebe und die sittliche Gesinnung zugleich frei von statutarischem Gesetz und fähig sei, das Gesetz des sittlichen Handelns in den besonderen Grundsätzen und den einzelnen Pflichturtheilen hervorzubringen.<sup>20</sup>

The length and complex syntax of this sentence, so characteristic of Ritschl's style, are a reflection of his conscientiousness in working out careful formulations in which doctrinal points are shown to be rooted in the more empirical spheres of morality and the church.

Deeply influenced by Kant, Ritschl elaborated his ethical empiricism by establishing the centrality of the human will. Taking as his biblical point of reference John VII.17 - 'Wenn jemand will des Willen tun, der wird innewerden, ob diese Lehre von Gott sei, oder ob ich von mir selbst rede' - he proceeded to expound basic Christian doctrines in terms of the will. Justification, for example, meant forgiveness of a person's sins in the past but definitely not the removal of the power of sin in the present, for this had to be combated by the decision of the individual will.<sup>21</sup> Related to this emphasis upon practicality and ethical activity in contrast to abstract dogma is Ritschl's pre-occupation with what he referred to as 'Werthurteile'; for him the most significant tenets of Christian doctrine were those

which require a certain attribution of value on the part of the believer. Remaining with the example of justification, Ritschl would distinguish between the statement 'Jesus died on the cross', which is an assertion of historical fact and makes no claims upon human behaviour, and 'we have justification through him', which both stems from and influences a man's ethical outlook and activity.<sup>22</sup>

In each way, therefore, Ritschl's theology is characterised by its concern to root itself in human experience and then, like Schleiermacher's, to move on to its religious dimension:

Denn eben die Gottesidee und die nach ihr bemessene Weltanschauung hat überall die Bedeutung, dem Menschen über den Contrast zwischen seiner natürlichen Lage und seinem geistigen Selbstgefühl hinweg zu helfen, und ihm eine Erhabenheit oder Freiheit über der Welt und dem gewöhnlichen Verkehr mit ihr zu sichern ... Aber die Ergänzung seines eigenthümlichen Selbstgefühls erreicht eben der Geist durch seine Beziehung auf Gott ...<sup>23</sup>

According to this scheme the Christian faith begins by recognising human ideals and potentialities and, where a purely humanistic ethics would end in failure and frustration, then leads them on to ultimate realisation and fulfilment. For Ritschl the idea of the 'Kingdom of God' in the Gospel narratives could be understood only in terms of such ethical ideals, and it was really his teaching of the 'Kingdom' as a moral unification of the human race on the basis of universal love of one's neighbour that became one of the main attractions of his work for the generation of theologians that succeeded him. Its most prominent figure was Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930).

Earlier in the century Hegelian philosophy had, in its ambitious attempt to trace the development of human consciousness towards its final goal, tended to engulf theology and influenced its development in two quite different ways. Some, like Ritschl, were encouraged to place additional weight upon the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christianity against the challenge of relativism, while others such as F. C. Baur began to consider the Christian religion itself in terms of its historical growth.<sup>24</sup> Harnack, as a church historian, was well aware of the need to apply the historical method to the phenomenon of the Christian religion, and this is borne out by the titles of his major works such as Dogmengeschichte<sup>25</sup> and Die Mission und Ausbreitung des



Christentums.<sup>26</sup> Yet he too was intent on preserving its eternal value: he saw two possible ways of approaching Christianity - 'entweder das Evangelium ist in allen Stücken identisch mit seiner ersten Form: dann ist es mit der Zeit gekommen und mit ihr gegangen; oder aber es enthält immer Gültiges in geschichtlich wechselnden Formen.'<sup>27</sup> Harnack, in Das Wesen des Christentums, chooses the second of these alternatives, and argues that the gospel did not come into the world as a statutory religion and that as a result none of its historical forms has classical or permanent character.<sup>28</sup> Using an analogy from the natural world he explains that just as we cannot attain to an adequate knowledge of a tree unless we examine its leaf and bark as well as its roots and trunk, 'so können wir auch die christliche Religion nur auf Grund einer vollständigen Induktion, die sich über ihre gesamte Geschichte erstrecken muß, recht würdigen'.<sup>29</sup>

Das Wesen des Christentums attempts not only a summary of these facts but also a distillation of the essentials, or the 'Kern' as opposed to the 'Schale', of the Christian faith.<sup>30</sup> His programme here, as in his other works, is 'die Kirche von dem dogmatischen Christentum zu befreien',<sup>31</sup> and it is a mark of his success that theologians of this century as different as Tillich and Bonhoeffer both testify to the liberating effect of his thought.<sup>32</sup> Harnack describes what is left at the end of this liberating process in the first section of the same book in the course of outlining the principal features of Jesus' message. Here Harnack appears to unite the ideas of both Schleiermacher and Ritschl by isolating firstly man's feeling of dependence upon God as father, and secondly the practical application of this in love toward his neighbour. Harnack sees the former most perfectly crystallised in the Lord's Prayer and the latter as 'auf Erden die einzige Bestätigung der in der Demut lebendigen Gottesliebe'.<sup>33</sup> In whatever form Christianity has manifested itself over the centuries these two elements have been present, and the implication throughout Harnack's account is that the modern age is privileged above any other in possessing the learning and wisdom to separate them from previous mythological or supernaturalistic incrustation. For him, therefore, theology must not merely begin by considering the facts of Christian experience in an individual and present sense, but must also include the collective historical experience of Christendom

in its progress towards a profounder relationship with God.

Harnack's contemporary, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), was clearly thinking in similar terms when he wrote that 'Das Christentum ist nicht die einzige Offenbarung und Erlösung, sondern der Höhepunkt der in der Erhebung der Menschheit zu Gott wirkenden Offenbarungen und Erlösungen',<sup>34</sup> but in placing Christianity on the same scale as other religions, albeit higher than them, he also opened the way for radical doubts concerning its own claims to absoluteness. Harnack had been able to affirm absolute values even within the flux of time, whereas Troeltsch now denied the possibility of finding an 'essence' of Christianity. In Der Historismus und seine Überwindung Troeltsch takes this thought a step further, claiming that religious beliefs are a mixture of national characteristics and personal conviction, and yet that '... eine Wahrheit, die in erster Linie Wahrheit für uns ist, ist darum doch Wahrheit und Leben'.<sup>35</sup> In much of his work Troeltsch, also, emphasises the positive Christian virtues of love for one's neighbour and a reverence for 'dem Höchsten und Tiefsten' in every aspect of reality, thus echoing Harnack;<sup>36</sup> yet occasionally his insights and conclusions suggest that liberal theology's anthropocentric approach to religious questions - one which had begun so confidently at the start of the nineteenth century - carries within it the seeds of its own failure. Some of the qualities it had originally sought to defend, such as the validity, superiority, or even uniqueness of Christianity, could no longer consistently be upheld within a framework founded upon the 'facts of a Christian's experience'.

For most of the second decade of this century, however, a general air of confidence still prevailed; there was a great revival of interest in Schleiermacher's thought, and Troeltsch's influence and popularity was slight in comparison with Harnack, of whom Tillich writes:

He also told us that this book (Das Wesen des Christentums) was being translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible. This means that this book, which was the greatest witness of one of the greatest scholars of the century, had great significance to the educated people prior to the First World War.<sup>37</sup>

Yet for Karl Barth, who had been educated in the liberal tradition and had for a while been assistant editor of the journal Die christliche Welt, it was the outbreak of the war that helped to bring home the shortcomings of nineteenth-century theology:

Mir persönlich hat sich ein Tag am Anfang des Augusts (1914) als der dies ater eingeprägt, an welchem 93 deutsche Intellektuelle mit einem Bekenntnis zur Kriegspolitik Kaiser Wilhelms II. und seiner Ratgeber an die Öffentlichkeit traten, unter denen ich zu meinem Entsetzen auch die Namen so ziemlich aller meiner bis dahin gläubig verehrten theologischen Lehrer wahrnehmen mußte. Irre geworden an ihren Ethos, bemerkte ich, daß ich auch ihrer Ethik und Dogmatik, ihrer Bibelauslegung und Geschichtsdarstellung nicht mehr werde folgen können, daß die Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts für mich keine Zukunft mehr hatte.<sup>38</sup>

By the end of the war, after he had been able to consider what was inherent within this theology that it should lead to such overt identification with national interests, Barth had published his Römerbrief, the second edition of which, in 1922, clearly established his rejection of the current theological method.<sup>39</sup> Neither was he alone in this reaction, for the previous year had seen the publication of Friedrich Gogarten's Die religiöse Entscheidung, Emil Brunner's Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube and Eduard Thurneysen's Dostoevski, all of which shared Barth's opinion that liberalism had been over-enthusiastic in its attempt to meet the unbeliever on his own ground.

These so-called 'dialectical' theologians, among whom Rudolf Bultmann is also often included, maintained that a theology which began with the human would never be able to penetrate to any sphere beyond the finite and would necessarily become embroiled in purely national or cultural concerns. 'Nennt man dies oder das darin Gott,' proclaimed Gogarten in a speech delivered in 1920 'so fand man eben einen Götzen'.<sup>40</sup> Liberal theology had failed, according to them, because it had departed from the original biblical view of man, of God, and of the relationship between the two; this criticism is implied in the foreword to the second edition of Der Römerbrief:

Wenn ich ein 'System' habe, so besteht es darin, daß ich das, was Kierkegaard den 'unendlichen qualitativen Unterschied' von Zeit und Ewigkeit genannt hat, in seiner negativen und positiven Bedeutung möglichst beharrlich im Auge behalte. 'Gott ist im Himmel und du auf Erden'. Die Beziehung dieses Gottes zu diesem Menschen, die Beziehung dieses Menschen zu diesem Gott ist für mich das Thema der Bibel und die Summe der Philosophie in Einem. (Rb p.xiii)

In their more extreme moments the dialectical theologians felt their work to be distinct from that of their liberal predecessors to such an extent that they doubted whether they were speaking about the same God (AdT II p.94), but more generally they con-

sidered their contribution as a radical change of emphasis. Brunner, for example, condemns Ritschl for deliberately suppressing the idea of holiness as an attribute of God in his concern to reflect upon God's love, and contrasts Ritschl's rational approach with the paradoxical nature of genuine Christian faith.<sup>41</sup>

This reversal of emphasis also determined their view of man's potentiality. They maintained that, as there is a gulf fixed between man and God, which man can do nothing to bridge unless God first communicates with him, man by himself is spiritually impotent. Spiritual life is born only after man has recognised his own impotence and has given up all hope of achieving salvation himself. Such notions would have been quite alien to the tone of Schleiermacher's speeches:

Ihr wollt überall auf euren eigenen Füßen stehn und euren eignen Weg gehen, aber dieser würdige Wille schrecke euch nicht zurück von der Religion. Sie ist kein Sklavendienst und keine Gefangenschaft; auch hier sollt ihr euch selbst angehören, ja dies ist sogar die einzige Bedingung, unter welcher ihr ihrer teilhaftig werden könnt.<sup>42</sup>

but are central to Barth's Römerbrief:

Eher noch wird das Gott wohlgefällige 'Werk' bestehen in dem Ende, dem völligen Ende aller Menschengerechtigkeit, an dem er sich befindet, in seiner zweifellosen Verlorenheit, in seinem Verzicht auf alle religiösen und moralischen Illusionen, in seiner Absage an alle Hoffnung auf dieser Erde und in diesem Himmel. (Rb pp.42-3)

Schleiermacher's believer comes to Christianity retaining all his cultural heritage, while Barth's accepts salvation with empty hands, a juxtaposition which highlights the contrasts between these two conflicting theological approaches.

The problems and difficulties which dialectical theology itself raised, as well as its broader cultural significance, will have to be discussed later and in far greater detail; at present, however, it is sufficient to have sketched out the general contours of the theological map in the period under consideration. Yet, even allowing for the inevitable simplification of such an outline, the temptation must be resisted which would lead one to imagine a clear line of transition from one methodology to the other, or from one movement to the other, with liberal theology reigning supreme in 1910 and completely superseded by 1925. This

would be a misleading assessment of the situation and would, moreover, obscure the most characteristic feature of these years before, during and after the First World War - namely, that the liberal outlook of the nineteenth century still largely dominated theology but that it was becoming increasingly questioned and challenged from various quarters, especially from that of the dialectical theologians. As in the literary world of the time, there was a broad spectrum of responses to the sense of disillusionment with established religious views. Each of the attitudes noted in the early issues of Die Aktion, for example, has its parallel in the theological sphere. Egidy's optimistic religiosity reflects quite clearly the influence of the liberal outlook, while Pfemfert's reference to the disturbing nature of early Christian belief could be seen as a forerunner of some of the ideas expressed by the dialectical theologians. Gurlitt's more radical solution also has its counterpart in religious thinkers such as Arthur Drews, whose book Die Christusmythe sought to persuade the public that modern Christianity should rid itself of the illusion that its beliefs have any foundation in historical reality.<sup>43</sup>

The existence of parallels such as these has not passed totally unnoticed by literary historians, as has been largely the case with theological accounts of the period.<sup>44</sup> Over the last sixty years some attempts have been made not only to indicate the religious content of much of the literature written at this time but also to distinguish between the different types of attitudes represented. In order firstly not to repeat what has already been established by these critics, and secondly to avoid, if possible, some of the shortcomings of their analyses, it will be helpful to summarise the conclusions they have reached. A summary of the general accounts of the religious features of early twentieth-century German literature - as opposed to the discussions of individual writers' treatment of religious themes, which are too numerous to be considered here - is essential not just because it has not been undertaken so far by any other critic but, more importantly, because it helps to bring the aims of the present study into sharper focus.

Eckart von Sydow's short essay 'Das religiöse Bewußtsein des Expressionismus' in the 1919 volume of the periodical Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung is, to the best of my knowledge, the first attempt at a retrospective evaluation of the religious

characteristics of literature after 1910. With reference to both artists and writers connected with the Expressionist movement he points to a 'Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen' in their work, which had been largely absent during the preceding decades.<sup>45</sup> He claims, furthermore, that contemporary writers are too self-conscious to believe in an eternally transcendent reality, and that the yearning of which he speaks is more concerned with an awareness of the intensity of this life in its spiritual profundity. Expressionist religiosity combines man's longing for a spiritual realm with his attachment to the living world around him, and its art 'ist Ausdruck der problematischen Mischung des Hinstrebens zum Göttlichen, Begrifflichen und des Willens, neu gekräftigt wieder an das Tagewerk der Zeitlichkeit zu gehen'.<sup>46</sup> At this point Sydow's argument, from the outset couched in rather elusive terminology, becomes extremely difficult to follow, as if this mixture of tendencies becomes too complex even for him to encompass. The thoughts that emerge with relative clarity, however, are firstly that he believes it possible to divide writers into 'abstract' or 'ecstatic' Expressionists, according to whether they emphasise the spiritual or sensual aspects of religious feeling respectively, and secondly that in neither of these groups is the material world conceived as inimical to the spiritual.

Sydow does not write as a theologian, but it is nevertheless clear that the interpenetration of earthly and spiritual which he sees in Expressionism is a far cry from the radical dichotomy between the immanent and transcendent posited by Barth and his colleagues. In this connection it is significant that later in the same volume of Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung O. Walzel prefers to draw a comparison with Schleiermacher. In the article 'Wege neuester deutscher Dichtung' he expresses surprise that these writers do not recognise their similarity to the nineteenth-century theologian, adding 'Doch vielleicht erscheint die Art, in der auf Schleiermachers Wegen das Gefühl den Zusammenhang mit der Gottheit herstellt, dem Ausdrucksünstler noch zu realistisch, vor allem zu gedämpft'.<sup>47</sup>

Whereas both Sydow and Walzel implicitly affirm the traits to which they refer, Hanns Braun, in 'Das Religiöse und die jüngste Dichtung', indicates similar tendencies with a sense of disapproval. He criticises the lack of clarity inherent in many of the prevalent religious elements in contemporary literature - 'Denn was sie "Geist" und "Gott" nennen, ist nebelhaftes

Ungefähr. Unklare Empfindungen suchen sich erhabenen, umfassenden Ausdruck'.<sup>48</sup> His description of some of the current religious aspirations frequently resembles the language of liberal theology, although he nowhere draws this specific comparison:

Sie wollen ein dogmenloses, ein unmittelbares Verhältnis zu dem, was sie 'Gott' nennen. Ihr Gott ist nicht unbedingt der christliche Gott - das Christentum ist eine seiner tiefsten Offenbarungen, aber doch wohl, nach ihrer Meinung, zu überwinden, mindestens zu steigern.<sup>49</sup>

The 'Bequemlichkeit' and 'Selbstverständlichkeit' with which people talk about God also comes under fire. Yet in spite of all this Braun finds certain authors that meet with his approval, and these are characterised by their serious and genuine search for a salvation from the disharmony of human existence. It is here that Braun's contribution is most significant, for in this way he highlights a feature of the period which previous critics had either overlooked or ignored:

Auch sie denken vielleicht: Gott, auch sie ahnen ein Absolutes. Aber sie fühlen zugleich, daß Gott aus der Welt gegangen ist, daß sein Name nur tönt, aber nicht tröstet, und daß der Sinn dem Worte unfehlbar entschlüpft, welches magisch gebraucht wird: um das Ersehnte herzubannen.<sup>50</sup>

Two essays written in 1921 indicate that this new insight had fallen on deaf ears, at least as far as religiously inclined literary critics are concerned. There is no need to delay long over F. Muckermann's 'Von der Mystik des Expressionismus', for this communicates the writer's own prejudices rather than the subject with which he is supposed to be occupied. He begins by referring to the degeneracy of Expressionist mysticism and traces it to a revival of 'dieses geradezu satanisch giftigen ostjüdischen Geistes': from here he moves on to compare modern thought with the 'true' mysticism of the past and with its great deeds of purity and charity.<sup>51</sup> O. Fischer, writing in the same year, displays no such bigotry, and indeed welcomes the revival of prophecy and vision in modern literature, likening it to the charismatic enthusiasm of the early church, but does not develop these ideas any further.<sup>52</sup>

It is a year later that a Catholic essayist F. Herwig, writing in the same periodical as Muckermann, begins to elaborate some of the ideas introduced by Braun in 1920. To judge from an earlier article by Herwig on the subject of Expressionism,



which appeared in Hochland in 1915/16, one might not be led to expect too great an insight from this particular critic. Here he had commented upon Expressionism on the basis of reading Vom jüngsten Tag (sic), which had contained a short story about a traveller who had become insane (Kafka's 'Die Verwandlung'), and had concluded that this was an insignificant literary movement which would not last.<sup>53</sup> In 1922, however, he seems to have retracted this view and makes some quite penetrating observations as to the nature and significance of religious themes within Expressionism. He begins with a lengthy discussion of Strindberg's work, which he takes to be characteristic of a certain type of religious feeling prevalent within this period:

Es soll nicht die Ruhe des Besitzes gezeigt werden, nicht etwas vollkommen Erreichtes, sondern der Weg, das verzweifelte Händeauffrecken nach Gott ...<sup>54</sup>

Yet Herwig is not misled into viewing this as the only phenomenon worthy of note, but moves on to use Döblin as an example of a widespread rejection of God in any conventional sense in favour of a religious consciousness built around a belief in the spiritual constitution of humanity itself. In addition to this, Herwig reports, there are other writers, such as Adolf von Hatzfeld and occasionally Kurt Heynicke, who express a rebellious attitude to the conventional view of God and who yet are unable to be rid of him. In the second part of his essay Herwig intelligently interprets the confusion of religious themes at this time as the product of a reaction against a purely materialistic understanding of the world, and points out that the gap between Expressionist authors and good Catholic poets is not as great as many had believed - 'Wen Gott nie verließ, der hat nie große schöpferische Sehnsucht nach Gott gekannt'.<sup>55</sup> In this way he echoes Braun's feeling that the negative experience of the 'absence' of God is more genuine than an over-familiar sense of 'possessing' a right to the spiritual dimension.

Whereas Herwig's desire to see in contemporary literature a transitional phase towards an acceptance of a religious orthodoxy is generally overshadowed by a more detached view of the themes with which this literature deals, in the works of W. Knevels the former tends to predominate. In two booklets, both published in 1927, Expressionismus und Religion and Das Religiöse in der neuesten lyrischen Dichtung, Knevels is mainly concerned with



relating various modes of religious experience to his own conception of true faith. This exercise does bring with it, however, certain useful and accurate observations. He detects a tendency in Expressionism, for example, simultaneously to spiritualise man and humanise God, and in writers such as Rilke and Carl Hauptmann sees a 'Sehnsucht nach dem "ganz Anderen"' which sometimes becomes confused with a 'Vergöttlichung des eigenen Ichs'.<sup>56</sup> Yet in the final analysis the most important factor for Knevels is the increasing occurrence of religious 'Sehnsucht'; instead, however, of tracing the origin of this yearning he is more eager to mark it as the first stage on the road to orthodoxy.

After Knevels' books it is another twelve years before a further attempt is made to examine the religious aspects of Expressionist literature, but now the comparison with theology, which had not been taken up since Walzel's reference to Schleiermacher in 1919, returns to the foreground. The connection is made by R. Hinton Thomas, whose interest in the religious motifs of Expressionism emerges first of all in two articles published on Sorge and Kafka in 1937,<sup>57</sup> and then more importantly in two chapters from the book Expressionism in German life, literature and the theatre.<sup>58</sup> The first of these chapters analyses Sorge's transition from Nietzscheanism to Catholicism with the ensuing problem of finding finite symbols to express an infinite spiritual world, while the second deals more generally with 'The struggle towards God in Expressionism'. Here Hinton Thomas is more thorough than previous critics in his search for influences for, as well as mentioning Strindberg, he indicates the Expressionists' indebtedness to, among others, Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard. The range of literary witnesses he then brings forward, however, including Däubler, Döblin, Werfel and Kornfeld, serves only to underline the fact that the nineteenth-century influences can by no means account for the whole spectrum of Expressionist religiosity. Yet they do elucidate some of the ideas which had already interested Braun and Herwig in the twenties and which now also appear to be Hinton Thomas' central concern. These revolve around the problem of a dualism between the finite and the infinite, described most forcefully in the works of Sorge, Kafka and, to a certain extent, Rilke. Soon afterwards the same writer carries the discussion one step further in the preface to his book German Perspectives and establishes a link with dialectical theology:

I can trust therefore that chapter V will be of interest, not only in view of the considerable attention that the work of Kafka has awakened latterly in this country but also as it shows that ideas akin to those of Barthian theology can be traced also in the more general field of German culture. This question awaits a closer investigation which, I feel, it would amply repay.<sup>59</sup>

In fact the closer investigation did not take long to appear, although it might not have been quite what the English critic had in mind. J. Kelly, in the Southern Review in 1940, compares Barth and Kafka in some detail, but also unfortunately in a manner that leaves too many questions untouched and thus runs the danger of superficiality and over-simplification, exemplified most clearly in the following lines: 'Kafka works out his hero's problems by basing his allegory on the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and on Calvin's Pauline Christianity, absorbed through Kierkegaard'.<sup>60</sup> Even if modern Kafka criticism had not discredited the simple 'allegorical' view of his work, Kelly would have to find more substantial evidence than an allegorical interpretation of one novel to justify such far-reaching comparisons. This he fails to do.

E. Lämmert provides a model for the type of research which is required in an essay first published in 1963 entitled 'Das expressionistische Verkündigungsdrama'. The real merit of this study lies in the fact that Lämmert is unwilling to remain at the level of content but demonstrates that certain works are completely permeated with significant theological attitudes. By means of an interesting comparison between G. Hauptmann and Sorge he begins by pointing out a marked loss of physicality in much Expressionist drama, an attempt to be rid of all temporary, local or historical details. This, according to Lämmert, originates in the early twentieth-century outcry against man's limitation through history, milieu, social rank, psychology, conventional morality, and so on. It possesses, moreover, a theological dimension:

Es verdient Aufmerksamkeit, daß theologische Strömungen am Rande beider christlicher Konfessionen, der Modernismus und der Monismus der Hartmannschule, die Disposition zu dieser enthistorisierten Verinnerlichung mit bereitet haben.<sup>61</sup>

He sees a tendency in contemporary theological developments to diminish the importance of historical religious phenomena in favour of a more inward, subjective experience and detects a

reflection of this trend in late Expressionist drama in particular. Thus for religious writers such as Kalthoff and Drews, for example, the symbol of the cross becomes more important than its historical manifestation. In this way Lämmert has moved beyond surface resemblances between literature and theology and has suggested that both spheres can only be understood in the light of deep-rooted cultural developments in the period.

K. S. Guthke, in his essay 'Das Drama des Expressionismus und die Metaphysik der Enttäuschung', follows Lämmert inasmuch as he also concentrates upon the drama and is searching for causes as well as symptoms. The essay is based on a useful division of writers into those who are optimistic and those who are pessimistic in their conception of God, with Edschmid and Schreyer serving as examples of the former. In contrast to these, he finds in Carl Einstein and Hugo Ball a sense of the awesome and terrifying nature of God, in Kafka an indication of divine injustice, in Kornfeld a related inability to distinguish between God and Satan, and in Barlach a realisation of the futility of even wishing to speak about God. The weak point in Guthke's argument comes when he puts forward his explanation for these contrasting views. He claims: 'Daß das Auftauchen des bösen Gottes als Chiffre des Scheiterns jener expressionistischen Mission zu verstehen sei, die zum guten Gott führen sollte, von dem Edschmid und andere gesprochen hatten'.<sup>62</sup> A proposition of this nature, however, would firstly have to be supported by a chronological account of the period, demonstrating that Expressionism began with optimistic religious ideals and that only later did traces of disappointment creep in. The existence of figures like Trakl, Heym and Kafka, whose 'Enttäuschung' is more than apparent at the outset of their literary careers, would surely be a stumbling-block to this line of discussion. Guthke, furthermore, does not provide any examples of writers who change from one attitude to another as the shallowness of their idealism is exposed, but rather leaves one with the impression that the groupings he mentions must derive from quite different factors.

Wolfgang Rothe, a year later, sees them more sensibly as representing two distinct sets of ideas which stem from contrasting religious attitudes. In 'Der Mensch vor Gott - Expressionismus und Theologie' he categorises these groups as either 'theologisch' in a strict sense or 'religiös'; the former are defined in terms

of dialectical theology with its more dualistic outlook and the latter in terms of the influence of liberalism with its confused intermingling of the spiritual and material worlds. From this point of reference he then undertakes a systematic survey of the various possibilities of a theological exploration of the Expressionist period by beginning with a summary of the dialectical theologians' own thought and following this up with an account of how creative writers handle themes like death and resurrection, the I/Thou relationship, the role of the prophet, and so on. Although he discovers a considerable residue of liberal religiosity in the literature of the period Rothe perceives a far stronger imprint of ideas akin to those of Barth's generation. The distinguishing marks in the case of the latter are seen by Rothe as an awareness of the separation of the spiritual and material, but nevertheless as a concentration upon the physical world as being the proper area of concern: 'Theologisch relevant kann fortan grundsätzlich auch eine Literatur sein, die sich entschieden dem Menschen und seinem irdischen Dasein zuwendet.'<sup>63</sup> The names of Barlach, Kaiser and Werfel figure frequently amongst his many examples of this attitude, and he concludes the essay by referring to the manner in which it specifically reveals itself in the treatment of the themes of suffering and madness, which many saw as essential stages in man's search for God within the concrete realities of the temporal world. Rothe, in his survey, has clearly succeeded in accumulating a vast amount of evidence to underline the relationship between literature and theology at this time, and he has managed to do this far more thoroughly than any writer before him. But it is probably inevitable in an essay which mentions so many names in the course of thirty pages that occasionally a certain amount of confusion ensues. One could, for example, doubt the prudence of bringing together theologians such as Barth and Tillich in a manner which implies a greater resemblance of thought than actually existed between them. Or again, one could regret the absence of clarification of the fact that Werfel can seemingly be used to exemplify both sides of the theological fence.<sup>64</sup>

R. Pascal, however, in 1973 expresses far more fundamental objections to Rothe's work. In the chapter 'Religion and the churches' in From Naturalism to Expressionism he writes:

The prominence in this generation of the theme of suffering as a spiritual purpose, of faith in a God who sends only trials and suffering, has led W. Rothe to associate Expressionist 'theology' with the 'dialectical theology' of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner that was formulated only after the war ... There are indeed parallels in the essays and imaginative work of the Expressionists to this modernist movement that stripped religion of the comforting promise that the churches and traditional theology had offered. Yet the confident, rhetorical, often ecstatic prophecies and visions of a new social order and a new moral inspiration, so prominent in Expressionist writing, seem the very reverse of the harsh asceticism of the theologians.<sup>65</sup>

While this criticism emphasises that Rothe has not delineated the distinction between Expressionist 'theology' and 'religiosity' with sufficient clarity, Pascal's opposition of harsh asceticism and ecstatic confidence is also misleading. It is a contrast which depends very much upon one's selection of authors, and one which could equally be reversed. The highly self-confident and rhetorical speeches and lectures of Barth's early rebellion against liberal theology, for example, can be juxtaposed with the ascetic, withdrawn nature of writers such as Trakl or Kafka. S. Vietta's and H.G. Kemper's recent book on Expressionismus argues cogently, moreover, that if there is any value in the label 'Expressionism' then the basic nature of this movement should not be sought in the ecstatic 'new man' mentality, which in any case characterises only a certain number of its so-called exponents, but in a sense of 'Ichdissoziation' which is far more widespread. With this, however, a question is introduced which will have to await fuller treatment until the fifth chapter. It has been necessary to concentrate on Pascal's comments as quoted above since they are the most pertinent to the matter in hand, but this should not divert our attention from the fact that the remainder of his chapter constitutes an extremely informative account of the varieties of religious feeling at the time, not only as reflected in academic theology but also in the churches and amongst the general populace, and of the way in which all this is expressed in creative writing.

The most recent attempt to analyse some of the religious themes of Expressionism is to be found in C. Eykman's 'Zur Theologie des Expressionismus' from his book Denk- und Stilformen des Expressionismus, but this really adds little to what Rothe and Pascal, for example, have already discovered from their

different perspectives. Eykman begins with the Expressionist pre-occupation with 'Erlösung' (which Pascal had previously documented) and then, by means of a host of literary examples, demonstrates the diversity of contemporary conceptions of both Christ and God. God, he claims, is either used as a synonym of man or else he is posited as the unapproachable opposite of man, and while Eykman himself does not make the explicit comparison with theological movements this distinction nevertheless seems to reinforce Rothe's contrast between liberalism and dialectical theology. Eykman, however, mentions a third strand of thought which views God as the imagined goal of human development towards something higher than himself - an idea represented especially by the early Bloch. Leading on from here, Eykman attaches great importance to the social background of Expressionism in this respect, but only to arrive at a rather weak and uncommitted conclusion:

Religiöse Denkformen wie religiöses Vorstellungsgut werden überwiegend zur Chiffre für die menschliche Ohnmacht und Erniedrigung einerseits, wie für die Projektion eines neuen vollkommenen Menschen andererseits. Man mag diesen geistigen Vorgang als Säkularisierung des Religiösen deuten oder als theologisierende Weihe eines Säkulären.<sup>66</sup>

In the final analysis he does not seem to have improved much upon the critical essays written by Braun and Herwig in the twenties, both of whom discovered a similar diversity in Expressionist views of God.

This should not lead to the conclusion that research in this area over the last sixty years has been fruitless, but merely that Eykman has ignored the insights afforded by previous work. Rothe, after all, has shown that an explicit comparison with theology produces categories which can help one to discriminate between various literary treatments of religious topics, and can lead to a far deeper understanding of them in isolation, Lämmert has pointed out the manner in which thought processes akin to those present in theology extend their influence to the very structure of Expressionist drama, and Pascal has provided concrete examples of how a broader survey of religion in both church and society can contribute to our knowledge of early twentieth-century literature. Yet the summaries and criticisms of these writers' achievements as outlined above serve to indicate the fact that a large amount of confusion

still remains, and this must be partly due to the nature and limitations of individual chapters and articles.

At least two critics have suggested that there is much research still to be undertaken. Rothe maintains at the beginning of his essay that:

Es darf vermutet werden, daß eine eindringendere Erforschung der Formen, Inhalte, der Bildersprache und auch des Sprachmaterials einen weitaus stattlicheren Ertrag an konkreter Theologie erbringen würde, als die etwas leichtfertige Erklärung des Expressionismus zur reinen religiösen Gefühlsangelegenheit sich träumen läßt.<sup>67</sup>

From the above summary it is apparent that such research cannot usefully take the form of a fresh general survey, and so the present study will restrict itself in the first six chapters to investigating the parallels between writers and theologians who make a sharp distinction between a human and a spiritual reality. In other words, instead of looking at the influence of liberal theology on the literature of the period it will concentrate upon the emergence of a more dualistic outlook. It will undertake a detailed exploration of the nature of this dualism by limiting itself to the works of a small number of writers and theologians, and will ask whether the similarities of content extend to the very forms, structures and language of the works in question. If the relationship is discovered to be deep-rooted, then the reasons for such parallels will also have to be sought in possible determining factors within the intellectual and social climate of the time. Pascal believes that future research should concentrate particularly upon variations on the theme of 'Erlösung',<sup>68</sup> and indeed the last two chapters of this study will move on to look at various attempts by the same writers and theologians to transcend the dualism in order to escape its pessimism. Here it will be important to discover whether literature and theology resemble each other not only in their diagnosis of the dualistic problem but also in their endeavours to find forms of reconciliation.

It is not my intention to deal solely with the movements somewhat loosely referred to as 'Expressionism' and 'dialectical theology', because the outlook in question is by no means to be located in these areas alone. The following chapter will examine works by Rilke and Otto which preceded these two movements, but nevertheless reveal close affinities to the generation

of writers and theologians which was immediately to follow them. Barth himself expressed his indebtedness to the new direction upon which Otto had already embarked,<sup>69</sup> and Rilke in these works was struggling to a large extent with questions that were to occupy his younger 'Expressionist' contemporaries, although, as Allemann puts it, 'die hintergründigen Übereinstimmungen in der künstlerischen Aufgabenstellung zwischen ihm und der neuantretenden Generation blieben ihm verborgen'.<sup>70</sup> By commencing with Rilke and Otto, therefore, we are dealing with two 'forerunners', whose ideas were soon to find a broader resonance in their respective fields, and this necessitates a discussion of some poems from a collection which actually appeared two or three years before our period begins.

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  64. Rothe's more recent book Der Expressionismus: theologische, soziologische und anthropologische Aspekte einer Literatur (Frankfurt, 1977) provides a slightly longer account of Expressionist religious thinking, but in the end Rothe succeeds in widening his earlier analysis rather than deepening it.
  65. (London, 1973), pp.161-97 (p.196).
  66. (Munich, 1974), pp.63-107 (p.107).
  67. 'Der Mensch vor Gott', pp.37-8.
  68. From Naturalism to Expressionism, p.196.
  69. See Karl Barth - Eduard Thurneysen: Ein Briefwechsel (Munich and Hamburg, 1966), Barth's letter of 3.6.1919, p.50.
  70. In his introduction to Rilke, Werke, 3 vols (Frankfurt, 1966), I, p.xx.
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2. Two forerunners: Rainer Maria Rilke and Rudolf Otto.

The fact that the majority of Rilke's Neue Gedichte stems from the years 1906 and 1907 can easily lead one to overlook the length of time that separates the earliest from the latest poems in this collection, and consequently to ignore any development which might have taken place during this period. In the case of 'Der Panther', probably from early 1903, and 'Schwarze Katze', from the summer of 1908, this temptation is accentuated by a similarity of subject.<sup>1</sup> Both poems are concerned with the description of an animal; in both the poet wishes to progress beyond a merely visual depiction; in each case he attempts this by dealing with the theme of perception, as can be seen by the repetition of 'Blick' and a concentration upon the animals' eyes; and both poems conclude with an image perceived by the animal and enclosed within the depths of its being. A closer reading, however, soon demonstrates that such resemblances are superficial in comparison with the various features which separate these two Neue Gedichte.

In the first instance, 'Der Panther' begins with the animal itself - 'Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe / so müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält' - and throughout the poem the reader's attention is directly focussed upon the panther. In 'Schwarze Katze', on the other hand, it is not until the tenth line that the cat actually forms the subject of a sentence, and this is due to another presence which dominates the first two stanzas:

Ein Gespenst ist noch wie eine Stelle,  
dran dein Blick mit einem Klange stößt,  
aber da an diesem schwarzen Felle  
wird dein stärkstes Schauen aufgelöst:

wie ein Tobender, wenn er in vollster  
Raserei ins Schwarze stampft,  
jählings am benehmenden Gepolster  
einer Zelle aufhört und verdampft.

The identity of this presence is revealed by the repeated possessive adjective 'dein', which in this case could be translated most accurately by the impersonal 'one's', and which clearly includes the poet himself. Whereas in the earlier poem the role of the observer is not mentioned, leaving the panther to form the sole point of focus, here the observer is directly involved

and the poem deals, as it were, with the line of vision between him and the cat.

Even in the last long stanza, where the cat has become much more prominent, the contrasts continue to emerge. The adjectives 'drohend und verdrossen' are framed by the verbs 'verhehlen' and 'zuschauern', and all this combines to give the impression of a surly, threatening animal quite different from the panther, which, although strong and supple, is also harmlessly 'müd' and 'betäubt' behind its bars. The panther is essentially a passive beast, registering perceptions from the outside world which die out to make way for new ones in a meaningless succession. The cat, on the other hand, is in control:

Doch auf einmal kehrt sie, wie geweckt,  
ihr Gesicht und mitten in das deine:  
und da triffst du deinen Blick im geelen  
Amber ihrer runden Augensteine  
unerwartet wieder: eingeschlossen  
wie ein ausgestorbenes Insekt.

and far from being confined within man-made structures actually asserts its superiority by incarcerating the poet's own gaze.

The threatening quality of the cat as well as the explicit presence of the writer in the poem both result from the poet's inability to gain sufficient mastery over his subject matter to allow an adequate portrayal; instead of penetrating to the heart of the animal his gaze becomes 'aufgelöst'. The panther, presumably, posed no such difficulties, for Rilke not only manages to encapsulate its tired but powerful movement in the first six lines, but in the seventh is already using a simile - 'wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte' - to convey this more forcefully. When he uses the same device of the simile in 'Schwarze Katze' - 'wie ein Tobender ...' - he is still seeking analogies for his own dilemma. In short, therefore, the mastery of the observer over the object being contemplated, which is assumed in 'Der Panther', is threatened and challenged in the 1908 poem, producing an uneasy self-consciousness which was previously absent.

This juxtaposition of poems taken from the beginning and from the end of the Neue Gedichte period has in fact provided a magnified picture of a contrast which is also present in the main body of poems in this collection and which can be illustrated most clearly by looking at an aspect of Rilke's imagery. Images connected with the idea of circularity occur regularly in the

Neue Gedichte, and are used by the poet to reflect two quite different facets of experience. Usually the figure of the unbroken circle predominates and this serves to indicate self-containment or harmonious completeness. There is already a circular movement in the panther's 'Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte', but this emerges with greater clarity in other poems. The unicorn, in the poem of that title, is not confined within a cage, but nevertheless the aura and brilliance that surrounds it is contained within a circle:

Doch seine Blicke, die kein Ding begrenzte,  
warfen sich Bilder in den Raum  
und schlossen einen blauen Sagenkreis. (I, p.506).

In 'Römische Fontäne' (I, p.529) the circle is enhanced by the mirror, one of Rilke's favourite images, and the two convey a sense of self-contained harmony; the reflection in the mirror of the water brings the bowls of the fountain into a reciprocal relationship with each other, indicated by verbs such as 'reden', 'entgegenschweigen' and 'lächeln'. The fountain is complete in itself, requiring nothing from outside, 'verbreitend ohne Heimweh, Kreis aus Kreis', and in this respect is curiously similar to the corpses in 'Morgue' with their in-turned gaze - 'Die Augen haben hinter ihren Lidern / sich umgewandt und schauen jetzt hinein' (I, p.503). Finally, in the poems 'Buddha' (I, p.528) and 'Buddha in der Glorie' (I, p.642) the harmonious circularity is projected on to a cosmic canvas; he is not only the 'Mitte aller Mitten' around which the universe revolves, but also contains within himself movement 'das kreist in ihm seit Millionen Jahren'.

In each of these cases the circle has the function of circumscribing the subject of the poem, and this suggests that the poet is capable, either perceptually or conceptually, of encompassing his chosen material. On other occasions, however, the circular figure is broken or a line flies off at a tangent. 'Gott im Mittelalter', for example, describes a society which believed it could harness God's power to undergird its rigidly regulated day-to-day existence:

Und er sollte nur  
über seine grenzenlosen Zahlen  
zeigend kreisend und wie eine Uhr  
Zeichen geben ihrem Tun und Tagwerk.

but then goes on to portray their horror when they find that he cannot be held down to their imposed order:

Aber plötzlich kam er ganz in Gang,  
und die Leute der entsetzten Stadt  
ließen ihn, vor seiner Stimme bang,  
weitergehn mit ausgehängtem Schlagwerk  
und entflohn vor seinem Zifferblatt. (I, p.502).

Here the attempt to restrict God's movement to a clockwork circularity is frustrated by the force of that which they had endeavoured to contain. The awareness of this uncontrollable unleashing of energy perhaps reflects Rilke's own doubts concerning his ability to 'hold down' reality within the bounds of his poems. 'Die Erblindende', for example, deals with a human subject which threatens to break out of such limits - 'als ob, nach einem Übergang, / sie nicht mehr gehen würde, sondern fliegen' (I. p.516). At other times the circle, though unbroken, represents a world quite alien to the observer, who is in danger of being destroyed by it. In 'Schlangen-Beschwörung' he is drawn into 'den Kreis der Pfeife' almost hypnotically while his own sense of unity and control is under attack - 'Es geht ein Sprung / durch dein Gesicht' (I, p.594). This poem, also written in 1908, immediately precedes 'Schwarze Katze' in the second part of the Neue Gedichte and concludes with the same disturbing quality that was seen to be present in the cat - 'und in den Schlangen glänzt das Gift'.

The connection between Rilke's different use of circular imagery on the one hand and the contrasts noted in the comparison of 'Der Panther' and 'Schwarze Katze' on the other can be supported and clarified by turning to Rilke's monograph on Rodin, written in 1902, an essay which sets out some of the ideas which were to have a formative influence on his poetry in the years immediately following. Here he is deeply impressed by the manner in which the French sculptor manages to combine both plastic and intangible qualities in his work. Rodin's sculptures, according to Rilke, not only display a mastery of external detail but also magnetically attract one's attention to an essential movement or dynamism inherent within the created object. The poet's comparison of this harmonious essence with the movement of a fountain, in the light of his later poem on the same subject, underlines the fact that his interest here was not merely theoretical, but that he himself was concerned to implement some of Rodin's ideas in his own verse. In the same section he goes on to explain that this movement can best be visualised in terms of a circle, which, however vastly extended, is nonetheless complete in itself:

Aber plötzlich kam er ganz in Gang,  
und die Leute der entsetzten Stadt  
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Wie groß auch die Bewegung eines Bildwerkes sein mag, sie muß, und sei es aus unendlichen Weiten, sei es aus der Tiefe des Himmels, sie muß zu ihm zurückkehren, der große Kreis muß sich schließen, der Kreis der Einsamkeit, in der ein Kunst-Ding seine Tage verbringt. (V, p.158)

Any threat to the unity of the 'Kunst-Ding' is not posed by its inherent dynamism as such but by a particular type of movement which asserts its independence from the circle and 'hinausweist über die Grenzen des Dinges' (V, p.158). Again it is interesting to note the example Rilke selects:

Das plastische Dinge gleicht jenen Städten der alten Zeit, die ganz in ihren Mauern lebten: die Bewohner hielten deshalb nicht ihren Atem an und die Gebärden ihres Lebens brachen nicht ab. Aber nichts drang über die Grenzen des Kreises, der sie umgab, nichts war jenseits davon, nichts zeigte aus den Toren hinaus und keine Erwartung war offen nach außen. (V, p.158)

for the fact that Rilke later uses this same theme in 'Gott im Mittelalter', written in 1907, to express the opposite of an harmonious self-containment suggests that he may have already realised the impossibility of consistently applying Rodin's ideas to his own work.

Although in the 1905 draft for a lecture on Rodin which was revised and published in 1907 Rilke still speaks of the completeness of the circle (V, p.258), it is clear from poems like 'Gott im Mittelalter' that an independent movement beyond the bounds of the circle is beginning to assert itself. The Neue Gedichte, it must be said, cover a vast range of topics in a variety of ways, by no means all of which are explicable in terms of the so-called 'Dinggedicht' aesthetic, and for this reason alone it would be misleading to infer from them a chronologically consistent, gradual process of disillusionment between the years 1902 and 1908 with the ideas ascribed to at the beginning of this period. Yet the fact remains that the collection as a whole, in its treatment of both themes and images, reflects a tension in which the notion of a 'circular' harmony increasingly comes into conflict with elements beyond the poet's control, and that, while the former pole is represented by a large number of poems, examples of the latter occur far more frequently in those written in 1907 and 1908.

In the years following the publication of the Neue Gedichte this conflict remains one of Rilke's major concerns, and a letter he wrote in 1911, in which he records his impressions while travel-

ling in Egypt, reveals that it has intensified rather than decreased with the passing of time:

Ich ... sah, sah, sah, - mein Gott, man nimmt sich zusammen, sieht mit allem Glaubenwollen beider eingestellter Augen - und doch beginnts über ihnen, reicht überall über sie fort (nur ein Gott kann ein solches Sehfeld bestellen) - da steht eine Kelchsäule, einzeln, eine überlebende, und man umfaßt sie nicht.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of his utmost concentration he is unable to encompass perceptually the scene before him, as it constantly seems to move beyond his field of vision. This is not just an isolated experience, moreover, but repeats itself during the poet's Spanish journey of 1912-13, indicating that the tension between the plainly visible and the 'unencompassable' has taken up a position in the foreground of his thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence for this supposition is to be found in a very revealing letter written by the poet to Lou Salomé in December 1911, in which he looks back nostalgically to a time 'da ich nichts und niemanden erwartete und die ganze Welt mir immer mehr nur noch als Aufgabe entgegenströmte und ich klar und sicher mit purer Leistung antwortete. Wer mir damals gesagt hätte, daß mir so viele Rückfälle bevorstehen!'<sup>4</sup> In the same letter he suggests that the key to his 'relapses' lies in Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge, published a year previously. He is troubled by an inability to detach himself from this work and cannot gain a clear understanding of his relationship with its protagonist:

... aber niemand als Du, liebe Lou, kann unterscheiden und nachweisen, ob und wieweit er mir ähnlich sieht: Ob er, der ja zum Teil aus meinen Gefahren gemacht ist, darin untergeht, gewissermaßen um mir den Untergang zu ersparen, oder ob ich erst recht mit diesen Aufzeichnungen in die Strömung geraten bin, die mich wegrißt und hinübertreibt.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the author himself is still uncertain about a question which has occupied critics ever since - that of his identification with Malte. His statement implies that one of his motives in writing the novel was to exorcise the dangers that were threatening his own existence, but that now, far from being overcome, they are making their presence felt more strongly than ever.

In his letter to Lou Salomé, therefore, Rilke makes it quite clear that Malte was partly constructed from dangers he himself was experiencing. Although he also warns her of the pitfalls of an over-hasty identification of himself with the protagonist of the

novel, the fact that Malte both implicitly and explicitly deals with the same tension that lay beneath the surface of the Neue Gedichte provides sufficient justification for associating Malte with the poet at least in this respect. At the same time Malte is particularly relevant to the present discussion because it also demonstrates how the predicament of the poet who has begun to doubt his ability to master his material is inextricably connected with questions of an existential and religious nature.

In the following extract from Malte the problem which was reflected indirectly in several of the later Neue Gedichte is projected in a more extreme form on to a writer whom Malte admires, and is described once more with reference to the circle:

Da gingst du an die beispiellose Gewalttat deines Werkes, das immer ungeduldiger, immer verzweifelter unter dem Sichtbaren nach den Äquivalenten suchte für das innen Gesehene. Da war ein Kaninchen, ein Bodenraum, ein Saal, in dem einer auf und nieder geht: da war ein Glasklirren im Nebenzimmer, ein Brand vor den Fenstern, da war die Sonne. Da war eine Kirche und ein Felsental, das einer Kirche glich. Aber das reichte nicht aus; schließlich mußten die Türme herein und die ganzen Gebirge; und die Lawinen, die die Landschaften begraben, verschütteten die mit Greifbarem überladene Bühne um des Unfaßlichen willen. Da konntst du nicht mehr. Die beiden Enden, die du zusammengebogen hattest, schnellten auseinander; deine wahnsinnige Kraft entsprang aus dem elastischen Stab, und dein Werk war wie nicht. (VI, p.785)

A picture is presented here of a writer caught in the midst of a struggle between 'das Greifbare' and 'das Unfaßliche', in which the latter prevails. The image of an 'elastischer Stab' signifies that, as long as the effort to bend the two ends together is maintained, the writer's work aspires to the form of a circular, harmonious self-sufficiency, and that it therefore depends for its survival upon hard work and rigid discipline. These, of course, are the ideas central to Rilke's aesthetic at the outset of the Neue Gedichte, but here their validity is thrown into doubt; the writer has not the strength to hold the two ends together and when they spring apart the circle is broken. The circularity which played so important a role in the lyric collection thus gives way in this passage to fragmentation and open-endedness.

These qualities also characterise the overall structure of Malte. The novel begins with two conjunctions side by side - 'So, also hierher kommen die Leute' - giving the reader the impression that he has been introduced in the middle of a longer discourse,

the first part of which is missing. It ends with an adverbial phrase, 'noch nicht', which points out towards the future and produces a feeling of incompleteness. Between these two points the work consists of 'Aufzeichnungen', fragmented notes and sketches, which not only fail to construct any 'plot' in the conventional sense of the word, but constantly alternate between past and present. Even when the sections are examined as individual units a similar atmosphere of disjointedness often prevails, and it is worth looking at one of these in some detail.

In the second paragraph of the first book Malte vividly describes the effect of city life, and this is here quoted in full:

Daß ich es nicht lassen kann, bei offenem Fenster zu schlafen. Elektrische Bahnen rasen läutend durch meine Stube. Automobile gehen über mich hin. Eine Tür fällt zu. Irgendwo klirrt eine Scheibe herunter, ich höre ihre großen Scherben lachen, die kleinen Splitter kichern. Dann plötzlich dumpfer, eingeschlossener Lärm von der anderen Seite, innen im Hause. Jemand steigt die Treppe. Kommt, kommt unaufhörlich. Ist da, ist lange da, geht vorbei. Und wieder die Straße. Ein Mädchen kreischt: Ah tais-toi, je ne veux plus. Die Elektrische rennt ganz erregt heran, darüber fort, fort über alles. Jemand ruft. Leute laufen, überholen sich. Ein Hund bellt. Was für eine Erleichterung: ein Hund. Gegen Morgen kräht sogar ein Hahn, und das ist Wohltun ohne Grenzen. Dann schlafe ich plötzlich ein. (VI, p.710)

The open window in the first sentence already suggests a mixture of both receptivity and vulnerability, thus setting the scene for what is to follow. Verbs such as 'durchrasen' and 'hingehen über' underline Malte's susceptibility to movements which virtually trample over him, and the sentence beginning 'Die Elektrische rennt ...' enhances the idea of a destructive line of force which passes through him, encountering little resistance. The sound of someone mounting the stairs is less direct in that it passes him by, yet the one word 'lange' indicates that it is equally disturbing. For much of the paragraph, therefore, Malte's consciousness is criss-crossed by the city noises which accept the invitation of his open window. When this is visualised geometrically it appears as a series of unrelated lines passing through his room, or else touching it tangentially, and then proceeding in their various directions - 'fort über alles'.

The disarray of movement is reinforced by an atmosphere of fragmentation which permeates both form and content. No clause in this paragraph contains more than seven words, and indeed many

sentences consist of only three or four. The uneven and disjointed rhythm which this produces is provided with a visual parallel in the image of the broken pane of glass, and particularly in the nouns 'Scherben' and 'Splitter'. One could perhaps claim that the repetition of the sleep theme at the beginning and end of the excerpt represents an attempt to counterbalance the prevalent chaos and disorganisation by giving the section a rounded framework; yet even the first sentence introduces a sense of incompleteness, beginning in midstream with a 'daß' clause, and the last ends rather abruptly as a result of the adverb 'plötzlich'. In fact, the predominant mood of the section closely resembles Malte's later memories of his grandfather's house - 'es is ganz aufgeteilt in mir; da ein Raum, dort ein Raum und hier ein Stück Gang, daß diese beiden Räume nicht verbindet, sondern für sich, als Fragment, aufbewahrt ist. In dieser Weise ist alles in mir verstreut ...' (VI, p.729).

While the opening paragraphs of the book describe Malte's vulnerability to the confusing fragmentation of life in the metropolis, only a few pages later the city is presented in quite a different light:

Was so ein kleiner Mond alles vermag. Da sind Tage, wo alles um einen Licht ist, leicht, kaum angegeben in der hellen Luft und doch deutlich. Das Nächste schon hat Töne der Ferne, ist weggenommen und nur gezeigt, nicht hergereicht; und was Beziehung zur Weite hat: der Fluß, die Brücken, die langen Straßen und die Plätze, die sich verschwenden, das hat diese Weite eingenommen hinter sich, ist auf ihr gemalt wie auf Seide. Es ist nicht zu sagen, was dann ein lichtgrüner Wagen sein kann auf dem Pont-neuf oder irgendein Rot, das nicht zu halten ist, oder auch nur ein Plakat an der Feuermauer einer perlgrauen Häusergruppe. Alles ist vereinfacht, auf einige richtige, helle Plans gebracht wie das Gesicht in einem Manetschen Bildnis. Und nichts ist gering und überflüssig. Die Bouquinisten am Quai tun ihre Kästen auf, und das frische oder vernutzte Gelb der Bücher, das violette Braun der Bänder, das größere Grün einer Mappe: alles stimmt, gilt, nimmt teil und bildet eine Vollzähligkeit, in der nichts fehlt. (VI, pp.722-3)

This passage contrasts with the one already discussed in almost every respect, for the previous sense of open-endedness is now replaced by an atmosphere of completeness and harmony. The short, disjointed phrases make way for longer, more flowing sentences and the 'geometrical' form changes from a confusion of unrelated lines disappearing in all directions to a rounded whole in which they curve back to a central point of reference - 'was Beziehung zur

Weite hat ... hat diese Weite eingenommen'. The traffic no longer disturbs Malte with its shrieking noises, for it too merges into a harmony in which 'alles stimmt, gilt, nimmt teil'.

These two passages, when taken together, bear witness to the fact that Malte, like the poet of the Neue Gedichte, is being pulled in two different directions, and this is also apparent in other sections of the book. On the one hand he expresses his desire to hold on to a view of life which had appeared adequate in the past: 'Ich würde so gerne unter den Bedeutungen bleiben, die mir lieb geworden sind' (VI, p.756), and yet many of his experiences in Paris reveal a dimension which is both too new and too vast for him to comprehend:

Eine vollkommen andere Auffassung aller Dinge hat sich unter diesen Einflüssen in mir herausgebildet, es sind gewisse Unterschiede da, die mich von den Menschen mehr als alles Bisherige abtrennen. Eine veränderte Welt. Ein neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutungen. Ich habe es augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen. (VI, p.775)

At the same time, although the Neue Gedichte and Malte both reflect a similar conflict, they differ from each other in the emphasis given to its opposing poles. In the majority of the poems the mastery of the poet over his material still predominates, while Rilke uses the prose work to lay greater weight upon that which challenges and threatens it, upon the 'Gefahren' which were mentioned in his letter to Lou Salomé.

In accordance with this change of emphasis Malte not only deals more directly with the nature of this poetic tension but also moves on to indicate some of its underlying causes, and these emerge most clearly when one compares and contrasts two or three themes which occur both in the novel and in the Neue Gedichte. The first of these is concerned with the problem of the self and, correspondingly, with the identity of the poet. Under the influence of Rodin's ideas Rilke wrote that the immense importance of the 'Kunst-Ding' for the life of its maker lay in its ability to act as an ever-recurring proof of his own 'Einheit und Wahrhaftigkeit'.<sup>6</sup> The ideas that motivated many of his poems during this period assumed a detachment on the part of the writer, without which a precise observation of external detail would be impossible and any apparent penetration into the essence of an object would be mere subjectivity. For this reason references to the poet's existence occur rarely in the

Neue Gedichte and, when he does appear, he is often depicted not only as one who lacks identity in the material world - 'Ich habe keine Geliebte, kein Haus' (I, p.511) - but also as a completely impersonal being emotionally. In 'Der Einsame' the poet's heart is compared to a tower, his face to a stone, and he is described as 'Noch ein Ding alleim im Übergroßen, / welches dunkel wird und wieder licht' (I, p.636).

Whereas many of the Neue Gedichte had been protected by this impersonality, by the equation of the poet with the undifferentiated oneness of the Ding, Malte demonstrates that it is not something which can automatically be assumed. The question of identity becomes far more prominent, and the reader of the novel is introduced to a world in which the unity of the self is concealed by a variety of faces, masks, and names (VI, pp.711,778,783). The image of the mirror, which had been used in poems such as 'Römische Fontäne' to evoke an atmosphere of harmony, now appears in a very different context:

Wir entdecken wohl, daß wir die Rolle nicht wissen, wir suchen einen Spiegel, wir möchten abschminken und das Falsche abnehmen und wirklich sein. Aber irgendwo haftet uns noch ein Stück Verkleidung an, das wir vergessen. Eine Spur Übertreibung bleibt in unseren Augenbrauen, wir merken nicht, daß unsere Mundwinkel verbogen sind. Und so gehen wir herum, ein Gespött und eine Hälfte, weder Seiende, noch Schauspieler. (VI, pp.920-21)

An impersonal unity can thus no longer be presupposed by one who, unable to be 'real' and yet discontent with the artificiality of the mask, hovers between these two extremes and is therefore highly uncertain as to the nature of his own self.

Malte's uncertainty in this respect is also reflected in his attitude to childhood. In the poem 'Das Kind' the child had radiated an aura of completeness and unity - '... zuweilen tritt das runde / seiende Gesicht aus dem Profil, / klar und ganz wie eine volle Stunde' - but now childhood is no longer remembered as a period of unselfconscious harmony. It is viewed rather as an age of disturbance which has to be endured and overcome before entering the relatively carefree world of the majority of adults:

Das eigentümlich Unbegrenzte der Kindheit, das Unverhältnismäßige, das Nie-recht-Absehbare, das würde dann überstanden sein ... Es war leicht zu beobachten, daß die Erwachsenen sehr wenig davon beunruhigt wurden ... (VI, p.89)

Malte, of course, is the exception, and does not find security in adulthood either, for because of his lingering inward uncertainty his relationship to the outside world remains complicated. The writer of the Neue Gedichte had, ideally, considered himself impenetrable and could thus devote himself freely to the depiction of external objects and beings, whereas Malte, who is unable to come to terms with the complexities of his own personality, cannot hope to comprehend the world around him. Malte's preoccupation with the turmoil and suffering of Paris life rather than with the protected parks of the Jardin des Plantes is an external symptom of his inward perplexity.

Further insight into the nature of Malte's dilemma is provided by his concern with the problem of death, and here again it is clear that, in comparison with the Neue Gedichte, a shift of emphasis has occurred. In the poem 'Todes-Erfahrung' Rilke had realised that human mortality is something which puts the whole of one's existence into question, but had chosen to emphasise that an awareness of it can also enrich our lives:

Doch als du gingst, da brach in diese Bühne  
ein Streifen Wirklichkeit durch jenen Spalt  
durch den du hingingst ... (I, p.518)

In Malte, however, this gives way to a disturbing sense that death poses the most vital existential question, and that it too threatens to undermine the very foundations of artistic creativity. In the early pages of the first book it has already thrown the daily routine of the villagers into turmoil: 'Und alle taten ihr Tagwerk schlecht und vergaßen das Heu einzubringen, weil sie sich bei Tage ängstigten vor der Nacht' (VI, p.719), and one remembers that Rilke also, under the influence of Rodin, had stressed the importance of a disciplined routine for his poetry. This crumbles when confronted with the transience of human existence.

Malte, moreover, does not just treat death as a cold fact with which one is ultimately forced to reckon, but lends it almost apocalyptic proportions. The death of Christoph Detlev Brigge, for example, plays such a prominent role that it virtually assumes an identity of its own; its impact intensifies until it brings about a general crisis which pervades the whole spectrum of life's activities - '... und die Kühe, welche kalbten in dieser Zeit, waren hilflos und verschlossen' (VI, p.719). Although each individual is said to carry his own death within him, it soon becomes



clear that each death reaches far beyond the bounds of the particular individual to whom it belongs. Even the flies do not simply die in isolation but contaminate their environment with the atmosphere of death: 'Und endlich krochen sie überall und bestarben langsam das ganze Zimmer' (VI, p.860).

Malte's treatment of the themes of death and self-identity demonstrates, therefore, that these problems contributed significantly to the tension that underlies his outlook, yet by the same token it is evident that they also open up into areas which are less easy to isolate or define. When, for example, Malte uses 'es' to refer to the death of his dog (VI, p.860), one is left with the impression that he is aware of a dimension inaccessible to logical analysis, the mystery of which cannot be conveyed adequately by the words 'der Tod'. The impersonal pronoun carries the necessary vague suggestiveness, and this is probably the reason for its frequent appearance in Malte's accounts of his childhood experiences of ghosts. 'Ich habe es gesehen', exclaims his mother, while telling him of the strange occurrence that followed Ingeborg's death, and goes on to describe how the dog 'begann rund herum zu springen, um etwas, das nicht da war' (VI, p.791). In both of these examples it is a dog that senses an extra presence and this awareness is then communicated to the human bystanders. Thus the implication on both occasions is that Malte is dealing with something whose existence is indirectly indicated by the visible world, yet which is itself invisible and consequently eludes precise clarification or depiction.

Malte's pre-occupation with the invisible grows as the novel progresses, and it becomes increasingly obvious that a sphere of reality is being denoted which is latent in a variety of situations and threatens to emerge at any opportunity. It is not restricted to his experiences of death and ghosts, but even appears in his description of a Paris street, where he is more interested in the houses 'die nicht mehr da waren' (VI, p.749). In the second half of the book the 'absence' of a house again brings an awareness of an invisible presence, which this time overpowers not only Malte but also the adults who are with him:

Es wurde mir klar, daß alle die deutlichen großen Menschen, die eben noch gesprochen und gelacht hatten, gebückt herumgingen und sich mit etwas Unsichtbarem beschäftigten; daß sie zugaben, daß da etwas war, was sie nicht sahen. Und es war schrecklich, daß es stärker war als sie alle. (VI, p.841)

In his attempts to convey meaningful information about that which so far has been delineated in terms of the 'invisible', the author is constantly forced to try and stretch the boundaries of human thought and language, and the range of vocabulary he uses in this endeavour is particularly illuminating. At a first level there is Malte's fear of 'das Große', which had not troubled him since childhood but now re-emerges as he is awaiting electrical treatment (VI, p.764). Later, in a discourse on the theatre, this word is replaced by one that suggests proportions of still greater immensity as he speaks of 'Angst vor dem Äußersten' (VI, p.924), and if this takes the reader to the far reaches of his imagination, then with other phrases these limits are broken through and left behind, for now Malte carries him into the regions of 'das Unbegrenzte', 'das Unbegreifliche', 'das Unverhältnismäßige', and so on (VI, pp.891,922).

These expressions, because they represent that which Malte is no longer able to 'encompass', are clearly linked with the poetic tension we have traced in both the lyric and the prose work. At the same time, however, as a result of their similarity to the language of the mystic via negationis, they contain strongly religious overtones and thus raise the question as to whether Rilke is also drawing a connection between Malte's conflicts and the existence of a spiritual reality. A clear warning is sounded early in the novel concerning the dangers of oversimplification and misunderstanding when it comes to speaking about God: 'Ist es möglich, daß es Leute gibt, welche "Gott" sagen und meinen, es wäre etwas Gemeinsames?' (VI, p.728). Indeed, Malte himself studiously avoids any direct references to God in the first half of the book, and even when he quotes from the thirtieth chapter of Job he omits the section in which Job calls upon God, resuming his quotation with the last verse of the chapter (VI, p.757). Perhaps by the second half of the 'Aufzeichnungen' Malte is beginning to feel that he has painted a sufficiently clear picture of his experiences to be able to use the word 'God' without fear of excessive misunderstanding, for now God is mentioned with increasing regularity as the novel moves towards its conclusion.

One passage from the second half of the book calls for special attention, in that it clarifies Malte's attitude to this whole question, and the fact that very similar passages can be found in Rilke's correspondence indicates that, although

the previous discussion has centred upon Malte's outlook, it has actually never moved very far from the poet himself:<sup>7</sup>

Aber seitdem habe ich mich fürchten gelernt mit der wirklichen Furcht, die nur zunimmt, wenn die Kraft zunimmt, die sie erzeugt. Wir haben keine Vorstellung von dieser Kraft, außer in unserer Furcht. Denn so ganz unbegreiflich ist sie, so völlig gegen uns, daß unser Gehirn sich zersetzt an der Stelle, wo wir uns anstrengen, sie zu denken. Und dennoch, seit einer Weile glaube ich, daß es unsere Kraft ist, alle unsere Kraft, die noch zu stark ist für uns. Es ist wahr, wir kennen sie nicht, aber ist es nicht gerade unser Eigenstes, wovon wir am wenigsten wissen? Manchmal denke ich mir, wie der Himmel entstanden ist und der Tod: dadurch, daß wir unser Kostbarstes von uns fortgerückt haben, weil noch so viel anderes zu tun war vorher und weil es bei uns Beschäftigten nicht in Sicherheit war. Nun sind Zeiten darüber vergangen, und wir haben uns an Geringeres gewöhnt. Wir erkennen unser Eigentum nicht mehr und entsetzen uns vor seiner äußersten Großheit. Kann das nicht sein? (VI, pp.861-2)

In this concentration upon fear the passage brings into focus the themes we have already examined by showing how they are related to the problem of the existence and nature of God. Malte is never concerned with self-identity, death, or the invisible as abstractions, but deals rather with the ways in which they affect his own experience, and in each case they manifest themselves in terms of fear. When he dresses up in front of the mirror and suddenly sees in it a separate 'self' instead of his own reflection, Malte is filled with a fear which verges upon terror (VI, pp.807-8); when, in childhood, he is troubled by insomnia, this is said to be caused by 'Todesangst' (VI, p.860); and again, remembering his visit to the Schulin's house and its accompanying sense of the invisible, he writes 'Meine Angst steigerte sich ...' (VI, p.842). Now, in his reflections, he implies that not only 'Himmel' and 'Tod' but all these experiences are different manifestations of an incomprehensible power, which demonstrates its existence only through the channel of fear or dread.

Although Malte traces this underlying reality back to its origins within man's own being, he also perceives that over the span of history it has become separated from humanity to such an extent that it now confronts man as something immense and threatening. Rilke uses a similar argument in a letter to Lotte Hepner written in 1915, and elucidates the point by referring explicitly to God: 'Gott und Tod waren nun draußen, waren das

Andere, und das Eine war unser Leben ...'.<sup>8</sup> In other words, that which was originally an integral part of human consciousness has since become so distant that it is now a quite separate distinctly 'other' dimension, and for this reason Malte is able to say of the prodigal son that 'Er vergaß Gott beinah über der harten Arbeit, sich ihm zu nähern' (VI, p.947).

Malte, therefore, finds himself confronted with a spiritual reality which is immensely threatening and which can best be summarised by the notion of 'das Entsetzliche'. He is aware of 'Die Existenz des Entsetzlichen in jeden Bestandteil der Luft' (VI, p.776) and concludes his thoughts on death and heaven with the words 'Wir ... entsetzen uns vor seiner äußersten Großheit'. In the course of the book, however, his relationship with this indescribable dimension becomes increasingly ambivalent. He does not merely attempt to flee from his experiences of 'das Entsetzliche', for its effect is also magnetic; it produces not only fear but a deep longing to recover a world which has been lost. This ambivalent response is depicted most lucidly in his description of a man sitting at a café table:

So saß er da und wartete, bis es geschehen sein würde.  
Und wehrte sich nicht mehr. Und ich wehre mich noch.  
Ich wehre mich, obwohl ich weiß, daß mir das Herz schon  
heraushängt ... doch habe ich jenen Mann nur begreifen  
können, weil auch in mir etwas vor sich geht, das an-  
fängt, mich von allem zu entfernen und abzutrennen.  
(VI, p.755)

Malte is constantly torn between embracing that which is sensed on these occasions and turning away from it as something disturbing and painful.

He goes on in the same passage to re-state the inadequacy of his previous understanding of the world and indicates the consequences of this failure for his writing: 'Die Zeit der anderen Auslegung wird anbrechen, und es wird kein Wort auf dem anderen bleiben, und jeder Sinn wird wie Wolken sich auflösen und wie Wasser niedergehen' (VI, p.756). Here too an ambivalence is apparent. These words resemble Jesus' apocalyptic message 'Es wird die Zeit kommen, in welcher ... nicht ein Stein auf dem andern gelassen wird, der nicht zerbrochen werde' and, as in Christian eschatology, their connotations are not solely negative.<sup>9</sup> Beyond the impending chaos lies a new interpretation of reality:

Aber es wird ein Tag kommen, da meine Hand weit von mir sein wird, und wenn ich sie schreiben heißen werde, wird sie Worte schreiben, die ich nicht meine ... Aber diesmal werde ich geschrieben werden. Ich bin der Eindruck, der sich verwandeln wird. Oh, es fehlt nur ein kleines, und ich könnte das alles begreifen und gutheißen. Nur ein Schritt, und mein tiefes Elend würde Seligkeit sein. (VI, p.756)

Although he looks forward to this future time, at the moment he is caught between the old and the new, unable to take the step which will transform 'Elend' into 'Seligkeit'.

Malte's hesitancy to allow himself to be drawn into something which he does not comprehend can be seen again in his account of a vision he had as a child while groping on the floor for a lost pencil. The lines quoted above forecast a time when Malte's hand would work independently of his mind, and yet this possibility had already presented itself to him when he was younger: he is taken back at the peculiarity and independence of his own hand when quite suddenly another hand appears from the wall:

Sie suchte in ähnlicher Weise von der anderen Seite her, und die beiden gespreizten Hände bewegten sich blind aufeinander zu. Meine Neugierde war noch nicht aufgebraucht, aber plötzlich war sie zu Ende, und es war nur Grauen da. Ich fühlte, daß die eine von den Händen mir gehörte und daß sie sich da in etwas einließ, was nicht wieder gutzumachen war. (VI, p.795)

Once more the same ambivalence predominates, for Malte is both attracted and repulsed by this apparition and his reaction to it alternates between curiosity and horror. In fact, the appearance of the hand affects Malte in much the same way as the novel was later to affect its author, and this can be seen by referring back to Rilke's letter to Lou Salomé. The uncontrollable elements which had begun to challenge the poet's mastery in the Neue Gedichte, and which then pervade the pages of Malte, constitute not only a threat but also 'eine Strömung ... die mich wegrißt und hinübertreibt'.<sup>10</sup>

It is at this point that the ideas of Rudolf Otto may be usefully introduced, for the following characteristic lines from Das Heilige could almost be read as a commentary upon Malte's ambivalent relationship to 'das Entsetzliche':

So grauenvoll-furchtbar das Dämonisch-Göttliche dem Gemüte erscheinen kann, so lockend-reizvoll ist es gleichzeitig. Und die Kreatur, die vor ihm erzittert in demütigstem Verzagen, hat immer zugleich den Antrieb, sich zu ihm hinzuwenden, ja es irgendwie sich anzueignen.<sup>11</sup>

Here Otto describes the experience of the holy in a way which is remarkably similar to the pattern that has begun to emerge from Rilke's work. The resemblance is, moreover, by no means coincidental, for, despite differences in style and approach, both poet and theologian are attempting to come to terms with a dimension that manifests itself in a twofold relationship of attraction and repulsion as something 'Other'. In order to discover just how far these similarities extend it is worth considering Otto's analysis in greater detail.

There is little sense of internal tension in Otto's work, as there was in Rilke's, and this is because its ideas develop not so much as a self-conscious dialogue with attitudes he had previously held, but are rather delineated in contrast to an earlier theological tradition. It is, in fact, a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the confusion between human and religious qualities that had characterised nineteenth-century theological liberalism which provides the point of reference for Otto's examination of the 'holy'. His first concern is to re-establish the uniqueness of religious experience, and thus he begins by attempting to distinguish it from that which is merely ethical or emotional.

Whereas Ritschl and his followers had located the relevance of Christianity primarily within the sphere of morality, and had consequently tended to equate holiness with righteousness, Otto maintains that the holy must be given a far broader frame of reference. He is equally uneasy about Schleiermacher's concentration upon the relationship between religious and ordinary emotions, as this had resulted in a failure to demonstrate any qualitative distinction between the two areas. In their adoption of a methodology which had centred upon man's experience of the spiritual Otto felt that many nineteenth-century thinkers had either neglected or else totally ignored those aspects of God's nature that could not easily be assimilated by the human intellect. It is precisely these which Otto wishes to restore to their rightful position:

Es ist ganz zweifellos, daß auch das Christentum 'vom Zorne Gottes' zu lehren habe, trotz Schleiermacher und Ritschl. Dabei ist wieder sogleich einleuchtend, daß wir es bei diesem Wort nicht mit einem eigentlichen, verständigen 'Begriffe' zu tun haben, sondern nur mit einem Begriffs-Ähnlichen, mit einem Ideogramm oder reinen Deute-Zeichen eines eigentümlichen Gefühls-momentes im religiösen Erleben, eines solchen aber, das seltsam abdrängenden, mit Scheu erfüllenden Charakters ist und durchaus die Kreise derer stört, die nur Güte, Milde, Liebe, Vertraubarkeit und im allgemeinen nur Momente der Welt-Zugekehrtheit im Göttlichen anerkennen wollen. (DH p.22)

He is pre-occupied, like Rilke, with something threatening and disturbing, and it is interesting to note that Otto also uses the figure of the broken circle in this context. The apparently secure yet artificially confined world of those who preferred to emphasise God's 'Welt-Zugekehrtheit' is penetrated and destroyed by a reality which eludes liberal terminology.

In order to restrict the possibility of misunderstanding he coins the term 'numinous' to denote an a priori reality, which he later describes as 'überweltlich', 'übernatürlich', and utterly distinct from all forms of natural experience. It is, in short, 'das Ganz andere':

Dieses selber aber, nämlich das religiös Mysteriöse, das echte Mirum, ist, um es vielleicht am treffendsten auszudrücken, das 'Ganz andere', das thateron, das anyad, das alienum, das Fremde und Befremdende, das aus dem Bereiche des Gewohnten, Verstandenen und Vertrauten und darum 'Heimlichen' schlechterdings Herausfallende und zu ihm in Gegensatz sich Setzende und darum das Gemüt mit starrem Staunen Erfüllende. (DH p.33)

Having laid this foundation, Otto moves on to focus his attention more exclusively upon the various ways in which the numinous affects human experience, and adopts the Latin phrase 'mysterium tremendum' to encapsulate the dual response brought about by all genuinely religious perception. The author devotes the fourth chapter of his work to different aspects of the 'tremendum', which for him represents the repelling 'Otherness' of the numinous. As in Malte, it expresses itself primarily through the channel of fear. This is, furthermore, a medium which is on no account to be confused with fear of visible or tangible objects, but which often 'zeigt sich in der Gewalt und dem Reiz, den auch auf hohen Stufen der allgemeinen Gemüts-bildung immer noch das "Grausen" in den "Spuk"- und "Gespenster"-Erzählung hat' (DH p.18). In his quest for clarity Otto again finds it helpful to draw from the vocabulary of other languages, and in

this case he feels that the Greek 'sebastos' and the English 'awe' evoke the supernatural uncanniness of his subject more precisely.

Whereas the 'tremendum' fills man with a sense of his own nothingness and insignificance, the 'mysterium' emphasises for Otto the opposite, attracting pole of the same numinous reality: 'Anderseits aber ist er offenbar zugleich etwas eigentümlich Anziehendes, Bestrickendes, Faszinierendes, das nun mit dem abdrängenden Momente des tremendum in eine seltsame Kontrastharmonie tritt' (DH p.43). It is this aspect of the holy, referred to by Otto in the fifth chapter as 'das Fascinans', that accounts for experiences of conversion, in that it is frequently accompanied by profound feelings of 'Seligkeit' or 'Entzücken'. Just as awe was not to be confused with ordinary fear, so too is it important to distinguish the state of blessedness from that of happiness, for, like the biblical 'peace that passes all understanding', it derives from an incomprehensible, transcendent dimension. From this point Otto proceeds in the second half of his book to survey some of the major occurrences of both facets of the numinous in religious and cultural history, before returning, in the final chapters, to substantiate his claim that the numinous must be viewed as an a priori category.

There is little doubt, therefore, that, in its central argument at least, Das Heilige bears a close resemblance to one of the major themes of Malte; both works are concerned with an 'Otherness' which produces an ambivalent response in the human subject. Yet there are, of course, obvious differences between the two writers, which can scarcely be overlooked. Fülleborn, in his book Das Strukturproblem der späten Lyrik Rilkes, also explores and investigates the similarities between Rilke and Otto, but comes to the conclusion that Rilke's endeavours to speak of the numinous should be termed 'im Gegensatz zu der von Otto postulierten Synthesis a priori einen Brückenschlag a posteriori'.<sup>12</sup> Fülleborn's contrast is justified to the extent that Otto's role, as a theologian, is to analyse and expound given beliefs, whereas Rilke, as a poet, aims to present the reader with a crystallisation of human experience. Because of this, Otto, from start to finish, is intent upon establishing the given, a priori nature of his subject, while Rilke tends to move in the reverse direction. Rilke's awareness of 'das Andere' comes, as it were, at the end of a long chain of experience, and



even then it is described, not as something totally distinct from human reality, but as a phenomenon which was originally rooted within man's own consciousness. Otto, on the other hand, prefers to speak of 'das Ganz andere', and this forms the starting-point of his discussion, from which he then turns to examine its empirical manifestations. It is clearly as a result of this that he chooses the medium of the theological treatise, for, working from an established pre-supposition, he can afford to detach himself from his subject and stand on the side-lines as an analytical observer. The novelist, however, in his use of the first person narrator, creates the impression of greater involvement with his protagonist, as well as a sense of urgency and immediacy that is quite different from Otto's academic style. Yet there are two basic problems in Das Heilige which Fülleborn does not discuss and which not only diminish the force of these contrasts quite considerably, but also uncover deeper levels of similarity between the two writers.

In the first instance, although he insists upon the a priori nature of his theme, Otto nevertheless constantly finds himself proceeding a posteriori. It is true that he commences his argument by postulating the existence of a numinous category, and yet, in order to achieve anything more than a repetition of a contentless and unelaborated assertion, he too is forced to rely heavily upon the evidence of human experience. Otto had in fact travelled widely in order to accumulate material for Das Heilige (like Rilke, he visited Egypt and North Africa in 1911, but from there his journeys extended to the Far East), and thus the book is able to draw upon a multitude of examples, ranging from Old Testament times to the present day as well as spanning the religious cultures of both east and west. This results in a methodology surprisingly similar to that of the liberal theologians Otto had sharply criticised in his early chapters. Schleiermacher, Ritschl and Harnack had, in their various ways, all felt it necessary to start with the facts of human experience, and from this foundation they were able to understand the 'super-structure' of Christian doctrine. In spite of his attack upon their empirical 'Welt-Zugekehrtheit', Otto proceeds in much the same way; he simply replaces ethical or emotional experience with experience of the numinous, and claims it is this alone which gives rise to the complexities of religious dogma. He is convinced that the two poles of the

numinous, the tremendum and the mysterium, merge to form one central pivot around which all Christian doctrine revolves; the former explains the belief in predestination, while the mysterium accounts for ideas such as grace, atonement and sanctification. As a method, this is scarcely distinguishable from that which led to Schleiermacher's contention that dogmatic propositions can be traced to 'den Erregungen des frommen Selbstbewußtseins'.<sup>13</sup>

As well as being inconsistent in his methodology Otto is highly ambiguous, to the point of being self-contradictory, when it comes to expressing the very nature of his subject. Although the title of Das Heilige and sections of its early chapters encourage the reader to believe that the author is dealing with the holy or numinous as an independent reality, it soon becomes apparent that this cannot be taken for granted. In the third chapter, for example, Otto speaks of 'eines objektiv gegebenen Numinosen', whereas only a few pages earlier it had been introduced as a 'Deutungs- und Bewertungs-kategorie' and a 'Gemüts-gestimmtheit' (DH p.7). It gradually emerges that his intention is to deal more with 'the idea of the holy' (as the English translator renders the title) than with the holy as such. The terms 'das Numinose' and 'das ganz Andere' are used more frequently to refer to a soul-like sphere deep within human consciousness, upon which Otto wishes to confer a priori status, than to a transcendent dimension 'outside' human contingency. He evades any discussion of the relationship between man's numinous consciousness and an independent God or numinous reality beyond it, and yet he finds it difficult on occasions to desist from referring to such a reality. In other words, notwithstanding Husserl's claim that Das Heilige is the first really phenomenological study of religion, Otto is never totally able to 'bracket' the object of man's religious perception.<sup>14</sup> Even though it is couched in the vaguest of terminology, such as 'ein Besonderes', it is still unmistakably present in certain passages:

Das, was das primitive religiöse Gefühl zuerst erfaßt in der Art der 'dämonischen Scheu', was sich ihm dann weiter entfaltet, steigert und veredelt, ist von Haus aus nicht oder noch nicht ein rationales, auch nicht ein sittliches Etwas, sondern ein Besonderes, eben ein Irrationales, worauf das Gemüt mit den beschriebenen, besonderen Gefühlsreflexen eigentümlich antwortet. (DH, p.144)

As a result of Otto's ambiguity the reader is left in doubt as to whether he is being presented with a psychology of religion or with a theological exposition of the ways in which the non-rational aspects of God are manifested in human consciousness. In the final analysis, Otto's ultimate point of reference seems to hover uncertainly between an immanent and a transcendent dimension.

It is here that Otto's proximity to Rilke is again clearly revealed. The poet, through the medium of Malte's reflections upon death and heaven, had described a line of movement which originated deep within man himself, but then moved away from him in order finally to curve backwards and confront him in opposition; an identical pattern occurs repeatedly in Das Heilige, and particularly in the following passage from one of the later chapters:

Solcher Art ist das Numinose. Es bricht auf aus dem tiefsten Erkenntnis-grunde der Seele selber, zweifellos nicht vor und nicht ohne weltliche und sinnliche Gegebenheiten und Erfahrungen, sondern in diesen und zwischen diesen. Aber es entspringt nicht aus ihnen, sondern nur durch sie. Sie sind Reiz und 'Veranlassung', daß er selber sich rege, sich rege und sich anfänglich sogleich naiv und unmittelbar einflechte und einwebe in das Weltlich-Sinnliche selber, bis es dieses in allmählicher Läuterung von sich stößt und es sich selbst schlechthin entgegengesetzt. (DH p.148)

Although this opposing and threatening spiritual reality lacks an unambiguously transcendent source, this in no way diminishes the force of its present 'Otherness'; it would in fact be more accurate to say that it is thereby intensified because it precludes the hope of a mediation independent of man. In presupposing the independent nature of God orthodox belief had been able to conceive not only of a divine confrontation with man, but also of the possibility that God, from his side, could provide a mediating revelation of himself; this was personified in the figure of Christ. For both Rilke and Otto, however, the idea of a revelation 'given' from without can have little meaning, and consequently they can place no great value upon the mediation of Christ; they tend instead to see him more in terms of a distraction from man's true spiritual quest. It is in these terms that Christ is spoken of in the closing pages of Malte:

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Ach, der für die Schwachen ein Helfer war, ist diesen Starken ein Unrecht; wo sie schon nichts mehr erwarteten, als den unendlichen Weg, da tritt sie noch einmal im spannenden Vorhimmel ein Gestalteter an und verwöhnt sie mit Unterkunft und verwirrt sie mit Mannheit. Seines starkbrechenden Herzens Linse nimmt noch einmal ihre schon parallelen Herzstrahlen zusammen, und sie, die die Engel schon ganz für Gott zu erhalten hofften, flammen auf in der Dürre ihrer Sehnsucht ... (VI, p.937)

In spite of Otto's censure of Schleiermacher for not finding a suitable place for Christ in his theology, he himself scarcely overcomes this problem with his reduction of doctrinal statements about Christ to experiences of the numinous nature of men's encounter with him. Christ was, admittedly, the greatest 'diviner' of God in history, but, according to Otto, one should be wary of referring to him in a way which '... einen Nachdruck verleiht, der sie ungebührlich in den Mittelpunkt des religiösen Interesses rückt, den doch nur Eines einnehmen darf: das Gotterlebnis selber' (DH p.215). In this manner he echoes Abelone's desire in Malte 'unauffällig und unmittelbar mit Gott in Beziehung zu kommen' (VI, P.938).

Until such a relationship can be achieved, however, one is left with an unmediated gulf between man and the 'Other', in which language is stretched to its limit. Like Rilke, Otto is forced to rely predominantly upon negative terminology, such as 'unheimlich' and 'unbegreiflich', and thereby associates himself with the via negationis: "Aber nach der via negationis sagen wir, daß es nicht nur Grund und Superlativ sei alles Gedenkbaren. Gott ist, in sich selbst, noch eine Sache für sich" (DH, p.54). Nevertheless, in order to avoid the criticism of total irrationalism, he feels the need to establish the nature of his subject more precisely, and yet he is constantly hindered by the finiteness of the language at his disposal. The most he can do is to use every means of suggestion available, and the following lines describe both his dilemma and his approach:

Man kann dem Hörer zu ihrem Verständnis nur dadurch helfen, daß man versucht, ihn durch Erörterung zu dem Punkte seines eigenen Gemütes zu leiten, wo sie ihm dann selber sich regen, entspringen und bewußt werden muß. Man kann dieses Verfahren unterstützen, indem man ihr Ähnliches oder auch ihr charakteristisch Entgegengesetztes, das in anderen, bereits bekannten und vertrauten Gemütsbereichen vorkommt, an gibt und dann hinzufügt: 'Unser X ist dieses nicht, ist aber diesem verwandt,

jenem entgegengesetzt. Wird es dir nun nicht selber einfallen? Das heißt: unser X ist nicht im strengen Sinne lehrbar, sondern nur anregbar, erweckbar - wie alles, was 'aus dem Geiste' kommt. (DH p.7)

To this end he uses 'ideograms', as he calls them, which do not aspire to define the numinous but merely to communicate it indirectly, sometimes by way of contrast and sometimes by means of analogy.

In Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens (II, p.94), a poem written four years after the publication of Malte, Rilke also adopts the analogical approach, and in so doing he closely parallels Otto's idea that the numinous cannot be conveyed but only evoked. In order to indicate the depths of 'das Herz', or the human consciousness, Rilke uses the analogy of a mountain landscape, consisting in its lower reaches of 'die letzte Ortschaft' and 'ein letztes Gehöft', and then moving upwards to encompass 'Steingrund', 'Absturz' and finally the space in which birds circle 'um der Gipfel reine Verweigerung'. Rilke deals with the problem of expressing unknown parts of his being by commencing with the known; 'Worte' and 'Gefühl' are compared with 'Ortschaft' and 'Gehöft'. When he then extends his description to include the mountain slopes and peaks he continues to stress their function as images of human consciousness by his repetition of 'auf den Bergen des Herzens'. Although at a certain stage in his ascent the poet can no longer find exact equivalents for his images - 'Aber der Wissende? Ach, der zu wissen begann / und schweigt nun ...' - he hopes to indicate the nature of the unknowable by clarifying its relationship to the known.

Malte had looked forward to the time when his problems of expression would be resolved, and had prophesied: 'Aber diesmal werde ich geschrieben werden'. For Rilke in 1914, however, the time of the new interpretation had still not arrived, and in this poem he can only map out the limits to which the 'sayable' extends before silence sets it. Otto, too, balks at the impossibility of his undertaking, constantly re-emphasising that he is struggling with a realm which 'entzieht ... sich aller Sagbarkeit' (DH, p.80). Their dilemma is crystallised in the words of Bernard of Cluny quoted in Das Heilige, and here translated from the Latin: 'I can as little tell of it as I can touch the skies with my finger, or run upon the sea or make a dart stand still in the air'.<sup>15</sup> In the final analysis, therefore, the works of Rilke and Otto reflect the inadequacy of human

language to express the numinous, and by the same token they bear witness to a separation between man and the 'Other'. It is this separation which emerges in a variety of ways in the pages of the periodical Der Brenner, which is the subject of the following chapter.

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#### References

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  8. Briefe 1914-21, p.89.
  9. Luke XXI. 6 (Luther translation).
  10. Briefe 1907-14, p.157.
  11. First published Breslau, 1917. Here quoted from 17th edition (Gotha, 1929), p.43. Further references to this edition will be provided in brackets within the text under the abbreviation DH.
  12. (Heidelberg, 1960), p.53.
  13. See above, p.7.
  14. See J. Macquarrie, 20th-Century Religious Thought (London, 1963), p.213.
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### 3. The early development of *Der Brenner*.

The Austrian periodical Der Brenner is known to many only as a result of the subsequent fame of certain of its contributors. Either it is the journal which was responsible for first publishing the poems of Georg Trakl, whose significance grew when he was seen in the context of literary Expressionism; or perhaps it is known to certain theologians as a somewhat minor publication in which Ferdinand Ebner, posthumously to be granted some measure of fame as a result of his connection with Martin Buber and Emil Brunner, gave expression to his ideas on the centrality of language and the I/Thou relationship in the sphere of religious thought. As an entity in its own right under the editorial guidance of Ludwig von Ficker it has been largely ignored. Discussion of it has been confined to brief documentations, as in F. Schlawe's Literarische Zeitschriften, short chapters in collections of essays on various topics, such as K. Thieme's 'Der Brenner in der Finsternis' from Minotaurus (edited by A. Döblin), or a small body of material consisting of one or two Austrian dissertations and a few remote magazine or newspaper articles.<sup>1</sup> None of these seem to have succeeded in establishing the historical significance of the subject with which they are dealing. Thieme points out that no major work on the history of German literature in the twentieth century sees fit to mention Der Brenner; yet his own account of its development is content merely to outline the ideas of its major contributors individually without attempting to place them in a clear cultural context, and because of this shortcoming his chapter does little to persuade the reader that the oversight of literary historians has been a particularly important one.

Nevertheless, in the pages of Der Brenner vital literary and theological issues characteristic of the early twentieth-century period are brought together in a unique way - not merely in the contributions of two or three well-known writers seen in separation, but in the manner in which these and others combine to create a discussion of the problematical nature of religious language and thought. At a time when a bewildering variety of religious opinion was being put forward in the areas of both literature and theology, Der Brenner, in its combination of these two spheres, succeeded in mitigating the confusion by focussing its attention upon a choice between two major relig-



ious outlooks which were then prevalent, and as such it helps to clarify distinctions which are essential for an understanding of the religious climate of the period.

Founded in Innsbruck by Ludwig von Ficker, Der Brenner continued, with two major interruptions caused by the First World War and the rise of Nazism, from 1910 right up to the early 1950s. The years of its most crucial development, however, extended from 1910 to 1923, the latter being the date of the visible split among its leading contributors. This period itself can be divided into two stages of development, with the four-year intermission caused by the war forming a convenient dividing line. From 1910 to 1914 the main orientation of the journal is cultural, and the editor's 'Geleitwort' in the founding issue of Der Brenner, described in its first volumes as a 'Halbmonatsschrift für Kunst und Kultur', expresses the following aims:

Darum wollen wir trotz der wenig ermunternden Aussicht den Versuch wagen und gestützt auf ernstes Wollen in der Öffentlichkeit mit dem Unternehmen festen Fuß zu fassen suchen, indem wir uns bemühen, dasselbe so auszubauen, daß es uns die Begriffe: Kultur, Kunst, Dichtung lebendig und fruchtbar erhält.<sup>2</sup>

The contents of this issue, with an essay, poems, two short stories, and a satirical piece attacking the neglect of culture in Innsbruck, set a pattern which, with few modifications, is pursued through to 1914. The essay, Carl Dallago's 'Frühling als Wecker', receives pride of place and thereby underlines the importance of the essayistic reflection in Der Brenner, although in the pre-war period such pieces are generally restricted to one per issue, with the greater amount of space being allotted to literary contributions.

In 1919, however, this pattern is replaced by one which gives far greater weight to articles dealing with specifically religious or theological topics, while poetry and narrative play a relatively minor role. In a contemporary article from the newspaper Die Junge Schweiz Paul Walser points out the change in orientation of Der Brenner and sees its central concern as a 'jenseits aller Historie und Psychologie erfolgende <sup>(r)</sup>Einbruch des Transzendenten, Ewigen, Absoluten, in den menschlichen Geist'.<sup>3</sup> Ficker himself claims in 1920 'denn gibt es ein religiöses Problem, so ist es in seiner Aktualität im Brenner aufgeschlossen' (6, pp.820-1). Yet in spite of this clear distinc-

tion between its two phases, the development of Der Brenner is a consistent one. The change of emphasis brings with it no substantial change of intention, but merely a growing awareness of the problems with which it had always dealt, and correspondingly an understanding that these problems could most helpfully be articulated within a more theological context. The nature and scope of the religious problem to which Ficker refers can therefore be established most clearly by tracing the progress of Der Brenner from its earliest stage.

One of Ficker's motives for originally publishing Der Brenner was to create an outlet for the work of his friend, Dallago, and although the latter's writing may appear laborious and his ideas often unoriginal or even pretentious to a present-day reader, it is these which help to mould the journal's character in its early volumes. The roles of later contributors are brought out in full relief through their relationship to Dallago's thought. At the heart of this thought lies an attitude which can only be described as one of humanistic religiosity, whose principle characteristics may be found in summarised form in a miniature 'manifesto' within an essay entitled 'Verfall':

Wir aber, unsre Aufgabe erkennend und lösend, vielleicht würdig der größten Humanisten aller Zeiten, - wir stehen zur Menschennatur gegen die Mächte des Verfalls: gegen Einsicht und Wissen, gegen Moral und Sitte, gegen Satzung und Gesellschaft, gegen jede Art Herrschaft des Intellekts und der Menge, - wir verhelfen einzig den Menschen zu ihrer Natur - zum Menschen zurück. (2, p.74)

This somewhat vague expression of humanistic values is frequently augmented by a mystical or religious attitude to humanity and the realm of nature, and this finds its expression in pantheistic formulations such as 'die Natur ist der Leib der Gottheit' (4, p.370).

In order to find support for the humanistic aspects of his thought Dallago turns to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. In Nietzsche he finds sympathy not only for his antagonism to the rule of the intellect but also for his rejection of conventional standards of morality. In a series of articles on 'Nietzsche und - der Philister' he contrasts these standards with an essential life-force transcending intellect and morality, and dismisses as 'Philister' those who neglect this basic vitality within each human being (1, p.25ff.). Following this line of thought a step further he finds that he can share Nietzsche's

disdain for 'die Menge', in which such positive individual values become suffocated by mass conformity to accepted norms. Dallago carefully selects certain features of Nietzsche's philosophy to fortify his own position, and it is difficult to rid oneself of the impression that his reading of the philosopher has been superficial. Whereas Nietzsche's comments on the oppressive use of the intellect come at the end of a detailed critique of elements of the European intellectual tradition, Dallago appears to lift them out of their context, accept them unquestioningly, and use them rather as a starting-point for his analysis.

The parallel influence of Taoism, that which gives his essays their religious colouring, is one to which Dallago is prepared to give more consideration and it persists in his writing long after Nietzsche has been neglected. Taoism provides the framework which Dallago considers most suitable for communicating the nature of the spiritual force that underlies all human and natural existence and for helping man to understand its mysteries:

Aber die Wirklichkeit ist irrational, und ein Rest von ihr läßt sich rational erfassen - vielleicht das Belangloseste ... Tao bedeutet mir das Einigende. Mit Tao ist alles zu einem vorhanden ... Es ließe sich durch Suchen auch nicht finden, es muß aus einem herauswachsen. (2, pp.166,169,172)

'Tao', therefore, is seen as an immanent force inherent within human reality, which enables man to relate to a universe which is otherwise incomprehensible. Dallago often talks about Taoism in terms of 'der Anschluß' (2, p.199), a connection between man and man and between man and nature, without which each individual would remain in isolation. Realisation of 'der Anschluß' is basically a question of receptivity - 'indem ich ungemein willig werde allen Regungen der Tiefe' (2, p.312) - and this, in his view, can normally be achieved through the experience of love or of nature. The majority of Dallago's essays begin and end, often rather artificially, with a paragraph of nature depiction.

His ideas are usually elaborated in terms of contrasts and this is most clearly reflected in the essay 'Philister', where he attacks those who deprive life of its spontaneity by upholding external institutions rather than the immediacy of spiritual experience:

Sein Dasein empfängt das Leben nicht mehr vom Quell. Es hat sich um sein Menschentum eine gleißende Kruste - eine aufsaugende Umpanzerung gebildet, die alles Leben in Empfang nimmt, trübt und verflacht und so erst weiter gibt. Diese Umpanzerung ist die Vermittlung. Sie ist in der Religion da, in der Kunst, im Leben. In der Religion ist es das dogmatisierende Element, die Kirche; in der Kunst das Profanierende, die Presse; im Leben das rationalisierende, die Gesellschaft. Überall bedeuten die drei eine Veräußerlichung - eine Verschneidung - eine Verengung. (2, p.498)

This juxtaposition of genuine essence and artificial exterior, one which incidentally is characteristic of many 'Expressionist' writers who yearn for the re-discovery of 'Wesentlichkeit', is most apparent in Dallago's attitude to Christianity. He reveres Jesus, referring to him as an embodiment of 'das große Individualistische' (2, p.137), but then contrasts his positive qualities with the Christian institution of the church and its dogma: 'Der Begriff Sünde ist vielleicht erst die erste Unreinheit. ... Das Erlösungsbedürfnis; eine Schande für den frei geborenen gesunden Menschen' (3, pp.452,5). Again, in this attack upon Christianity it is not difficult to notice Dallago's dependence on the ideas as well as the style of Nietzsche's Der Antichrist.<sup>4</sup>

Dallago was by no means the sole representative of these views among the early contributors to Der Brenner. A. von Wallpach's poem 'Ohne Mittler', for example, respects Jesus' role as a mediator between man and God but claims too that each person can find his own path to the divine (2, p.584). Oskar Vonwiller's 'Die Kirche und die Kultur' compares Christianity unfavourably with the Brahman religion, since the latter feels no need for the concept of heresy or dogma. The driving force of a religion should not be 'Glauben' but 'Erkenntnis':

Erkenntnis ist im Buddhismus und Brahmanismus das erlösende Prinzip ... Den Christen aber soll der Glaube erlösen. Und 'Glauben' heißt: ohne zureichenden Grund für wahr halten ... (2, p.748)

Hugo Neugebauer, however, although he too shares Dallago's mystical religiosity, begins to cast doubt upon some of the assumptions underlying Dallago's thought. While the titles of several of Dallago's books - such as Das Buch der Unsicherheiten and Der große Unwissende<sup>5</sup> - suggest the necessity of uncertainty in the face of the spiritual, his work as a whole bears an unmistakable air of security and self-satisfaction,

occasionally to the extent of smugness, as in his reply to Hermann Broch's criticism of his article 'Philister' (3, p.442). Uncertainty is never conceived as a threat, merely as a stimulus, a means of penetrating to the positive quality of 'Geist'. Neugebauer's collection of aphorisms under the heading 'Einblicke' implicitly questions this sense of security. When he writes:

Wir kennen nicht die Wege zum Geiste, aber der Geist kennt die Wege zu uns und wandelt sie, wann er will. Ganz vergeblich ist es, ihn zu rufen, denn er gehorcht nur sich selbst. (3, p.130)

he introduces the possibility of an independent spiritual reality, which does not always accommodate itself to man's desire to enter into communion with it. Neugebauer does not himself pursue this thought, but it is soon expressed in a much more extreme fashion by Georg Trakl and Karl Borromäus Heinrich, both of whom represent a more serious challenge to Dallago's outlook in the pre-war period.

The inclusion of an analysis of Trakl's contribution to the development of Der Brenner entails difficulties other than the fact that he is not generally viewed in this context. As a poet who is still felt to be complex and problematical today, Trakl's role in the progress of Der Brenner cannot easily be located. In 1906, five years before his poems first came into Ficker's hands, Trakl's attitudes are expressed quite unambiguously by the main character in a dialogue entitled 'Maria Magdalena':

Die Götter lieben es, uns Menschen unlösbare Rätsel aufzugeben.  
Die Erde aber rettet uns nicht vor der Arglist der Götter;  
denn auch sie ist voll des Sinnbetörenden. Mich verwirren  
die Dinge und die Menschen.<sup>6</sup>

In his poems, however, the difficulty of penetrating to the meaning of worldly phenomena is expressed in their very opacity. The efforts of other pre-war Brenner poets such as Seifert, Wallpach and Vonwiller are generally transparent and easy to comprehend, while part of the uniqueness of Trakl's verse stems from its incomprehensibility and threatening ambiguity. The labours of many interpreters over the last sixty years have served only to emphasize the extent to which he succeeded in conveying the confusion of which he was so aware, for they have often uncovered further complexities rather than bringing much-

needed illumination.<sup>7</sup> Some critics do claim to have unravelled positive attitudes or beliefs from the maze of Trakl's work but these are often mutually exclusive. Lachmann and Zangerle, for example, propose a Christian interpretation, while others, such as Lindenberger, maintain that Trakl can be approached only from a formally aesthetic or, more precisely, Symbolist viewpoint.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, if a study of Trakl's work is to be fruitful in this context, certain basic indisputable characteristics of his poetry must be isolated from the proliferation of views that have grown around it. An initial outline for such a project may be achieved by examining a single poem in detail in order both to ascertain the nature of Trakl's ambiguity and at the same time to discover the most consistent general approach to his work.

Examples of his verse began to appear in Der Brenner in 1912 and the poem 'Dämmerung' was one of the first to be published:

Im Hof, verhext von milchigem Dämmerchein,  
Durch Herbstgebräuntes weiche Kranke gleiten.  
Ihr wächsern-runder Blick sinnt goldner Zeiten,  
Erfüllt von Träumerei und Ruh und Wein.

Ihr Siechentum schließt geisterhaft sich ein.  
Die Sterne weiße Traurigkeit verbreiten.  
Im Grau, erfüllt von Täuschung und Geläuten,  
Sieh, wie die Schrecklichen sich wirr zerstreun.

Formlose Spottgestalten huschen, kauern  
Und flattern sie auf schwarz-gekreuzten Pfaden.  
O! trauervolle Schatten an den Mauern.

Die andern fliehn durch dunkelnde Arkaden;  
Und nächstens stürzen sie aus roten Schauern  
Des Sternenwinds, gleich rasenden Mänaden.  
(I, p.48)

It is difficult to read this poem as a straightforward visual depiction of an evening scene, for such a reading is precluded by the presence of three closely related features. Firstly, whereas a conventionally descriptive lyric would take pains to establish with clarity the nature and identity of its subject, Trakl's figures remain confusingly vague. The first stanza informs the reader only that the poem is concerned with 'weiche Kranke', for the adjectival noun does not even make it clear whether it is the human or the animal world which is here being described. Although the former appears more probable, the remainder of the poem supplies no concrete evidence upon which

such a conclusion might be based. In fact, the noun 'Kranke' communicates more information than any of the subject nouns which follow, the vagueness increasing rather than diminishing with each stanza: the 'formlose Spottgestalten' of the third verse give way to a plain 'die andern' in the fourth. Secondly, the setting of the poem serves to enhance this atmosphere. Twilight is the time of day when contours become blurred, and this is concentrated into the last two words of the seventh line - 'im Grau'. This haziness then gives rise to an uncertainty of both visual and aural perception, and thus the line continues 'erfüllt von Täuschung und Geläuten'. Finally, there is confusion in the poem's movement, and this is apparent from the verbs Trakl chooses. Rarely is there a motion which is clearly defined, and the final seven lines contain several verbs, such as 'huschen', 'fliegen' and 'stürzen', which threaten to take the scene beyond the reader's field of vision.

All of these features combine to produce an elusively vague atmosphere, a blurred nebulosity rather than a sharply focussed reproduction. It is as though a conventional lyrical description cannot master the subject-matter, for it constantly flies off in directions which the poet's language cannot wholly grasp. This aspect of Trakl's style is documented in a letter of 1910 in which he writes:

Alles ist so ganz anders geworden. Man schaut und schaut -  
und die geringsten Dinge sind ohne Ende. Und man wird immer  
ärmer, je reicher man wird. (I, p.477)

and this suggests that the opacity of his work is to a certain extent a reflection of the way in which he perceives the world. His poems therefore affect the reader in quite a different way from, for example, the pieces of lyrical prose which begin and end many of Dallago's essays. In the latter the world of nature is something quite tangible which can easily be described within a few sentences; it is a world which is self-enclosed and comforting, unlike Trakl's, which is elusive and thus disturbing.

This contrast is underlined by the fact that 'Dämmerung' possesses no point of reference in a theme or an 'idea'. In other words, its disturbing qualities are not diminished by the poet taking refuge in an intellectual or a spiritual realm which could be expressed by means of definable symbols or images. It is not possible, for example, to explain the phrase 'goldne

Zeiten' in line three as a Christian paradise for which the writer yearns. Trakl's work does not permit such unambiguous interpretation. In this poem the 'goldne Zeiten' are merely a vague suggestion and no more tangible than the haziness of the evening scene already discussed. Other poems bring implicit warnings of the danger of attributing to Trakl a solution in an alternative world or set of beliefs. In 'Melancholie des Abends', for example, it is a flight of birds which directs his thoughts to 'jenen Ländern, schönen, andern' (I, p.19), but the identity of such a paradise remains as puzzling as the scene before him, for the same image of birds is often used to produce bewilderment, as in 'Schwalben irre Zeichen ziehen' of another poem (I, p.25).<sup>9</sup>

In each case, however, these images do have a specific role, and this can only be discovered if 'Dämmerung' is approached from a different point of view. When traditional expectations of a clearly visible description or of a thematic content are suspended, a structure emerges which helps alleviate the reader's initial helplessness in face of the poem's ambiguity. The poem begins with the words 'Im Hof', suggesting an enclosed space, and this sense of enclosure pervades the first five lines, explicitly in the use of the verb 'einschließen' and implicitly in the description of the subjects' gaze as 'rund'. The only reference to a reality beyond this self-enclosure within the courtyard is when the thoughts of the 'weiche Kranke' turn outwards to golden times, but this outward movement is reversed two lines later by 'Ihr Siechentum schließt geisterhaft sich ein'. Yet this in turn is contrasted immediately by 'verbreiten'. This contrapuntal pattern of movement continues throughout the remainder of the poem; the idea of enclosure is expressed by the short 'Im Grau' (which recalls 'Im Hof' of the first line) and the mention of walls in the third stanza, while the striving to break out of this imprisonment is conveyed by 'fliehen', 'zerstreun' and the appearance of 'Pfadern' (counterbalancing 'Mauern'). In this poem the outward movement not only prevails but in the last two verses is built up into a crescendo of frantic activity. Thus the last stanza forms a stark contrast to the relative peacefulness of the first. This pattern is also reflected in the poem's colours; it begins with 'milchig', 'golden' and 'weiß', but moves on to 'grau', 'schwarz', 'dunkelnd' und 'rot'. It is within this same type of structure that the images



of the poem play their role; they are not elevated to a position of autonomy symbolizing a known world outside the poem but take their place in the interplay of opposites within it. Forming a parallel to the polarity of movement and colour, the images too move backwards and forwards between illness and decay on the one hand and peacefulness, 'goldne Zeiten' and the whiteness of the stars on the other.

A reading of the poem in terms of a juxtaposition of movement, colour and image secures a foothold that would otherwise be lacking and, as opposed to reading into the poem a Christian belief or a Symbolist 'programme', it supplies a point of reference based upon the firm evidence of the text. At the same time it yields a certain amount of insight into the mind of the poet at the time of writing. Trakl's inability to restrict himself to a description of the physical world has been demonstrated, his perception of this world being constantly directed 'outwards', yet his failure to encompass the sphere towards which his mind turns has also become apparent. Like Rilke, he appears to be caught in a tension between two worlds and the polarity which constitutes the basic structure of 'Dämmerung' is quite clearly an expression and reflection of this tension.

Trakl's 'Vorstadt im Föhn', another early Brenner poem written at about the same time as 'Dämmerung', demonstrates that a contrapuntal structure is not unique to the latter (I, p.51). The first four stanzas abound in images of desolation and decay, from rats to slaughterhouses. Then in the eighteenth line the poet uses two nouns, 'Flüstern' and 'Gebilde', which do not clearly coincide with those that came before, but he immediately goes on to explain their presence:

Vielleicht Erinnerung an ein früheres Leben,  
Die mit den warmen Winden steigt und sinkt.

This rising and falling acts as a commentary upon the relationship between the poet's contrasting moods; he is torn between the despair conveyed by images of decay and the hope of a happier time in which he wishes to find refuge; the horror of the former he finds difficult to endure, while the latter appears too illusory.

At this point the objection might be raised that Dallago's writing is also based on contrasts and that, instead of underlining the distinction between the two writers, an analysis of

'Dämmerung' and 'Vorstadt im Föhn' has uncovered a fundamental similarity. This is not the case, however, for what emerges from these poems is not a statement of the difference between the realm of 'Geist' and that of the 'Philister' but an expression of a much more radical separation between two spheres of reality. As this separation is traced through further Trakl poems it becomes increasingly clear that it is a consistent characteristic of his verse, and at the same time insight is afforded into the nature of the two spheres of reality which have been mentioned.

The contrapuntal structure of the two poems already discussed reflects an attitude which often finds more explicit forms of expression. 'Frühling der Seele', published in Der Brenner in 1914, again shows Trakl's reliance upon the technique of contrasting visual imagery:

Stunde der Trauer, schweigender Anblick der Sonne; ...  
Stille blüht die Myrthe über den weißen Lidern des Toten.  
(I, p.141)

but later in the poem these tensions appear to be interpreted by means of a more spiritual terminology:

Gewaltiges Sterben und die singende Flamme im Herzen.  
Es ist die Seele ein Fremdes auf Erden.

In this way Trakl suggests that the structural polarity of his poetry might be rooted in a belief in the alienation of the soul from a world of death and decay. This is in line with some of the ideas expressed in his very early poems, such as 'Das tiefe Lied', in which the soul is invested with transcendent value separating it from the world of space and time (I, p.228). The connection between the polarity emerging from poems such as 'Dämmerung' and 'Vorstadt im Föhn' and this less ambiguous statement of a separation between the world and the soul is underlined by the fact that in many poems written between 1910 and 1913 Trakl embellishes his opposition of sensual images with marked ethical and religious overtones. In 'Menschheit' (I, p.43), for example, the Traklean counterpoint is accentuated by the use of biblical imagery, the atmosphere of despair being summarised in the line 'Hier Evas Schatten, Jagd und rotes Geld', implying the reality of evil and sin rather than simply depicting a mood of pessimism. In the same way the poem's references to

Christ and the Last Supper are evocative of innocence or even redemption, for the line 'Es wohnt in Brot und Wein ein sanftes Schweigen' counterbalances the despairing noise of verbs such as 'schellen' and 'schreien'. A year after 'Menschheit' the interplay of opposites begins to appear in a slightly different guise, and in poems such as 'Kaspar Hauser Lied' (I, p.95) Trakl deals with figures of innocence who are brought into contact with an evil world and can find no place in it. Finally, in 'Abendländisches Lied' (I, p.119), this separation is extended to a broader cultural canvas in which the decaying world of the present is compared to a superior past, dominated by innocence and sublimity. Trakl's longing for the past is also connected with the soul: this link is established not only by the similarity of these contrasts to those of 'Frühling der Seele', but also by a passage from an early prose piece, 'Verlassenheit', in which the two are equated: 'Er horcht nur mehr auf die kleine, traurige Melodie seiner Seele: Vergangenheit' (I, p.199).

To speak of Trakl's verse in these terms is not to fall back into the temptation of a symbolic interpretation. It is not necessary to say that 'weiße Sterne' in 'Dämmerung' are a 'symbol' of the poet's soul, but merely that the contrasts within that poem are a reflection of the same tension which is elsewhere given a more religious expression. For Trakl's work presents not only a belief in a radical distinction between the soul and the world, a guilty present and an innocent past, but also a parallel notion of the total separation of man from God. 'Psalm' (I, p.55), for example, concludes with a reference to 'Gottes Augen', but this image does nothing to alleviate the pessimism of the rest of the poem. God does not relieve man's pain, but merely sees the suffering to which humanity is subjected - 'Schweigsam über der Schädelstätte öffnen sich Gottes Augen' - and for Trakl there is no mediation between God and world, spiritual and transient. Because of this extreme polarisation between the physical and the spiritual of Trakl's poetry it is justifiable to describe his outlook as a dualistic one. Whether he is thinking of the split between the present and the past, the world and the soul, or the world and God, Trakl in each case sees an unbridgeable gulf:

Und der Himmel ist wie eine blaue Glocke. Es ist, als  
ob man sie tönen hörte, in tiefen, feierlichen Tönen.

Man könnte sogar vermuten, daß dort oben in den un-  
erreichbaren Höhen etwas vorgeht, wovon man nie etwas  
wissen wird. (I, p.197)

and this motivates the tensions inherent in his poetry. In Dallago's work, on the other hand, the fathomlessness of the transcendent is missing, for he is concerned rather with 'die diesseitige Fortdauer des Menschen' (4, p.101). Immanent reality is itself infinite and in that sense fathomless, yet each person possesses the potential of 'der Anschluß' and thus has the possibility of establishing contact with the source of meaning of life. Dallago therefore criticises the church in terms that could well be applied to Trakl: 'Sie stellt das Jen-  
seits an Stelle des Anschlusses und züchtet so die Gegensätz-  
lichkeit von Seele und Leib ...' (2, p.199).

K.B. Heinrich, who became closely acquainted with Trakl through Der Brenner, also gives expression in his essays to a dualism, or 'Gegensätzlichkeit', which implicitly questions Dallago's assumption of the potential unity of reality. Heinrich's dualism, moreover, is couched in terms almost identical to those of Trakl. In a contribution from 1913 entitled 'Vom toten und lebendigen Bewußtsein', he describes two experiences from his own life which have led him also to see man in terms of a distinct body and soul (4, p.532). On one occasion, while suffering from an overdose of veronal, a drug which Trakl is also known to have used,<sup>10</sup> he experienced a prolonged sensation of hovering between life and death, marked firstly by a 'Widerstreben des Körpers, sich von der Seele trennen zu müssen' (4, p.540) and then by a peaceful state during which his soul seemed to drift away from his body and then look down upon it from above. The parallel with Trakl is underlined by the fact that this essay is immediately followed by 'Frühling der Seele', which includes the line already quoted - 'Es ist die Seele ein Fremdes auf Erden'. Trakl's poetry is, moreover, peopled by semi-transparent figures such as Elis, who appear to be suspended between life and death and who have departed from this life but still form part of the earthly scene:

Ein Dornenbusch tönt.  
Wo deine mondenen Augen sind.  
O, wie lange bist, Elis, du verstorben. (I, p.84)

Another poem, appropriately entitled 'Gesang des Abgeschiedenen' (I, p.144), is dedicated by Trakl to his friend Heinrich. As well as suggesting a dualism between body and soul, Heinrich's essays also reflect his belief in a total split between God and man. In 'Christentum und Sexualität' he refers to the 'Entzweiung mit Gott' caused by original sin, and explains it as a rift between man and God brought about by sexuality (3, p.283). In 'Confiteor' he describes the same separation in the following manner: 'Die menschliche Seele leidet daran, Gott fern zu sein: sie ist ihm fern durch das Böse' (3, p.639). These lines bear witness to that discomfoting sense of alienation from the spiritual realm, a sense which is apparent in Trakl's verse but lacking in Dallago's essays.

It is important to mention at this stage that while the writing of Trakl and Heinrich might be said, in its reinstatement of the transcendence of God, to foreshadow the return to Christian orthodoxy which was increasingly to characterise Der Brenner in its post-war period, they themselves do not represent this orthodoxy. Trakl has been credited by several of his interpreters with Christian beliefs, but there is too little evidence in his work to support such a claim and too much that contradicts it. The pessimistic dualism that underlies his outlook is not mitigated by a belief in the mediating grace of God, and nowhere does he show himself capable of placing his confidence in any notion of permanent salvation through Christ. Both 'Psalm' (I, p.55) and 'Helian' (I, p.69) evoke a God who remains totally aloof from human existence; the only reflection of the divine in human reality is in man's possession of a soul but, as Trakl explains in a letter of 1913, this is also inaccessible due to its imprisonment within the body:

Ich sehne den Tag herbei, an dem die Seele in diesem unseeligen von Schwermut verpesteten Körper nicht mehr wird wohnen wollen und können, an dem sie diese Spottgestalt aus Kot und Fäulnis verlassen wird ... (I, p.519)

Heinrich describes the soul similarly as 'Odem Gottes in mir' (3, p.638) thirsting for salvation, yet this longing never appears to find fulfilment. Although on one occasion he refers to Christ's death as bringing about 'die Wiedervereinigung der Geschöpfe mit ihrem Schöpfer' (3, p.639), the generally melan-

choly and sometimes despairing tone of Heinrich's work suggests that this experience of God's grace is as elusive and distant as God himself.

The pre-war volumes of Der Brenner show, therefore, that a preoccupation with religious problems is present even in the early years of its development and at the same time reveal two quite different religious viewpoints. Whereas many of the journal's pages are dedicated to Dallago's message concerning the enrichment of life and culture through the rediscovery of the spiritual, a theme taken up by several other contributors such as Vonwiller and Seifert, the experience of Trakl and Heinrich implies that such access to the spiritual, whether within or outside man's being, is not to be taken for granted. The latter maintain a firm belief in God, but in concentrating almost exclusively upon his distance or absence they establish the hopelessness of the human predicament rather than finding ways of alleviating it.

As the First World War draws closer the outlook of Trakl and Heinrich finds various echoes in Der Brenner and this results in a growing conflict between the two religious approaches mentioned. In the first place, Ficker's willingness to publish work by well-known nineteenth-century authors and his choice of material in this respect indicate that he too is no longer totally convinced by Dallago's ideas. In 1914 extracts from Büchner's plays and the publication of his Lenz introduce the Austrian readers to a world which is both fragmented and disturbing. Selections from Dostoevsky, himself a major influence upon Trakl's early output, serve to show that a belief in God by no means releases man from his predicament, for the fates of the characters in Dostoevsky's novels seem to lie in the hands of spiritual forces which are beyond their comprehension and control. Experience of God is, in his work, aligned with that of brokenness and humility.

The discovery of Kierkegaard takes its place alongside the publication of texts by Büchner and Dostoevsky as a development of some significance. At the heart of Kierkegaard's thought is the belief in what he describes as a qualitative distinction between God and man, a fixed gulf which man cannot bridge, and therefore a conception of God as one who far surpasses the categories of ethics and logic finds frequent expression in Kierkegaard's work. The person responsible, if indirectly, for intro-

ducing the Danish thinker to the readership of Der Brenner was Theodor Haecker, who himself translated some of Kierkegaard's work and was soon to become a figure of central importance to the so-called 'Brennerkreis'. In 1913 his book Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit was published, which came into Ficker's hands shortly thereafter. Ficker then passed it on to Dallago, who in turn discussed it in a three-part review which appeared in Der Brenner in 1914 (4, pp.467ff.). While one might expect Dallago to be hostile to Kierkegaard's views, his review curiously contains a generally positive assessment of his significance. His affirmation is only achieved, however, by boldly and consistently redefining 'christlich' as 'menschlich' - 'weil ich das Große und Bedeutende am Christlichen als das Religiöse überhaupt, ja als das Menschliche, als ein von jeher im Menschen Gelegenes, ansehen muß' (4, p.519). Only after such a basic redefinition of Kierkegaard's terms of reference is he able to express his approval of the direction of his thought. As a corrective to Dallago's interpretation some essays and speeches by Kierkegaard himself, framed by Haecker's introductions and epilogues, soon appear in Der Brenner, and themselves provide ample evidence of Kierkegaard's non-humanistic orientation.

The change in direction in Der Brenner indicated by the increasingly regular publication of works by Büchner, Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard is also reflected in a shift of emphasis in the pre-war issues in the tone of the narrative pieces, which, although they play a considerable role in the constitution of Der Brenner right from the start, have so far not been mentioned. It would of course be impossible to include a satisfactory account of such a large variety of authors and works within the limited scope of this chapter, and for this reason it is more useful to refer instead to the conclusion reached by W. Bapka in his study of the early years of the periodical's development. Here he describes a transition which takes place in the narrative writing in the months leading up to the war:

Im Gegenzug aber ... ist zu bemerken, die häufige Behandlung erotischer Probleme, die die alles Überwindende Einstellung des selbstherrlichen Menschen, die Liebe zwischen Mann und Frau, und überhaupt das Verhältnis der Geschlechter in ganz ausgesuchten Situationen immer wieder zum Problem macht und eine Ahnung von Unerfüllbarkeit über alle 'Lust' ausbreitet und ein Gefühl von wirklicher Einsamkeit und Schrecken zurückläßt.<sup>11</sup>

and thus shows that in this area, too, man's ability to resolve his own problems is being questioned. Bakpa goes on to mention an increasing tendency in these writers to move beyond a psychological understanding of human relationships towards an approach which takes into account 'das Metaphysische' and in so doing reveals 'unüberwindliche Klüfte in der vollen Menschennatur'.<sup>12</sup>

When the war finally broke out it not only brought the death of Trakl and several lesser-known contributors but had the effect of delaying the inevitable clash of opinions within the 'Brennerkreis'. Publication of the journal was interrupted for over four years, and the only issue to appear during this period was the Jahrbuch of 1915, the contents of which reproduce very accurately the situation of Der Brenner at this time. It includes Trakl's last poems, a translation of Kierkegaard, Rilke's 'Verse' and, most importantly, two long essays by Dallago and Haecker respectively. Although these essays do not yet constitute an open debate between two opposing views - this did not occur until after the war - it is clear from the ideas Haecker expresses that his thought continues the new direction embarked upon by Der Brenner in the previous two years and therefore represents a further challenge to Dallago's supremacy. The differences between these two writers are already apparent in their response to the war itself. Dallago's Jahrbuch essay precedes his own paraphrase of Lao-tse entitled 'Der Anschluß an das Gesetz' (5, p.62), and outlines the importance of Lao-tse for his present time, but although he does make a minor concession to the existence of the war towards the end of the essay, it does not distract him from his almost exclusive concern with the unified world of nature and spirit contained in Taoism. Haecker, on the other hand, in 'Der Krieg und die Führer des Geistes' (5, p.130), treats the war as the burning issue and uses it to demonstrate the dangers of confusing earthly and spiritual interests. He directs the whole force of his polemic at the leading intellectuals of the time who, implicitly or explicitly, lend their support to such a war, and, by means of his concluding description of a priest accompanying a prisoner-of-war to his execution, attacks the endorsement of the war by the established church.

In 1919 Ficker still preferred to see this not as a divisive conflict within Der Brenner but as a delicately-held balance. In his 'Vorwort zum Wiederbeginn' he describes the 1915 Jahr-



buch as containing two directions in which it is possible for the age to move: '... der hohen Weisheit Chinas, die aus der Laotse Entrücktheit durch zweieinhalb Jahrtausende zu uns herüberschimmert, und der leidenschaftlichen Denk- und Glaubensinbrunst Sören Kierkegaards ...' (6, p.2). When Ficker's analysis of the position and role of Der Brenner in this foreword is compared with his 'Geleitwort' of 1910 it becomes apparent that as a journal it has undergone quite a substantial development during the preceding nine years. Having started as an organ for the discussion and enrichment of Austrian culture, it then increasingly concerned itself with the problem of religious experience within a cultural context, to the extent, finally, of being able to concentrate this problem into a choice between two different outlooks. Whether these are referred to as the wisdom of the East over against the passionate faith of Kierkegaard or Haecker, or as the harmony of Dallago's spiritual humanism contrasted with the disturbing spiritual world of Trakl and Heinrich, the antithesis is essentially the same. Ficker himself, in 1919, still seems to be torn between these two opposite ways: he is sympathetic to Dallago and yet he often speaks with the voice of Trakl, as in the concluding lines of the foreword, where he expresses the intention of Der Brenner to guide the present age 'aus dem ungeheuerlichen Angst-Dickicht, in dem sich der Geist der Zeit verfangen hat und darin er sich vom Auge des Ewigen, das er zu blenden wähnte, nun wie von etwas Furchtbarem fixiert fühlt' (6, p.4). In the same article he suggests that the artists and writers are in a better position than the 'weltfremd' theology-professors to decide which of the two alternative religious paths should be taken (6, p.2).

Ficker's reference to the professors of theology indicates his conviction that religious questions cannot be resolved by means of a merely academic discussion but must be confronted within the context of German-speaking society in the post-war years. He considers any attempt to take refuge in purely theological terminology inexcusable at a time when it is no longer possible to overlook the disastrous outcome of an excessive identification of Christianity with the interests of the State. It is against this background that he now decides to devote Der Brenner more exclusively to a concentration upon the nature of Christianity and its role in contemporary society. He expects neither easy answers nor immediate agreement among his contri-

butors and for this reason later refers to the whole enterprise as a 'Wagnis' (6, p.812). In the first instance, however, such a discussion discloses a certain amount of common ground between the conflicting parties.

Dallago and Haecker both agree that the embroilment of the Christian faith in concerns that have little to do with its essential character is a basic problem, and they express their concern on this score in the first post-war issue of Der Brenner. From his essay 'Weltkrieg und Zivilisation' it appears that Dallago too by this time has been affected by the impact of the war, and he feels that the cruelty which it unleashed had previously been disguised and hidden under the mask of civilisation. He considers it a crime that such a civilisation should don the robe of Christianity, and wants to cut the Gordian knot in which 'Die zivilisierte Welt ist zugleich die "christliche Welt" und wiederum auch diese Welt, von der das Reich Christi nicht sein soll' (6, p.18). The same sentiment emerges from Haecker's 'Ausblick in die Zeit': 'Der Sinn aber, den unser Glaube diesen Dingen gibt, ist der, daß ein Gericht ergeht über die sogenannte "christliche" Welt' (6, p.74). Haecker also takes up the editor's criticism of contemporary theologians by launching polemical broadsides at those who, in their endeavour to establish links between the spiritual and the temporal, produce, in his opinion, the same confused entanglement already attacked by Dallago. This general feeling of discontent with the religious establishment finds further support in the same issue in a piece by a Japanese writer, Utschimura, who explains that the false prophets of the Old Testament were always those who advocated military strength and earthly alliances as a means to establish God's kingdom on earth, whereas the true prophets recognised that God's righteousness was independent of temporal interests (6, pp.65ff.).

The similarities between Dallago and Haecker, however, begin and end with their common concern to clear away the many distortions of Christianity in order to regain an understanding of its true and original character. By the second issue of 1919 Dallago had already moved on from a criticism of the contemporary role of the church to a total rejection of the ecclesiastical institution as such - 'Darum fühle ich, der ich das Religiöse suche, daß ich mich auf meinem Wege von allem Kirchlichen entfernen muß' (6, p.83). His individualistic understanding of religion

as an inner strength obviates the need for an external institutional framework which the church provides and therefore, throughout the 1919/21 volume, Dallago intensifies his attack upon institutionalised Christianity which he had begun before the war. This leads him increasingly to emphasise the superiority of the Eastern religions over the Western church, for he claims: 'daß das Geistige und Religiöse des fernen Ostens das Christliche, als das Geistige und Religiöse von jeher, ungleich besser dartut als die Kirche, die das Christliche zu bewahren vorgibt' (6, p.476). Yet from this statement it is clear that Dallago still adheres to what he sees as the core of Christianity, and he tries to explain this in an article entitled 'Augustinus, Pascal und Kierkegaard' of the same year:

Ich vergesse hier nicht: Das Christentum ist die Religion meiner Väter, der ich im Grunde treu bleiben will; aber auch nur im Grunde. Es bedeutet, daß ich treu bleiben will dem Geistigen und Religiösen von jeher, das jeder Religion zugrunde liegt (6, p.643).

In the same long essay, on account of which Ficker uniquely places a complete issue of Der Brenner at his disposal, Dallago seeks to distil this essence, which he only vaguely elaborates in terms of love, from the writings of the three thinkers with which he is concerned, and contrasts this with the distorted and morbid ideas of sinfulness and lostness ('Verworfenheit') which he finds in Dostoevsky, Trakl and Haecker. Ferdinand Ebner, who had started writing for Der Brenner at the beginning of 1919 and whose views correspond in many areas to those of Haecker, also comes under attack.

It is not primarily in his criticism of the established church, therefore, but precisely in his understanding of the 'essence' of Christianity that Haecker differs from Dallago, and Ebner is similar in this respect. In his essay 'Übersicht' Haecker claims that Harnack's best-selling Das Wesen des Christentums had hopelessly failed to demonstrate to his contemporaries where the essence of true Christianity lies (6, p.357), and it is clear from the essays contributed by Haecker and Ebner to Der Brenner between 1919 and 1921 that they are equally dissatisfied with Dallago's response to this question. In this period the main outlines of their thinking gradually emerge until, at the end of 1921, the editor realises that Der Brenner can no longer hold

in balance two religious outlooks that are so radically opposed. By turning now to the main features of Haecker's and Ebner's understanding of the essence of Christianity it will be possible to isolate the most important areas of their disagreement with Dallago.

For both writers the element of transcendence is crucial to their understanding of God, and in this way they continue a development in Der Brenner which originated in the less explicitly theological work of Trakl and Heinrich. Even before the war Haecker had admired Kierkegaard for his emphasis upon the unapproachable infinity of God and later he complains that modern Protestant theology no longer knows of this absolutely transcendent sphere (6, p.358). Ebner, in his book Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, the greater part of which, from 1920 onwards, was published chapter by chapter in Der Brenner, insists upon stressing the importance of 'das undenkbar und unsagbare absolute Sein Gottes' which is totally independent of man's experience of the divine.<sup>13</sup> The disturbing features of Trakl's and Heinrich's thought which were seen to be connected with this conception of God are not so apparent in their two successors, but are nevertheless still present. Like Trakl, they are both impressed by the novels and characters of Dostoevsky; in an article 'Die müde Nazarenerseele' Haecker defends Dostoevsky against modern critics who are unsympathetic to his work (4, p.611), and the outlook of the Russian novelist finds echoes in many statements of Ebner:

Man muß in die Tiefe seines Lebens hinabsteigen, um das Vater-  
unser im rechten Sinn zu beten, sich demütigend in seiner Erd-  
gebundenheit und Lebensenge - in die Tiefe hinab, aber mit dem  
'Blick nach oben'.<sup>14</sup>

Experience of God involves for Ebner a breaking down of the self ('Erschütterung') similar to that undergone by Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, and for Haecker a willingness to sacrifice one's security. Haecker quotes Pascal 'Jésus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde; il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là', and then asks 'Wo ist der Mann, der ein solches Leben zu führen vermag?' (4, pp.907-8). Ebner is drawn to the French philosopher for similar reasons and cites his aphorism 'Travailler pour l'incertain - passer sur une planche - aller sur mer'.<sup>15</sup>

While the atmosphere of insecurity and uncertainty is in the forefront of Trakl's poetry, for Haecker and Ebner it acts as a backcloth against which more central beliefs are brought into relief. In contrast to the poet they were able to proceed to an articulation of the possibility of a communication with God which for him had proved elusive. It must, however, be emphasised that this possibility is in no way similar to the one elaborated by Dallago and examined in an earlier context. He maintained the existence of an 'Anschluß' within each individual by which one could relate to the spiritual by means of a process of becoming receptive. Yet as early as 1916 Ebner distinguishes between this approach and his own, writing in his diary: 'Es gibt eine Geistigkeit im Menschen, deren Wesen Entwicklung, und eine andere, deren Wesen "Durchbruch" ist.'<sup>16</sup> For him, any experience of the spiritual is initiated by a reality outside man's own being: 'Mensch sein heißt von allem Anfang an und vom Grund seiner Existenz aus in Beziehung zum Geist existieren, zum Geist außer ihm, und das ist Gott.'<sup>17</sup> Although he still makes use of the vague term 'Geist' Ebner takes pains to demonstrate not only that it refers to a transcendent reality but also that it is by no means a metaphysical construct. 'Geist' or, more simply, God, has a personal existence and is therefore able to relate to mankind on an individual level and, whereas for Dallago's immanent, more impersonal spiritual force silence is an essential means of communication, Ebner emphasises the centrality of the spoken word for the relationship between man and God.<sup>18</sup> Arguing from this position, and in implicit criticism of Dallago's leaning towards the East, he claims the uniqueness of Christianity to lie in the fact that God actually addresses a person whereas in other religions he does not (6, pp.575-87).

Haecker, like his fellow-contributor, also totally rejects the possibility of man establishing contact with God from his own initiative, and, with reference to the philosophical quest for knowledge of the divine, he writes in his 1919 article 'Übersicht':

Aber hier gilt absolut, daß es in keines, gar keines, auch nicht des genialsten Menschen Macht liegt, aus diesem Reich ein Wissen bescheidenster Art willentlich sich zu holen, wenn Gott nicht will. Hier gilt die pure Gnade und kein Verdienst. (6, p.345)

He describes the futility of human aspirations to communicate with God in terms of Calvin's axiom 'finitum non est capax infiniti', and claims, in the same article, that this doctrine can either lead to a loss of faith and consequently to a relativistic mode of thought, or else to a dynamic, passionate faith in God which speaks of him in terms of paradox and antithesis (6, p.346). Yet even paradoxical language is no guarantee that a living relationship with God is being described:

Es ist der Stil der Antithese von vornherein nur erträglich, voll Sinn, und das Leben des - endlichen - Geistes selbst in der unendlich leidenschaftlichen Person, deren Leben an ihr sich immer neu entzündet und wächst, welche die objektiven Gegensätze mit der Macht des Pathos in einem einzigen Satze verbindet und nun, kaum merklich noch zitternd vom gewaltigen Sprunge, heil und fest dasteht. Fehlt die unendliche Leidenschaft der pathetischen Person, die allein die Wahrheit des Erlebnisses und des Sprunges verbürgt, so ist nichts toter, nichts alberner und verlorener als die Antithese, eine müßige und mäßige Spielerei. (6, p.346)

As long as it is being used as just one more human way to bridge the gulf between the finite and the infinite, antithetical thought and language is doomed to failure, but if it is viewed as the most adequate reflection possible of a relationship initiated from the side of the infinite then it can be successful and dynamic. Many of Haecker's ideas in this context are clearly influenced by Kierkegaard, and it is in a definitely Kierkegaardian vein that he now proceeds to outline the necessity of a divine 'calling' ('Auftrag' or 'Amt'), without which all religious language becomes fossilised (6, p.348).

Hence it is crucial for both Haecker and Ebner that if the dualism between man and God is to be bridged, mediation can only be provided by the latter. Man must recognise the valuelessness of his own attempts to reach God and humbly accept the hand of God which reaches out to him. It is for this reason that the concept of grace recurs throughout their work, and furthermore that the figure of Christ, in their view, occupies a central position as the mediator of divine grace to man. In his 1916 diary Ebner writes:

Jesus hat den geistigen Abgrund der menschlichen Existenz vollends aufgerissen und so dem Menschen sein Fernsein von Gott zum Bewußtsein gebracht. Er hat aber auch über diesen Abgrund hinweg die Brücke gebaut, über die des Menschen Weg zu Gott führt;<sup>19</sup>

and in Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten he insists that man can know God only through Jesus and not through the mediation of the world or of nature.<sup>20</sup> Haecker believes a revitalisation of the Protestant theological tradition to be possible only through a re-discovery of those who 'verherrlichen Christus' (6, p.356). The significance of Christ, he claims, is not something which can be fathomed by the human intellect but must rather be embraced in an act of faith. In an essay 'Das Wissen um Gott und der Glaube' (6, p.797) Ebner distinguishes between the faith that accepts a statement because a particular person makes it and the faith that agrees to a statement because it seems reasonable, maintaining that only the first type of faith is genuine and that this is the faith which Christ demands. In a similar vein, in his 'Nachwort' to Kierkegaard's Kritik der Gegenwart, Haecker outlines three possible presuppositions for knowledge - 'Der Verstand, die Vernunft, der Glaube an eine Offenbarung' (4, p.903) - and affirms the latter.

It is because of Haecker's and Ebner's acceptance of the fundamental tenets of Christian revelation that they also begin to see the importance of the institution of the church; for them the church, regardless of its misguided involvement in temporal political concerns, is still the guardian of Christian doctrine and revelation and for this reason cannot be totally rejected. In fact, Haecker's attitude to the church motivated his conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism in the early 1920s; Ebner's doubts concerning the questionable role of the church in recent German history were more enduring, but he too was accepted into the Catholic church about a decade later. It is this growing sympathy for the church as an institution, of course, that Dallago specifically attacks, but he fails to connect this tendency in their thinking with their view of God as a radically transcendent being and with their insistence upon the necessity of revelation. Starting from his own conception of the immanent character of spiritual reality, he fails to understand their constant recourse to faith, authority and dogmatic assertions concerning the role of Christ. Dallago's incomprehension emerges particularly clearly in his long essay 'Augustinus, Pascal und Kierkegaard':

Denn das Geistige und Religiöse von jeher kann letzten Endes nur die Aufgabe haben, das Tun des Menschen so zu gestalten, daß es Gott wohlgefällig wird ... Wenn nun Gott erst Mensch



werden muß, um das Beispiel einer solchen erfüllenden Wohlgeratenheit zu geben, ist damit etwas vorausgesetzt, das den Menschen eher von der erfüllenden Nachfolge ausschließt als dazu ermuntert (6, p.645).

Since he still regards it as the task of religion to render human activity pleasing to God it is not surprising that in the same essay he takes issue with Ebner's dogmatic statement that 'Der Geist des Christentums fordert vom Menschen den Glauben an die Menschwerdung Gottes im Leben Jesu und es wird keiner ein Christ ohne die innere Erfüllung dieser Forderung' (6, p.646).

It is this article by Dallago which is the cause of the open split between the two different outlooks represented in Der Brenner. In the following issue of June 1921 Ficker, in his 'Mitteilungen des Herausgebers', informs his readers that he has received a written statement from Haecker to the effect that he wishes to dissociate himself completely from the ideas expressed by Dallago. As a result of Haecker's statement Ficker now realises not merely that his delicately-held balance of views is in great danger, but 'Daß dieses Wagnis schließlich eine innere Krise zeitigte, die den gegebenen Rahmen der Zeitschrift ... sprengt' (6, p.812). In his editorial comment upon the situation, the laborious style of which is probably due to Ficker's attempt to criticise Dallago without at the same time offending him, he tends to side with Haecker, although he is aware of the problematical relationship between the church as a fallible human institution and the church as the preserver of Christian doctrine:

... was, frage ich, hilft es diesem Sterblichen zu wissen, daß die katholische Kirche im Besitz des wahren Glaubenssystems ist, wenn er dabei auf Schritt und Tritt dem Teufelsspek einer katholischen Kirche begegnet, die die Waffen des Weltkriegs in allen christlichen Feindesländern gesegnet hat ...? (6, p.815)

Ficker accurately traces the roots of the internal crisis in Der Brenner to the different responses to this question. Much later, in an interview in 1964, he still describes the central concern of Der Brenner in the early 1920s in the same way: 'Das "Programm" war die Frage nach dem Christentum, nach der Kirche und dem Menschen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Glauben und Institution'.<sup>21</sup>



Although in the same editorial he expresses his intention of suspending publication of the periodical until some resolution of this crisis is found, Der Brenner actually begins to re-appear in the early months of the following year, bringing an 'Auseinandersetzung' written by Dallago (7, pp.176ff.). Here, however, in spite of the fact that he deals with the question of allegiance to the church, Dallago once more fails to penetrate to the heart of the conflict. He proceeds no further than a re-statement of his notion of a dichotomy between a pure faith at the time of Christ and an impure church now, and overlooks Haecker's and Ebner's belief, reflected in Ficker's comments, that the church is still in possession of religious truth. The phrase 'im Besitz des wahren Glaubenssystems' is one which is alien to Dallago's thought and yet he does not argue his differences along these lines. Had he done so he would have discovered the fundamental conflict to lie in differing conceptions of the 'essence' of Christianity. Dallago's exclusive concentration upon the individual experience of spirituality forbade him to align himself with an institution that overrode this individuality, while the acceptance by Haecker and Ebner of a revelation of a religious truth from a sphere which transcends the individual human consciousness also enabled them to lay aside their reservations and finally affirm the institution to which this revelation is entrusted.

Der Brenner in fact reached the peak of its development with the crystallisation of these two opposite attitudes to the question of Christianity, for after Dallago's 'Auseinandersetzung' with the views of Ebner and Haecker in 1922 there was little change for some time. In an unpublished piece 'Nachschrift zur Mitarbeit am Brenner' written in 1927 Ebner recalls the development of the journal from its initial aesthetic inclinations to its determination to give priority to the religious question: 'Belastet mit ihrem "Problem", dessen eigenartige Aufrollung immer wieder als ein keineswegs ungefährliches Wagnis sich herausstellte'.<sup>22</sup> Now he sees this problem stepping once more into the background and giving way to more aesthetic pursuits, albeit within a specifically Christian context. Since 1922 publication of Der Brenner had become far more sporadic than during the years immediately following the war, and the one issue to appear in 1927 dealt solely with the relationship of Christianity to art, with two essays by the poets Paula Schlier

and Hildegard Jone and a contribution by Léon Bloy entitled 'Die Kunst und unsere Zeit'. Dallago and Haecker were each only represented three times after 1922 and Ebner only twice. No issues appeared between 1927 and 1932, and after a brief revival between 1932 and 1934 the Nazi period again brought publication to a stand-still. Paula Schlier was once more featured in the few issues to appear after the Second World War, alongside articles by literary critics such as Lachmann and Zangerle. The history of Der Brenner closed with its final number in 1954.

In retrospect, the significance of this periodical is rooted firstly in its clear presentation of two alternative religious outlooks and especially in its growing concern with questions arising from a new awareness of a radically transcendent spiritual dimension. Already reflected in a literary context by Trakl before the war, this awareness was later elaborated in theological terms by Haecker and Ebner, who were writing in a post-war society disillusioned with the church and its teaching. Der Brenner was by no means an isolated phenomenon in this respect, and thus its importance also lies in the fact that it dealt with problems that were preoccupying other writers in the areas of both literature and theology. The ideas of Haecker and Ebner can be seen both as a development of Otto's emphasis upon the holy as 'das ganz Andere' and as an anticipation of the far-reaching changes in German theology that began in the years 1921-22 with the first major publications of the dialectical theologians. Haecker's essay 'Übersicht' in fact contains in summarised form much of what Barth was shortly to write on the centrality of paradox in all human speech about God. The similarity between Ebner's work, too, and some of the main features of dialectical theology was recognised by Emil Brunner, who wrote in a letter to Ebner in 1922:

... als ein Zeichen des Dankes für die Herzstärkung, die mir Ihr Buch bereitet hat, übersende ich Ihnen in der Beilage meine neueste Veröffentlichung, Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube. Sie werden den dort vorgetragenen Gedanken nicht überall zustimmen können, glaube ich, doch werden Sie sich vielleicht wie ich selber, verwundern, in wie manchen Punkten wir einander, ohne uns zu kennen, nahe kamen.<sup>23</sup>

On the literary side the parallels are even more apparent, for Trakl's poetry reflects the same tensions which emerge from much of Rilke's work. His field of vision, like Rilke's, constantly extends into areas which cannot be conveyed by normal language. Trakl writes in 1910, 'Alles ist so ganz anders geworden. Man schaut und schaut - und die geringsten Dinge sind ohne Ende' (I, p.477), and Malte, with almost identical words, 'Außen ist vieles anders geworden' (VI, p.920). The fact that both writers often find themselves using religious language merely serves to underline the fact that they too are aware of the fundamental 'Otherness' of that with which they are confronted. At the same time Trakl's work, as will be seen, focusses upon problems central to other writers of the Expressionist decade. In short, therefore, Der Brenner fulfils, in the areas of both literature and theology, the aspirations expressed by its editor in 1919, when he wrote: 'So ist denn die Bestimmung des Brenner im letzten: Wegbereiter zu sein, der Erkenntnis der Kommenden, der Tieferberufenen, Herz und Verstand der Gegenwart zu weiten ...' (6, p.4).

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#### References

1. For a list of the secondary literature on Der Brenner see bibliography, p.241.
2. Der Brenner, 1 (1910), p.1. Further references to Der Brenner, giving the Jahrgang followed by the page number, will be provided in brackets within the text. For details of the dates of each Jahrgang see bibliography.
3. Walser's comments are reprinted in Der Brenner, 6 (1919-21), unpaginated but two pages after p.640.
4. Nietzsche, Werke, based on Schlechta edition but re-edited by I. Frenzel, 2 vols (Munich, 1967), II, pp.483-546. See especially pp.504, 524, 527-8.
5. (Leipzig, 1912) and (Innsbruck, 1922) respectively.
6. Dichtungen und Briefe, historisch-kritische Ausgabe, edited by W. Killy and H. Szklenar, 2 vols (Salzburg, 1969), I, p.197. Further references to these volumes will be provided in brackets within the text.
7. A recent example of this is to be found in the conclusion to J. Calbert, Dimensions of Style and Meaning in the Language of Trakl and Rilke (Tübingen, 1974).
8. See bibliography, p.237.

9. For a more detailed interpretation of 'Melancholie des Abends' see my article 'Religious dualism and aesthetic mediation in the work of Georg Trakl', Orbis Litterarum, 32 (1977), pp.229-46.
  10. See Trakl's letter to Ficker of 11 November 1911 (I, p.526).
  11. '"Der Brenner" von 1910-1915' (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Innsbruck, 1950), p.187.
  12. Bapka, p.187.
  13. Here quoted from Ferdinand Ebner, Schriften, edited by F. Seyr, 3 vols (Munich, 1963), I, p.266.
  14. Schriften, I, p.253.
  15. I, p.723.
  16. I, p.27.
  17. I, p.175.
  18. I, p.107.
  19. I, p.68.
  20. I, p.157.
  21. P. Noack, 'Ludwig Ficker und Der Brenner', Der Monat, 17 (1964), p.42.
  22. Schriften, I, p.575.
  23. III, p.457.
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#### 4. Dualism in the plays of Reinhard Johannes Sorge.

In the fifth act of Der Bettler, written in 1911/12 and seen by later critics to have played a vital part in the genesis of Expressionist drama, it soon becomes apparent that Sorge is struggling with an experience of a similar nature to that of 'das ganz Andere' described by Rudolf Otto. At this late stage of the play, 'der Dichter', the leading character, has come to a crisis point in his poetic development. The directions at the beginning of Act V, Scene 2 require the stage to be totally dark, and the darkness is only broken by a shaft of light when the poet opens the curtain to his study. In this manner the author symbolically prefigures the nature of the experience around which the whole scene revolves. 'Wie lebe ich dies? Wie lebe ich die Erleuchtung?' are the poet's first words after he appears on stage, and he continues, 'Ja, ein Blitz fuhr nieder und zerriss mein Erdreich.'<sup>1</sup> In the first part of the ensuing monologue, which constitutes the whole of the second scene, the poet dwells upon the immediate effects of his experience:

O Segen des Blitzes! Seligkeit der Lichtmächte! O  
zitterndes Glück der Nähe Gottes, ewiger Kummer sei-  
ne Nähe! Wie soll ich leben, da mich dies verdammt!

The stark juxtaposition of the ecstatic 'Segen', 'Seligkeit' and 'Glück' with the despairing 'Kummer' and 'verdammt' presents as clearly as possible the same paradoxical awareness of the 'Other' considered in previous chapters. The positive side, 'das Fascinans', has already been suggested by the light symbolism, and is now underlined by the poet's belief that the source of this light is God himself. The vision, however, is as destructive as it is illuminating, because it throws into doubt the foundation of the poet's existence - his work. He considers the unfinished drama on the desk in front of him and realises that it is totally inadequate: 'Nun kann kein Strich mehr daran geschehen'.

The reference to 'die Dirnen' in this part of the speech strongly suggests that the drama being referred to is Der Bettler itself, with its prostitute scene in the middle of the first act, and the close resemblance of much of this monologue to

passages from Sorge's diaries at this time places it beyond doubt that Sorge is projecting a crisis in his own development on to the figure of 'der Dichter'.<sup>2</sup> At the heart of this crisis lies the realisation that the action of his drama is thoroughly lifeless and insignificant when exposed to the shaft of light that has just broken into his consciousness. This alone is the source of 'wahrhafte Handlung', but Sorge's poetic aspirations are shattered by the realisation that the nature of this action cannot be dramatically expressed:

Sie hat keinen Ausdruck, nicht im Wort, denn sie ist schweigend, nicht in der schauspielerischen Gebärde, denn sie hat wohl Gebärde, aber unnachahmbare, nicht im Schaubild, denn sie bietet wohl ein Bild, aber es ist erfüllt von ewigen Beziehungen, von Regungen und tausend Seelen, die nicht wiederzugeben sind. Dies ist der Fluch! (II, p.86)

Because he sees his sense of poetic mission and calling endangered by the curse, Sorge attempts to resist its logic; before conceding defeat he tries once more to capture 'the Other' in poetic language and does so by means of the image of a falling star. Yet this attempt, although it suggests the elusiveness of his subject, can only delay the despairing conclusion: 'Wer kann es darstellen?' (II, p.87).

The fact that the poet is now once more driven to despair at the inadequacy of his art is sparked off by the realisation that even the falling star is a 'hohles Symbol', incapable of representing the inexpressible - '... es ist unaussprechbar. Keine Kunst kann es wirklich werden lassen'. Nevertheless, because he believes his experience to have stemmed from God - 'Ja, es war der Blitz aus der Hand Gottes, denn nur Gott kann so unglücklich machen !!!' - he also knows that he will feel compelled again and again to reproduce it in words, yet will be aware with increasing intensity that he is condemned to speak in symbols. As he reflects on the word 'Symbole', however, a new possibility opens up before him, expressed in the words 'Symbole der Ewigkeit'. This is the climax to which the entire monologue has been leading; the phrase is written twice in italics, is followed by the words: 'Ende! Ende! Ziel und Ende!', and shortly afterwards the scene is closed (II, p.88). The poet, therefore, and thus Sorge also, welcomes the 'symbols of eternity' as a solution to his dilemma; his poetic mission,

which had been fundamentally challenged by his confrontation with 'the Other', is once more restored to him - 'aber die Sendung bleibt'. This moment of discovery poses questions of central importance for the understanding of Sorge's development. In this section of Der Bettler he does not indicate the identity of these 'symbols of eternity' and as yet it remains unclear whether this is merely a way of affirming the symbols he has already used - in this case the star - or whether he is pointing forward to a different solution of the problem of language. Such questions cannot be answered by this passage alone, but require an analysis of Sorge's work up to and beyond this point in his development.

Der Jüngling, written a year earlier in 1910, shows quite clearly that Der Bettler was not the first of Sorge's plays to be concerned with the problem of language or symbols. Here also the leading figure seeks to escape from the restrictive power of finite symbols - 'Erlösen von aller Bilder Bann' (I, p.238) - and believes that this is only possible through an exertion of the will and through decisive action - 'die Tat'. For him the decisive deed is to murder 'der Alte', who supervises the worship of images ('Bilder') in a cave on the mountain-side where the action takes place. Before he can accomplish this, however, he meets the figure of 'der Wanderer', who seeks to persuade him that the essence of salvation is not to be found in the will but through yearning ('die Sehnsucht'):

Das Leben der Hohen ist Sehnsucht. Sehnsucht, von ihrem Leben sich zu lösen zu heißerem Leben. Das Leben der Hohen ist Sehnsucht nach Leben. (I, p.232)

The 'Jüngling' rejects this interpretation, as it signifies that he would always be in bondage to human symbols; when the 'Wanderer' explains 'Bild bist du, bildlos sehnst du, Bild wird dein Sehnen', the young man takes this to be a curse rather than the path to salvation. He murders 'der Alte' and for a short moment believes his own ideas to have been vindicated - 'Bildlos glänzen alle Bilder. So logst du, Fremder; Wahn waren deine Worte' (I, p.238). His ecstasy, though, turns out to be short-lived, for through the morning mist he is now able to see, further up the side of the mountain, a cave similar to the one whose image-worship he thought he had transcended. 'Der Wanderer', whose

statements about the infinity of 'Sehnsucht' have in this way been proven true, now re-appears on stage and tells the youth what awaits him: 'Fremdes Feuer wartet dein. Ferneres Feuer ... Fremde Bilder warten dein. Fremdere Bilder' (I, p.238).

In several ways Der Jüngling already reflects a strong Nietzschean influence in Sorge's writing, not only in its themes but also in its setting and imagery. For the setting of this play Sorge chooses a mountain landscape, as, incidentally, does Rilke in 'Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens ...', and uses this to represent man's aspiration to overcome his own finite limitations. From the vantage point of a 'felsige Gipfel vor dem Himmel' (I, p.224) his characters struggle for release from their human bonds - 'Gefangenschaft' or 'Bande' (I, pp.230-1) - in order to reach out for something higher, which Sorge usually represents by images of cosmic proportions - 'Sterne ..., Sonnen, Lichter' (I, p.235), 'die funkelnden Feuer' (I, p.230). The beginning of the third section of Also Sprach Zarathustra, a book which is known to have had a profound effect on Sorge's thinking,<sup>3</sup> bears the title 'Der Wanderer' and contains the following lines which Zarathustra addresses to himself:

Du aber, O Zarathustra, wolltest aller Dinge Grund schauen  
und Hintergrund: so mußt du schon über dich selber steigen -  
hinan, hinauf, bis du auch deine Sterne noch unter dir  
hast!

Ja! Hinab auf mich selber sehn und noch auf meine Sterne:  
das erst hieße mir mein Gipfel, das blieb mir noch zurück  
als mein letzter Gipfel!<sup>4</sup>

The similarity of ideas and language strongly suggests that this section of Nietzsche's book provided inspiration for the character 'der Wanderer' in Der Jüngling.

For both writers the validity of man's existence is to be found in his constant endeavour to transcend his own limitations in search of a higher existence. In this context 'Sehnsucht' plays a prominent role for Nietzsche also, and a section towards the end of the third part of Zarathustra carries the heading 'Von der großen Sehnsucht'.<sup>5</sup> The object of Zarathustra's yearning is that which is not yet known, and this is often expressed in Nietzsche's later work by the idea of 'die höheren Menschen': ' - so allein wächst der Mensch in die Höhe, wo der Blitz ihn trifft und zerbricht: hoch genug für den Blitz!'<sup>6</sup> His higher being will be in a position to



come to terms with those aspects of reality which at the moment blind man with their incomprehensibility. The longing for 'die höheren Menschen' occupies a central position in Sorge's next drama Odysseus.

The location of Odysseus is again important, as it helps to indicate the relationship of this play to Der Jüngling; the mountainous landscape is still there, but its rocks act as a foundation for the pillars of Odysseus' palace. Sorge's stage direction: 'Von den Säulen erscheinen weder Kapitell noch Architrav, sie streben gerade und nackt bis zur letzten sichtbaren Höhe empor ...' (I, p.242) seems to suggest that the lesson of Der Jüngling has been fully assimilated, and that the infinity of human yearning can be taken as the play's point of departure. In the previous play it had been the function of 'der Wanderer' to reveal to the youth the distances that still separated them from the fulfilment of their yearning. It was to this end that he recounted his vision of one who had been destroyed by the intensity of his longing for union with the sun:

... er bog sich hintüber und rang nach Erlösung und stand aufgereckt wie eine erzene Flamme. Und starnte immer ins Glühe und stand so flackernd ... Er starb an der Sonne. (I, p.230)

In Odysseus it is 'der Seher' who dies in his ecstatic proclamation of the advent of the higher man. The figure of Odysseus represents Sorge's attempt to depict Nietzsche's 'höherer Mensch' more directly; he is the embodiment of the future possibilities of a humanity which constantly tries to overcome and transcend its own finite nature. Yet even in Sorge's terms the character of Odysseus is inadequate, for instead of pointing forward to further human potentialities he indicates rather the final achievement of a goal: 'Zu herbster Vollendung endlich greife ich / Den Bogen ...' (I, p.272). The play culminates with him standing as a victor - 'Odysseus steht hoch und stolz, zitternd in der Freude des Siegers' (I, p.273).

In Antichrist, the last of Sorge's works before Der Bettler, the sense of premature success, akin in some respects to the over-hasty ecstasy of 'der Jüngling', has once more disappeared. The play is structured as a dialogue between Jesus and Judas, the latter, as the dramatis personae makes clear, being intended to represent Nietzsche/Zarathustra. With this more explicit

portrayal of a Nietzschean figure, Sorge's adoption of Nietzsche's doctrine of 'die ewige Wiederkehr', present to a lesser degree in the two earlier plays already mentioned, now becomes prominent. Whereas Nietzsche, however, understands eternal recurrence in the first place as a horrifying fact of human existence, which, only when it has been squarely confronted and affirmed, can then lead to a growth in man's development towards mastery of the self and the world, Sorge appears to equate eternal recurrence more straightforwardly with eternity itself - in other words with the very object of man's striving and not merely with a stage of enlightenment on the road towards his goal. The over-riding aim of the conversations between Jesus and Judas is to demonstrate that 'ewige Wiederkehr' and 'ewiges Leben' are merely two different labels for what is basically one conception of life. For this reason Jesus and Judas are able to speak the following lines together, summarising what Sorge takes to be the fundamental aspects of Christ's and Nietzsche's teaching:

Das himmlische Reich, das ich euch verhieß, ich verhieß es euch im Geiste. Es sollte euch Erlösung werden von Irrmacht dieses Lebens, Erlösung durch Begriff und Einnung mit dem Geist, dessen das Reich ist ... in diesem Geist solltet ihr wachsen mit Mühe und Ringen, mit Wachen und Harren ... Ihr solltet mehr als Menschen sein mit ihren Plagen und kleinen Nöten, mit ihren armen Lügen und Halbheiten; über des Menschen Not habe ich euch das Reich gesetzt und Übermenschentum. (I, p.341)

In the poem which acts as a prologue to the play Sorge writes in a similar vein, under the title 'Christus und Nietzsche':

Eines Vaters,  
Einer Sehnsucht,  
Werbende gleich und Süchtige nach dem erlösenden Reich.  
(I, p.328)

His programme, therefore, even with the introduction of Jesus as a new exponent, remains unchanged. Man's striving upwards for release, away from the world of material values and towards a world of more spiritual values, is still the central feature. Man's aspirations are not terminated or fulfilled with the deaths of the two leading characters in Antichrist, but extend far into the future - 'dann wächst wohl der Mensch aufwärts ein in das Geheimnis' (I, p.349).

This thematic summary of the three most important of Sorge's early plays not only shows where his central concerns lie but also suggests the pattern in which his ideas are developed. At this stage this pattern could perhaps best be described as a rotation between an awareness of the necessity of striving and longing for the infinite on the one hand and a sense of having achieved the aims of this yearning on the other. The former pole is represented by Antichrist and the conclusion of Der Jüngling; the latter is never totally absent but emerges most strongly at the end of Odysseus.

This understanding of the thematic direction of Sorge's early work serves as a necessary basis for the discussion of his cosmic imagery, which also closely parallels that of Nietzsche throughout these three early dramas and reflects the same rotation. The sun and the stars are the outermost visible extents of man's perception, and thus symbolise for Nietzsche the goal of human 'Sehnsucht', that which can still be seen but which cannot be mastered. Zarathustra, in his reflections in 'Der Wanderer', will not be satisfied until the stars are beneath him, and in the section 'Vor Sonnen-Aufgang' expresses his yearning for union with the sun itself: 'fliegen allein will mein ganzer Wille, in dich hinein fliegen!'.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, cosmic forces are also used by Nietzsche to symbolise, at a higher stage of man's development, the gradual achievement of mastery by 'die höheren Menschen' over their universe:

Es ist mir nicht genug, daß der Blitz nicht mehr schadet.  
Nicht ableiten will ich ihn: er soll lernen für mich -  
arbeiten. -  
Diesen Menschen von heute will ich nicht Licht sein, nicht Licht  
heißen. Die - will ich blenden.<sup>8</sup>

Although this ability to harness cosmic energy is obviously for Nietzsche a symbolic representation of a state only to be achieved in the distant future, the closing lines of the book suggest that Zarathustra is well on the way - 'Also sprach Zarathustra und verließ seine Höhle, glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunklen Bergen kommt'.<sup>9</sup>

The two levels of cosmic imagery - the representation of the goal of human longing and the partial realisation of that goal - are reproduced exactly by Sorge. It is not only 'der

Jüngling' and 'der Wanderer' who speak of 'Sonnen' and 'funkelnden Feuer', but also 'der Sänger' in Odysseus ('Aus blauen Weiten schäumte eine Sonne' 244), and Jesus in Antichrist. The latter sums up Sorge's use of the sun symbol most typically:

Noch weißt, wie da der Geist über mich kam und mich knien hieß und die Hände gegen die Sonne recken, als wollte ich sie fangen, und die Lippen gegen die Sonne heben, als wollte ich sie küssen. (I, p.333)

The second function of these symbols is most noticeable in the play Odysseus: here the stars and sun do not merely reflect the aspirations of the characters but actually respond to their emotions at the moments of their most passionate intensity. Each time the name Odysseus is uttered there are repercussions on a cosmic scale: on the first occasion the stars begin to move - 'es fallen Sterne' - and on the second, 'Ein Sturm streicht heulend in der Ferne vorüber, dann schweigt er wieder' (I, p.267). The same images are later used by Jesus in Antichrist - 'Vermag euch ein Wind zu schrecken und ein fallender Stern?' (I, p.335). More extremely, at the end of Odysseus even the sun seems to be controlled by the action of the hero:

Odysseus schießt den Pfeil ab; krachend springt die Sehne zurück. Das Geschoß flieht in feurigem Streifen durch die Luft über die Häupter der Freier fort und nieder in den Himmel. Die Freier stürzen hintüber zum Abgrund. Ein morgenroter Sonnenstrahl loht aus der Tiefe über den Himmel ... (I, pp.272-3)

Imagery of this nature is thus used by both Sorge and Nietzsche not only to represent the goal of human longing but also as a measure of man's progress on the path upwards towards self-mastery and the status of 'die höheren Menschen'. The figures in Sorge's dramas can be divided into those who are prepared to tread this path and those, like 'die Freier' in Odysseus, who are not, between those who affirm the light and those who remain in darkness.

To return to Der Bettler, it is clear that this play, in its structure and imagery, basically follows the same pattern as Sorge's earlier work. The fact that it is Sorge's first play to be set in a recognisable everyday world should not be allowed to detract from this essential similarity, for although the externals may have been changed the character types remain the

same. 'Die Freier' now take on the guise of different 'figures of darkness', the newspaper-readers and the prostitutes, and the 'Sänger' or 'Seher' becomes the modern poet. What is achieved by the different setting, however, is that it acts as a more effective foil to the poet's aspirations; his passionate yearning and lyrical flights into a non-material world are depicted in stark contrast to the tenor of contemporary society as Sorge sees it.

That the play is once more concerned with flights of 'Sehnsucht' towards the eternal is indicated by the poem 'Lied der Bettler', which acts as a prologue to the play:

In weiten Kreisen deine Flüge grabend:  
Durch Finsternis, durch wirren Traum gigantisch,  
Durch Qualenstriche, Höhlenraum gigantisch -  
Ruhlos gen Morgen, ruhelos gen Abend ...

Drehen dich höher deine wilden Schreie  
Aus Vaterfluch und allen Mutterschmerzen;  
Bald zündet ewige Zeugung Sternekerzen -:  
Und trotzig steigt Erlösung aus der Kleie ... (II, p.14)

These two verses in fact prefigure the structure of the first three acts. In the first act the poet rises up not only above the world of the newspaper-readers and prostitutes but also of 'der Mäzen', who does not share the poet's vision and is not prepared to help in the staging of his play. Opposition of this nature does not daunt the poet but merely serves to accelerate his flight, represented by the Nietzschean image of the eagle:

Du warfst mir einen himmelhohen Fels  
In meine Straße - ...  
Doch deine Widermacht stählt meine Pulse,  
Schicksal!  
Einst trotze ich mich himmelauf in blaue Sonne ...,  
Adler  
Spreite ich Schwingen aus  
Feuern der Sonne. (II, p.39)

The second and third acts then move on to deal with the poet's struggle for release from the restrictions of his family, culminating in the symbolic murder of his mother and father.

Der Bettler, however, introduces a different motif, which goes on to play a significant role in Sorge's subsequent work, and which augments the pattern of rotation between longing and

achievement already noted. The subtitle of the play is 'Eine dramatische Sendung' and the theme of the poet's mission, which is developed throughout the play, tends to give added weight to the idea that the poet has already achieved some understanding of the infinite. Sorge's description of this mission in the fourth act implies that his poet has already attained spiritual awareness and now sees it as his task to communicate this to the rest of humanity:

Ich hebe euch aus stinkender Verwesung  
Blinkend den Stern, daß ihr zu Boden brecht  
Vor Glanz und Glut! ...  
Aus tiefster Reinheit brennen meine Ziele:  
Ich will die Welt auf meine Schulter nehmen  
Und sie mit Lobgesang zur Sonne tragen. (II, p.80)

Although the emphasis on the 'Sendung' motif is a new development in Sorge's work, it is nevertheless one which grows out of features which are already present. In the first place, the imagery which he uses to describe the poetic mission - 'Stern', 'Glanz' and 'Sonne' - is strikingly familiar. Secondly, the sense of mission is again balanced by the awareness of the need for constant progress towards the infinite. The experiences of the leading character closely resemble those of 'der Jüngling' in the earlier play: they each begin with certain aspirations which are then shattered at a particular point in the play, but they are both able to weather this crisis and move beyond it to make further progress on the path of 'Sehnsucht' towards the eternal. It is in this sense that 'der Dichter' can exclaim at the close of Der Bettler - 'Ich küsse dich und liebe dich im Opfer / Und schreite lichtwärts in den nächsten Kreis' (II, p.93). The announcement of his intention to have a child merely underlines the idea of a recurrent and never-ending upward movement from one circle to the next: even the poet's child will eventually, like his father, also wish to overcome the restrictions of his family, and will in turn progress into further circles of development.

Once again, therefore, the same two features are prominent, summed up in the words 'Sehnsucht' and 'Sendung'. Although these would appear to be in opposition to each other, the one suggesting a never-ending process and the other a sense of certainty or achievement, they seem to complement each other in Sorge's work, reflecting again a Nietzschean view of man's development

through stages or crises of 'Selbstüberwindung' towards a higher state of being - 'Und dies Geheimnis redete das Leben zu mir: 'Siehe', sprach es, 'ich bin das, was sich immer selber Überwinden muß'.<sup>10</sup> It is really only the two long monologues at the commencement of the fifth act that do not comfortably fit in to this dramatic structure, a fact which does not pass unnoticed by Sorge himself. At one stage in his revision of the final section of the play he composed a foreword, which begins as follows:

Der Dichter verhehlt sich nicht, daß jene Gesetze der starken und bewegten Handlung, denen er bisher nachging, im folgenden fünften Aufzug unbefolgt bleiben; daß man daher diesen Aufzug zu Recht dramatisch ungesetzmäßig nennen kann. - (II, p.356)

At the heart of this admitted inconsistency lie two important factors. Firstly, the laws of strong and passionate action which Sorge refers to can no longer be followed because of a deep sense of despair which grips 'der Dichter'. He had decided to take up a job in the city in order to acquire material for his work, but after ten weeks he realises that such a project is doomed to failure - 'Der Ekel! Der Ekel! Das Handwerk hat mein Blut geronnen gemacht, ich eitere in den Adern ... Alles ward Böse!' (II, p.84). In other words, he is totally unable to fulfil his self-confessed mission to elevate mankind through his poetic work, and he experiences the downfall that is forecast in the last verse of 'Lied der Bettler' at the beginning of the play:

Dann rühren deine Schwingen jene Riegel,  
In deren Kiefern sich manch Hirn zerklemmte;  
Du liebst die Sehnsucht, die dich hierhin schwemmte,  
Fängst sie und taumelst nieder in den Tiegel. (II, p.14)

The fact that this poem ends on a note of defeat and the space devoted to the poet's despair at the beginning of the last act endow the poet's collapse with a significance which surpasses that of the temporary set-backs encountered by, for example, 'der Jüngling'.

This is further substantiated by the second major point of difference. In these monologues the poet's despair acts as a necessary pre-condition for an experience rather different to those which occurred in the earlier plays. The man in the vision

of 'der Wanderer' is shattered by the power of the sun in the moment that he reaches up towards it; 'der Seher', in the following play, also perishes at the moment of his highest elevation - 'hoch aufgerichtet' (I, p.261); Nietzsche's future man was also to raise himself up 'hoch genug für den Blitz'. Yet in contrast to all of these the poet in Der Bettler experiences 'der Blitz' at the deepest point of his despair. This development is emphasised by a reversal in Sorge's use of cosmic imagery. In Odysseus the movement of the sun and stars was controlled by the intensity of the hero's passion, but here the opposite occurs: 'Ein Blitz fuhr nieder und zerriß mein Erdreich!' (II, p.86). In Der Bettler the ecstasy of the girl in the forest is sparked off by the falling of the star, and not the other way round: 'Und dieser Stern setzt sie so in Verwirrung ...' (II, p.87). This reversal in Sorge's imagery suggests the beginnings of a shift of emphasis from man's passion and 'Sehnsucht' to some external motivating force of a spiritual nature. Later in the same speech the poet indeed refers to 'ein Blitz aus der Hand Gottes' but does not, as has been seen, take these thoughts any further within this particular play. In the unpublished foreword to the fifth act Sorge writes of the poet: 'Für ihn wird es Aufgabe sein, den neu-erlebten Kreisen in späteren Werken Leben zu schenken, das dramatisch ist und Zeichen gegen Zeichen setzt' (II, p.356), and in order to discover if and how this task is executed we now turn to a discussion of these later works.

That which had stood out in the last act of Der Bettler as being inconsistent with the rest of the play, becomes the central determining feature of Gericht über Zarathustra. In this 'Vision', written in May and June of 1912, six months after Der Bettler, Sorge begins to clarify his new ideas by means of a radical critique of his old mentor. Man's yearning to embrace the eternal, previously the raison d'être of Sorge's thought, now becomes the source of his damnation, and Zarathustra is used as the personification of this fatal error:

Dein Geist wollte die Ewigkeit befliegen,  
Der Geist, ist er verkehrt, tut an Flügel,

Wo doch nichts ist zu befliegen -  
Ein Flügel rührt nur die Zeit.



Du nahmst dir den Adler  
Und flogst hinauf zur Sonne ...

Flogest doch in der Zeit  
Mühevoll von einem Stern zum andern. (II, p.121-2)

For Sorge, therefore, the sun and stars have come to be illusions of eternity, and this realisation is rooted in a change in his understanding of what man is capable of achieving. The following lines from Gericht über Zarathustra are almost certainly written against the background of the failure of the poet's mission in the previous play and of the ensuing sense of 'Ekel':

Auf dieser Erde, wer da lebt,  
Sei's ein König der Jahrtausende,  
Ist Mensch und der Gefangenschaft  
Menschlich, zeitlich, heimgefallen. (II, p.110)

Because of man's inherent limitations, spiritual awareness or enlightenment must stem from a source other than himself, and significantly, when Sorge now speaks of 'Sehnsucht' in this work, it is a longing planted within man's being by God. It is, moreover, apparent that Sorge, at least, does not view this God as a projection of his own aspirations but as an independent and unpredictable spiritual force:

Er schickt die Feuersäule vor Sich her,  
Er teilt die Wasser,  
Er schlägt die Menschen wund mit Plagen,  
Er schüttet Segen. (II, p.118)

The task of the poet is no longer to raise mankind up to the stars on the wings of his own passionate longing, but to bear witness to a God who alone has the power to impart salvation - 'Ich will Zeugnis geben von dir, / Wie Du, Herr, den Menschen aufweckst' (II, p.111).

Sorge's rejection of Nietzsche's ideas and his affirmation of what appears to be orthodox Christianity find their clearest exposition in the drama Guntwar, written towards the end of 1912. The close correspondence between the experiences which Guntwar, the central character, describes in the course of two significant dialogues with Frau Mirjam and Sorge's own conversion experience of 1912 has been sufficiently substantiated by earlier critics and can thus be taken as the point of departure for the following discussion.<sup>11</sup> Rötzer emphasises the basic continuity bet-

ween this and Sorge's previous drama: 'Sorge betrachtete den 'Guntwar' als Fortsetzung des 'Bettlers'. Was dort noch in einer Frage endete, findet hier Antwort',<sup>12</sup> and Guntwar's own words make it sufficiently clear that he represents the further development of 'der Dichter' in the earlier work: 'Das weißt du wohl, daß ich die Sonne schwang / Mit beiden Händen jubelnd mir ums Haupt' (II, p.167). At this stage, however, he has been confronted by something totally 'Other', to make use once more of Otto's terminology, which throws into question his former interpretation of reality: 'In die geschlossene Empfindung ... da bricht herein ein Fremdes' (II, p.168). It is a world which makes his previous symbols and concepts appear utterly inadequate - 'Ist nicht von Sternen, Mutter, nicht von Diesseits' (II, p.168) - and which at present he can only describe in terms of its difference from the world that is familiar to him:

Ich ging in Nacht und war in Zweifel und Bedrängnis,  
Sterne und Himmel vor meinen Augen weit; -  
Da plötzlich fand ich mich in anderen Welten,  
Wo dieser Erde-Welt nur noch ein schwaches Wissen war ...  
(II, p.182-3)

In the course of Guntwar's conversation with Mirjam, however, a new language comes to him, and this is able to carry him beyond his despair of ever being able to find words for the inexpressible. He suddenly finds himself speaking with a voice that comes from outside his own being - in a 'Stimme-Vision', as Sorge describes it, which closes with the following lines:

Ich führe dich auf dieser dunklen Erde,  
Ich leite dich aus Lichtem zu dem Wunder,  
Ich leite dich aus Wunder zu dem Sohn. (II, p.169)

These lines provide the key to the nature of Sorge's development at this crucial stage of his career and begin to shed light on the identity of the enigmatic 'Symbole der Ewigkeit' mentioned at the end of Der Bettler. He is no longer interested in images such as the stars and sun, which mark the limits of the known world, for he has come to the conclusion that man is inherently incapable of transcending these limits without assistance from a spiritual power greater than himself; now, convinced of the

existence of such a power, he begins to speak in symbols which are, so to speak, 'given' or revealed from a transcendent dimension. The lines of movement in his earlier work had always been rooted in human 'Sehnsucht' and had aspired upwards towards the eternal. At this stage of his work the direction of this movement is reversed: the eternal reaches down to confront man, and does so in the form of revelation, bringing with it its own set of symbols:

Als jetzt mit Kümmernis und Sorg hoher Verständigung  
Zufolge sich ein Heil von droben löste,  
Das sausend niederstieg zu Erde-Umfängen ...  
Ich sah, ich sah das Kreuz einfältig in Dreifältigkeit  
Durch Weltenräume in unfaßbarer Bewegung sich beugen.  
(II, p.183)

God, therefore, becomes the prime mover, leading the poet out of his bondage to earth-bound images and revealing to him the mysteries of a totally other, spiritual realm. New symbols which were previously absent from Sorge's work begin to play a central role - in the lines quoted from Guntwar's conversations with Mirjam 'der Sohn' and 'das Kreuz', and elsewhere 'Kelch und Brot' (II, p.109), 'der Hirt' (II, p.250), and so on.

In short, therefore, the monologues at the end of Der Bettler mark a turning-point in Sorge's development; their implications are not worked out in that particular play but set the direction for the works which follow. Although, as will be seen shortly, one must be careful not to over-emphasise this change or to oversimplify Sorge's career into a neat division between a Nietzschean and a Christian phase, it can nevertheless be stated with confidence that from this time onwards there are fundamental differences in his work. The reversal of emphasis in his use of cosmic imagery has helped to bring to the fore a considerable shift in the writer's ideas. Where previously there was only 'Diesseits', which, while stretching out into infinity, was still ultimately accessible to man, now 'das Jenseitige' appears, and with such suddenness that the startled Guntwar at first tries to resist it:

Siehe, ich wehre mich,  
Weil das Jenseitige Unsichtbare Hohn war  
Vor mir im Geist, ich lachte drüber. (II, p.170)

He is faced with a dualism between a transcendent and an immanent world which he had always tried to avoid - 'Verfluchte Teilung! - Ich wollte sie nicht!' (II, p.168).

Although this represents a turning-point for Sorge, it must not be overlooked that certain dualistic features are also latent in his earlier plays, especially in the separation of the soul from the world of everyday reality. In an unpublished essay of 1908, two years before Der Jüngling, the young Sorge attempts to formulate his 'Lebensphilosophie':

Was ist Seele? Die menschliche Seele ist wohl ein Teil der Weltseele, jener alles bewegenden Kraft, die wiederum der Ursprung alles Seins ist. Diese Urkraft, die geschaffen und gezeugt hat, muß nun naturgemäß als seelische Kraft frei sein von allen irdischen, geistigen Eigenschaften, die durch irdische Einflüsse geschaffen werden, d.h. von allem Bösen. (I, p.390)

It is not difficult to demonstrate that this fundamental separation of soul from body or matter, remarkably similar to the ideas contained in Trakl's early poems such as 'Das tiefe Lied', remains a permanent feature of Sorge's thought, even if one takes into account the many shifts or reversals of opinion that characterise his earlier writings. It colours his understanding of the role of art, for in the following lines written in 1909 he implies that art finds its justification as an instrument of the soul: '(Dichtung) soll uns hinwegtragen mit schönen Schwingen über den Kram des Alltagslebens' (I, p.397). It also motivates his personal striving for eternal values, expressed this time in a diary entry from 1910:

Verachtung des Lebens. Haß gegen das Gesetz der Wandlung in und außer uns. Möglichstes Streben nach Unabhängigkeit von diesem Gesetz. Wilde und tiefe Sehnsucht nach einem Ewigseienden, Wandellosen, Unirdischen. (I, p.27)

The same dualism between body and soul permeates Der Bettler, as, for example, in the lines 'Aus des Leibes Not / Reckt sich die Seele frei zu ihrem Werk' (II, p.81).

Its significance, moreover, is not merely restricted to the thought content of Sorge's work, but extends to cover the characterisation and structure of his dramas. Sorge's characters, as has already been shown in Odysseus, can be divided into those who affirm the spiritual world and those who reject it, those who are open to the light and those who remain in

darkness. In his essay on Sorge in the volume Expressionismus als Literatur Hans Schuhmacher indicates the way in which this is reflected in the structure of Sorge's dramas as well, especially in that of Der Bettler:

Dualistisch ist die Gesamtfügung des Dramas: visionar-ekstatischen Ich-Szenen stehen 'realistisch' satirische Szenen des 'Man' gegenüber, in denen das spirituelle Elend einer sich im Unwesentlichen ergehenden, in Wollust, Neid und Gier versunkenen Menschheit deutlich wird.<sup>13</sup>

The dualism between soul, or self, and world does not disappear in Sorge's later plays but is in fact often expressed in similar terminology. Central to Guntwar, for example, is the notion of the journey of the soul from its earthly captivity to its heavenly redemption. The distinction in the earlier plays between those who affirm the values of the soul and those who do not is also maintained in Guntwar: in Der Jüngling the contrast was made between the sick and the healthy and now it is between those who are blind and those who see. Frau Mirjam says to her husband: 'Ach, du weißt ja nichts, von allem nichts, du bist blind, du siehst ja nichts. Ich sehe doch, Peter, und was ich sehe, ist wahrhaftig' (II, p.181).

To demonstrate both change and continuity in Sorge's work in terms of dualistic thought and structures is not, as it might at first appear, a self-contradictory procedure, but rather indicates the nature of his development more precisely. That which began as a dualism between soul and world is extended, due to the overpowering nature of Sorge's experiences in 1911, to the idea of a gulf between God and man. The introduction of God into the writer's framework of belief naturally is accompanied by the radical changes already mentioned, but is nevertheless still to be seen as a dualism on a vaster scale, encompassing the separation of soul from world but endowing it with more explicitly transcendent proportions. Guntwar himself is aware of the continuity of his experiences:

Und aller Sterne-Sang träumte nur dies  
Ganz unfaßbare Glück von Licht-Empfindung,  
Und alles Sonne-Beten wollte dies. (II, p.170)

and Mirjam too recognises the relationship between his earlier emphasis on the soul and his subsequent acceptance of God:

Du warst in Leib und Erde befangen; aber deine Seele war Christ, rein im Sinn, und sie träumte ihren Christustraum mitten unter den Sternen und Welten. Erdbilder griff sie noch, doch sie träumte das Himmlische. (II, p.184)

It is only when this dualism develops into a notion of the separation between man and a transcendent God that the concept of revelation and its accompanying 'symbols of eternity' become important for Sorge. If a gulf is posited between God and man, unbridgeable from this side due to man's inherent and total inability to grasp anything beyond the empirical world, then the only possibility for man to acquire knowledge of the divine lies in a willingness on the part of God to reveal spiritual mysteries in concepts which man can comprehend. Thus, with reference to 'das Jenseitige', Guntwar can say:

Nun  
Redet's mit Stimmen und greiftso ans Herz  
Und redet gar vom Sohn ... (II, p.170)

Voices, visions and revelations therefore become a necessary ingredient of Sorge's later work; in early 1913, for example, he writes down a series of 'Visionen', in which once again the poet believes himself to be recording words stemming directly from God himself. The fact that Sorge also does not hesitate to pass absolute judgement on his contemporary world is also rooted in the assurance that he is the recipient of direct revelation; his belief in God validates not only his 'Gericht' upon Zarathustra but also on a broader scale. In a letter of 1914 to the publisher Georg Fischer he describes Guntwar in the following terms:

Das mittlere Zwischenspiel, das zweite, hält das Gericht über die Menschen unserer Zeit. Das dritte hält das Gericht über die nicht nach Gottes Absicht im Weibe Wurzelnden. Das erste Zwischenspiel endlich behandelt die bildende Kunst. Es übt Gericht an solchen, die in Form befangen, steckengeblieben in Form, Gott nicht schauen. (II, p.371)

In the light of the centrality of revelation it is not surprising that Sorge, in later works such as Metanoeite, König David and Mystische Zwiesprache, turns increasingly to the Bible for his material. As early as 1913 he is able to write to a friend: 'Ich lese nur noch ganz wenig Modernes - nur Dante, Mystiker, die Bibel' (II, p.384).

In his reliance upon revelation Sorge has taken a step which Rilke, for example, is unwilling to take; both writers are concerned primarily with the experience of 'the Other', but at a certain stage in their career their paths diverge as they turn to different solutions. A short, but extremely illuminating, correspondence between the two writers not only emphasises that they are in fact dealing with the same problem but also sheds light on their respective responses to it. Sorge visited Rilke in Munich in October 1913 and on this occasion the conversation between the two men reportedly revolved around the function of Christ as mediator. Rilke repeated his reasons for rejecting Christ as a bridge between man and God, the same reasons as those given in the second book of Malte,<sup>14</sup> to which Sorge replied: 'Aber Christus ist doch nicht nur Brücke, er ist doch schon jenseitiges Ufer'.<sup>15</sup> As a result of this conversation, letters were exchanged for the following six months; Sorge's have unfortunately been lost but the three letters written by Rilke have been preserved, from which the content of the correspondence can be fairly accurately reconstructed.

In his second letter Rilke expresses concern that Sorge's adoption of Catholicism might endanger the precision of his writing, that he might be tempted to use a vague or inadequate image 'bloß weil er etwas 'katholisch' wäre' (II, p.380). In the final letter, however, written after Rilke had read Guntwar, he confesses that his worries were perhaps unfounded, and in the course of explaining himself he takes us to the heart of the basic similarity, but also of the important differences, between the two writers:

Die Besorgnis, die ich einmal früher aussprach, scheint auch mir jetzt fast überflüssig; wenn Sie sich ganz imstande wissen, innerhalb der angenommenen und leidenschaftlich anerkannten Umfriedigung jede Bewegung und Darstellung Ihres Herzens auszuführen, wenn auch die äußersten Worte und letzten Schreie noch in dem Umkreis Raum haben, den Sie die Kirche nennen, so ist es natürlich, daß Sie darin uneingeschränkt alle Beweglichkeit finden, zu der Ihr Wesen angelegt ist. Ich habe Ihnen schon bei unserer ersten Begegnung nicht verhehlt, daß es sich für mich anders verhält; im rein Geistigen mag, wenn man sie ganz groß auffasst, die Kirche ein unabsehbarer Umkreis sein, der größte irdische, der, über eine fast unscheinbare Spur, ins Ewige übergeht -; wo aber einer (wie ich es bin) zunächst zu seiner Sichtbarmachung des Geistigen verpflichtet ist, da muß ihm die Kunst als die überaus größere (als seine weiteste ins Unendliche überführende) Lebensperipherie einleuchten; ...  
(II, pp.380-1)

The image of circles moving out into infinity fits in well with the direction of Sorge's earlier work; he too had used similar language to describe his Nietzschean yearning for the unknown. Yet these lines of Rilke fail to penetrate to the essence of Sorge's thought at this time, and there are two reasons for this. First of all, in his depiction of the church and art in terms of two circles, with art representing the larger one, there is an unmistakable arrogance. Rilke is saying, in effect, that if Sorge's passions and perceptions find enough room to manoeuvre in the smaller circle then he has obviously no need to seek a larger one, and in so doing implies that his, Rilke's, artistic integrity and insights require a larger area and are thus far more profound. More importantly, though, the idea of two circles sharing the same middle-point misrepresents Sorge's understanding of his religious conversion. Sorge would almost certainly have replied that if the church and its symbolism are to be represented by a circle at all then they must have a centre other than man himself. Both writers had been struggling to give expression to experiences that stood on the periphery of human reality, and had endeavoured to progress through ever-expanding circles towards the eternal; when confronted by a crisis which threatens to halt this movement Rilke ultimately responds by trying to push back the frontiers of language still further, as witnessed, for example, in 'Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens ...', whereas Sorge discards the man-centred circle altogether and replaces it with one whose centre is a transcendent God. By affirming that which is unequivocally 'jenseitig' he simultaneously states the problem of the 'Other', with its accompanying dualism between the human and the spiritual, more extremely than Rilke and Otto, and points to a possibility of resolving it, through his acceptance of a religious belief.

It is, of course, not only Rilke who feels constrained to part company with Sorge at this point. There is relatively little secondary literature on Sorge, but a considerable proportion of those critics who have written on him tend to reject the later, 'religious' Sorge, not necessarily because they have no sympathy with his beliefs, but because they consider him to be either unworthy or uninteresting as a subject for academic research. In Expressionism in German life, literature and the theatre R. Hinton Thomas concludes his chapter



on Sorge as follows: 'Denominational religion is not compatible with the spiritual world of Expressionism and therefore at this point Sorge passes beyond the scope of this book',<sup>16</sup> and in 1956 Otto Mann expresses a similar idea in a more dogmatic manner, 'Die zur positiven Religion zurückgekehrten Dichter sind keine Expressionisten mehr'.<sup>17</sup>

The neglect of Sorge's later work, which is mainly the consequence of its exclusion from the ranks of Expressionism, cannot be justified today in the same way as it has been in the past, for it is based on certain fundamental misconceptions. Over the last twenty years 'das expressionistische Jahrzehnt' has emerged in literary histories as a much more complex phenomenon than was previously realised; the term 'Expressionism', if it can be used at all, can no longer merely refer to a select group of writers who state and attempt to solve contemporary problems in terms of their own art or personal philosophy, but must also take into account those who seek solutions in the less individualistic spheres of politics - or of the church. Too hasty a rejection of certain authors can overlook the fact that, in spite of their varying remedies, many writers of the period are grappling with essentially identical problems. This has already emerged in the comparison between Sorge and Rilke, as well as through the analysis of Der Brenner in the relationship of the theologians Haecker and Ebner to the poet Trakl. It is often only through an examination of the attempted solutions that an adequate understanding of the central problems can be achieved.

In the case of Sorge the disregard of his later work has been given added impetus by a further misconception - an oversimplified division of his development into a Nietzschean and a Catholic period.<sup>18</sup> Yet readers who follow Sorge's development not only up to Der Bettler but until his death in 1916 will not only be struck by his religious conversion and his adoption of Catholic symbolism, but will also sense that in certain areas nothing has changed. One of the reasons for this has already been mentioned - the continuity from the dualism between soul and world in the earlier work to a dualism between God and world in the later. Another important factor, however, is revealed when we look more closely at the repercussions of Sorge's concept of revelation for his later work. These are already noticeable in Guntwar. Shortly after his first revelations from

God - in the form of a 'Stimme-Vision' (II, p.169) - Guntwar makes the following comments in a conversation with Peter, his host:

... ich aber muß reden, mein Beruf befiehlt das, mir sind die Lippen aufgetan ... Gott ist allen gemein, Christus jedes Menschen, keiner besitzt ihn für sich allein, wenn ihn dann auch wieder jeder für sich besitzt. (II, p.178)

In these lines an important feature of Sorge's earlier work begins to re-emerge: Guntwar is becoming aware of a sense of mission, and this is reinforced by the fact that he now sees his spirituality in terms of a possession which 'jeder für sich besitzt'. In other words, the idea of 'Sendung', which since Der Bettler had given way to an experience of crisis leading to conversion, is now reasserting itself. Faith in Christ is something which has been attained by the poet and must now be passed on to others. The distance and incomprehensibility of God, which had destroyed the poet's certainty of his mission in Der Bettler, is in fact now expressed by Peter in his reply to Guntwar, rather than Guntwar himself:

Nun ja - ich kann über Gott nicht so schnell reden - ich sagte es dir ja: Gott ist eigentlich viel zu groß für Worte - findest du nicht? (II, p.178)

Yet in this play it is Peter who is regarded as being blind and who must be brought to spiritual awareness.

The renewed sense of mission is exemplified even more clearly in König David (1914). In this play David is, from the outset, firm in his assurance that he has been chosen by God for a special task; he is convinced that he is God's anointed servant. The motif of 'Salbung' plays a similar role in this play to that of 'Sendung' in Der Bettler. David's certainty of his relationship with God results in lines such as 'Mein Jahwe! O Du Liebster! O mein Jahwe!' (III, p.87), which, in their pathos and enthusiasm, are strongly reminiscent of plays such as Der Jüngling. Here too there is even another reversal of movement in the direction of Sorge's imagery. David is not confronted or threatened by a divine 'Blitz von oben' but himself reaches up towards God. This is symbolised in the first scene, when he shoots an arrow towards heaven:

Nun, Pfeil hinein  
Zum Ziel in Jahwes Himmel, und mein Herze.  
Schieß Jahwe zu! (III, p.74)

Once more a close similarity to Sorge's earlier work is plainly evident, as this is the same image as at the end of Odysseus:

Odysseus schießt den Pfeil ab; krachend springt die Sehne zurück. Das Geschoß flieht in feurigem Streifen durch die Luft über die Häupter der Freier fort und nieder in den Himmel. (I, p.272)

These developments all indicate that Sorge is again tracing a line of progress from man and towards the infinite. The experience of God as 'Other', as one who breaks into human reality, recedes and is replaced by the concept of man treading an upward path towards spiritual enlightenment. In his 'Visionen', which were written at the same time as Guntwar, Sorge still describes God as an inaccessible being, high above human aspirations:

UND hättest du alles Wissen der Welt, siehe, es wäre  
denn nichts anderes denn Menschen-Wissen.  
Denn Mein Wissen ist nicht eures, noch ist eures Meins.

but the lines which follow suggest that Sorge is moving back to a Nietzschean position rather than expressing a Christian view of salvation:

Ringe hindurch durch deine Schwachheit, spricht der Herr, welche sie auch sei und wie sehr du sie auch liebest. Ja, lerne dich selbst überwinden. Amen.  
(II, p.281)

With the re-appearance of these features the sense of the 'Otherness' and distance of God, which had given a new direction to Sorge's work from the end of Der Bettler onwards, is severely weakened and recedes into the background. In the plays and poems written in 1914, such as König David, Der Sieg des Christos and the unpublished 'Christuslieder', the dualism between God and man has almost totally disappeared; here Sorge presents characters who are already on familiar terms with the divine and who see it as their task to progress still further on the path to spiritual awareness ('ein wenig weiter in die süße Einsicht' (III, p.161) ) and to lead the rest of mankind to

a similar relationship with God. In this way Sorge has clearly returned to the alternating pattern of his earlier work, with its twin themes of spiritual attainment and vocation on the one hand, and the eternal 'Sehnsucht' which drives man towards a deeper and deeper communion with the spiritual on the other.

The division of Sorge's work into a Nietzschean and a Christian period is therefore an inadequate one. Although his conversion to Catholicism clearly has a strong influence on his later work, an equally valid case can be made for a continuity of purpose between the early and the later plays of Sorge. A more accurate account is provided by drawing a distinction between the middle period of his creative output and that which came before and after. This middle period, which is represented most clearly by the two long monologues at the end of Der Bettler but also by the ideas of Gericht über Zarathustra and the first part of Guntwar, must be seen as a brief interruption in the continuity of Sorge's work, as a period in which Sorge experiences the 'Otherness' of God in such a way that the direction of his earlier writing is thrown into question. The fact that he soon reverts to the earlier pattern will be demonstrated from a different perspective when we return to a closer analysis of the imagery of Sorge's later work in chapter eight.

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References:

1. Sorge, Werke, edited by H. Rötzer, 3 vols (Nuremberg, 1962-7), II, p.86. Further references to this edition will be provided within brackets after quotations in the text.
2. See Rötzer's notes in Werke, II, p.363.
3. See Rötzer, II, pp.365-8.
4. Nietzsche, Werke, I, p.649.
5. Nietzsche, I, p.701.
6. I, p.748.
7. I, p.657.
8. I, p.748.
9. I, p.778.
10. I, p.623.
11. See Rötzer's notes in Sorge, Werke, II, p.370.
12. See Rötzer, II, p.370.
13. Expressionismus als Literatur (Berne and Munich, 1969), p.565.

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11. See Rötzer's notes in Sorge, Werke, II, p.370.
12. See Rötzer, II, p.370.
13. Expressionismus als Literatur (Berne and Munich, 1969), p.565.

14. See above, chapter 2, p.51.
  15. For an account of this conversation and for Rilke's letters to Sorge, see Sorge, Werke, II, pp.377-81.
  16. Thomas and Samuel, p.37.
  17. Quoted by Rötzer in Sorge, Werke, II, p.11.
  18. Apart from Otto Mann and R.H. Thomas see also J. Kröll, 'Reinhard Johannes Sorge. Studien zu seiner inneren Entwicklung' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Berlin, 1941), and Claire Lucques, Le poids du monde. Rilke et Sorge (Paris, 1962).
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5. Excursus: the concept of 'Erlösungsbedürfnis' as an interpretative model.

Our discussion of each of the writers mentioned so far has brought to light a shared problem of perception and language. A new awareness of a dimension of reality which both disturbs and attracts has led them to speak in terms of the 'Other' and forced them to search for a vocabulary which might express it more adequately. There are naturally differences between a theologian's and a writer's treatment of the problem. Trakl, Rilke, and Sorge (in the last act of Der Bettler) are more involved with immediate visual perception; they attempt to make sense of a perceived world which seems to burst the bounds of previously held patterns of thinking. Because of this their works record a more personal confrontation with the 'Other' than those of Haecker, Ebner or Otto, for whom the perceived world includes the world of corporate religious experience as well as their own. If, in dealing with the experience of biblical writers and, in Otto's case, with other religions, they might appear less immediate or involved than the poets, this cannot detract from the fact that they too are concerned with an 'Otherness' which, especially when seen in contrast to the conception of God in liberal theology of the previous century, is disturbing and challenging rather than comforting.

This common concern gives rise in each writer to dualistic thought structures, expressed either in terms of a gulf between God and man or in terms of a split between the soul and the world. Both of these dualistic aspects are present in Trakl and Sorge. In the former the theme of the alienation of man from God augments that of the soul's separation from the world and runs parallel with it, while in Sorge, as seen in the previous chapter, the concept of a soul 'frei von allen irdischen Eigenschaften' (I, p.390) runs through his whole work, broadening out for a while after Der Bettler to an awareness of the distance between 'Diesseits' and 'Jenseits'. Rilke and Otto also posit a distance between man and God, emphasised once more by the inability of human language to speak adequately of a spiritual dimension. Because in their work the concept of God on the one hand and the hidden depths of inner consciousness on the other are two areas which are not clearly divided,

they do not find it so necessary to speak of a two-tier dualism that includes a split between soul and world. God and the soul become intermingled as the source of man's experience of the 'Other'. Finally, when Haecker or Ebner refer to soul or 'Geist' they are speaking of something which has its roots in a God whose basic characteristic is his distance from man.<sup>1</sup> Ebner makes clear that the separation of man from God results in a dualism that permeates man's whole existence:

Der Mensch krankt am Riß zwischen Wirklichkeit und Idee, Leben und Denken, Natur und Geist. Der Geist des Christentums hat dieser Krankheit zum vollen Ausbruch verholfen - was wohl unbedingt notwendig war zu ihrer Heilung.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in spite of their differing points of departure, whether they are working in the field of literature or theology, whether from inside or outside the framework of confessional or orthodox religion, these writers are drawn together by fundamental similarities of outlook. The dualistic features which have emerged in their work stand in stark contrast, moreover, to a view of the world which almost exclusively emphasises the continuity between God and man, the religious and the secular, and which presupposes the possibility of 'Anschluß', the availability of God to all who are in any way prepared to affirm 'spiritual' values. This view had found its clearest expression at the height of liberal theology in Harnack and Troeltsch, and is then reflected not only in literary figures such as Carl Dallago but in many others of the Expressionist period who find a certain security in the 'Bequemlichkeit und Selbstverständlichkeit' of religion without encountering the disturbance of the numinous.<sup>3</sup>

Until now we have postponed a discussion of the underlying reasons for the convergence of dualistic thought structures at this particular period of German history in the interest of a more thorough analysis of their nature and content. These reasons will be treated in detail in the following chapter through the work of Karl Barth and the dialectical theologians, for their thought helps to bring into focus many of the factors that gave rise to this dualistic outlook. The direction of their theology, however, emerges with greater clarity when seen against the background of a methodological problem which any discussion of determining factors inevitably raises. For this reason we



shall turn firstly to this problem and particularly to its manifestation in the form of an interpretative model that has frequently been used to explain the resurgence of religious interest in the period in question. Although the origins of this model could be traced back to the nineteenth century, it is more helpful in this context to consider the way in which it is used by three writers of this century, the last of whom attempts to apply it specifically to the literature of the Expressionist decade. In this way it will be possible to ascertain the relevance of this approach to the writers studied so far, and this in turn can provide a basis for a deeper understanding of the contribution of Karl Barth and his colleagues.

A useful starting-point in this respect is provided by two essays written by a man who was neither a theologian nor a literary figure, but who nevertheless made interesting contributions to both areas. In the 1907 volume of the periodical Morgen Georg Simmel, in an article entitled 'Das Christentum und die Kunst', outlines 'die Gemeinsamkeit des religiösen und des künstlerischen Verhaltens' - his belief that religion and art in their different ways are yet giving a similar account of man's experience of reality:

In dem Maß, in dem eine Religion wirklich ihrem reinen Begriff entspricht und nicht von andern Seelenprovinzen her mit allerhand Bedürftigkeiten und Beschränktheiten gemischt ist, drängt sie den Gott ins 'Jenseits'; sein Abstand von allem Greifbaren und von der Welt unsrer Wirklichkeiten ist die absolute Steigerung jener 'Distanz', in der der hohe und überlegene Mensch alle ihm Nicht-gleichen hält. Aber der Gott, in dieser Distanz verbleibend, bleibt zugleich nicht in ihr, sondern als wäre jene nur ein Anlaufrückschritt, bemächtigt sich die Seele seiner als des Nächsten und Vertrautesten, bis zur mystischen Einswerdung mit ihm. Dieses Doppelverhältnis zu unserer Wirklichkeit wiederholt die Kunst. Sie ist das Andere des Lebens, die Erlösung von ihm durch seinen Gegensatz. ...<sup>4</sup>

Here Simmel uses many of the terms, such as 'Jenseits' and 'Distanz', that have now become familiar from previous chapters, even to the point of referring to art as 'das Andere des Lebens'. Yet what might at first sight seem to be an affinity with the writers already mentioned is diminished by two important factors. Firstly, unlike Trakl, Sorge, Ebner and Haecker, he refers to God as the object of man's activity: religion 'drängt Gott ins Jenseits', before God can then appear in the next sentence as a moving force in his own right. One might object here that

Rilke also expressed his ideas in a similar vein in the words 'daß wir unser Kostbarstes von uns fortgerückt haben' (VI, pp. 861-2), but this could be countered by the second factor, namely, that when Rilke's God turns back to confront human reality he does so in terms of 'Entsetzen', whereas Simmel speaks more positively of a 'mystische Einswerdung'. For Simmel this does not take place in a remote area of consciousness, for in the course of his essay it becomes clear that he sees the soul not only as an immediately accessible area, but also as the source of all religious and artistic activity:

Aber eben damit gibt sie (die Kunst) der Seele die Möglichkeit, mit der Ergänzung der einen Welt aus der andern sich selbst als den Einheitspunkt beider zu fühlen, als die Kraft, die einen dieser Ströme aus dem andern speisen kann, weil jeder für sich aus ihr entspringt.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, Simmel's ideas on art and religion give the impression of a basically liberal humanistic outlook grounded in a belief in man's spiritual capacities, but with occasional hints of the distance between the spiritual and the material world.

If this were all he had to say, one might be justified in thinking that he had no fresh insights into the connections between literature and theology, and yet in a section near the beginning of his essay, so short that it could easily be overlooked, Simmel opens up quite a different angle on the whole subject by drawing a comparison:

Während alle Dinge der realen Welt in unser Leben als Mittel und Material einbezogen werden können, ist das Kunstwerk schlechthin für sich. Aber all jene Wirklichkeiten behalten dabei eine letzte, tiefe Fremdheit gegen uns; und selbst zwischen unserer Seele und der des anderen findet unsere Sehnsucht des Nehmens und des Gebens eine hoffnungslose Unüberbrückbarkeit. Das Kunstwerk allein kann ganz unser werden ... Nur der Gott an den wir glauben, und die Kunst, die wir genießen, sind von vornherein bloß dadurch, daß sie da sind, für unsere Seele bestimmt.<sup>6</sup>

In these sentences he turns away from the more abstract line of argument characteristic of the rest of the essay and suggests in an indirect way that religion, art and the soul must be seen in terms of more tangible aspects of existence. Man's relationship to his physical environment, especially his use of it as 'Mittel und Material', is marked by a sense of alienation between

himself and the world of things and people. In their promise of union with the soul, art and religion provide the polar opposite to this 'unbridgeability'. Here Simmel assumes, although he does not state it in so many words, that there is a connection between the quality of man's social life and the development of his spiritual values, because the latter compensates for the former.

This idea had in fact already been worked out more explicitly, though without the specific application to art, in an essay published in 1903 under the title 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben'.<sup>7</sup> Working from the idea that 'die allerweitesten und allgemeinsten Inhalte und Formen des Lebens sind mit den allerindividuellsten innig verbunden',<sup>8</sup> Simmel goes on to explain that the rapid accumulation of men into cities, the concentration in the city of the money economy, and the division of labour have combined to produce reactions in man's 'Geistesleben' that had not been present in small-town life. He detects in the city-dweller a tendency towards 'Blasiertheit', resulting from an increasing inertness to the qualitative distinctions between different aspects of his environment, which, in turn, he sees as one result of the levelling function of money. An integral part of city life is the necessity of precision and punctuality in men's dealings with each other and Simmel believes that this has led to the attempts of natural science to explain the world solely in terms of mathematical formulae. At the same time, however, he welcomes the city as the bringer of a new kind of personal freedom; the larger and more amorphous the social group that man lives in, the more free he is to express his own individuality, as the restrictive structures of the small group have now disappeared.<sup>9</sup>

This dual attitude to the rise of the city which emerges from Simmel's reflections is in fact one of the main merits of his essay. He is not prepared to simplify his analysis in favour of an affirmation of city life in the manner of, for example, the Futurists; nor does he fearfully resist it by trying to cling on to what he sees as the values of small town life. As he explains in his conclusion, he is not prepared either 'anzuklagen oder zu verzeihen, sondern allein zu verstehen'.<sup>10</sup> To understand means for him above all to accept the complex and paradoxical nature of man's relationship to

the city, and this he summarises most succinctly in the following comparison between the small town and the metropolis:

Die Lebenssphäre der Kleinstadt ist in der Hauptsache in und mit ihr selbst beschlossen. Für die Großstadt ist dies entscheidend, daß ihr Innenleben sich in Wellenzügen über einen weiten nationalen oder internationalen Bezirk erstreckt. Weimar ist keine Gegeninstanz, weil eben diese Bedeutung seiner an einzelne Persönlichkeiten geknüpft war und mit ihnen starb, während die Großstadt gerade durch ihre wesentliche Unabhängigkeit selbst von den bedeutendsten Einzelpersönlichkeiten charakterisiert wird - das Gegenbild und der Preis der Unabhängigkeit, die der Einzelne innerhalb ihrer genießt.<sup>11</sup>

Simmel's failure to develop this notion of a simultaneous sense of freedom and superfluity (with reference, for example, to the role of the artist in modern society) serves to illustrate that he was by no means a systematic thinker but was content to provide fresh insights into discrete social spheres. Yet if we piece together some of the ideas outlined in these two essays it becomes clear that his thought is motivated by an awareness of a complex inter-relationship between culture and the society in which it thrives. He is not satisfied with an analysis of cultural values solely in terms of 'Geist', but provides instead a comparatively detailed account of several of the social and economic factors that affect it. Finally, he tends to see art's promise of harmony in the face of alienation as a reaction or defence against the increasing pressures of society, an idea also contained in his book Philosophie des Geldes, published in 1900. Here he finds the most important cultural expressions of his time, as Pascal summarises it, in 'those through which the individual, the spirit, what he sometimes calls the soul, defends and asserts itself against the engulfing reality of capitalism'.<sup>12</sup>

If applied to the literary figures discussed so far, Simmel's conclusions have an obvious relevance: Sorge, Rilke and Trakl had each lived in the city for extended periods of time, and each had experienced it as something threatening or inimical - Rilke, during the writing of Malte, lived in Paris, Sorge moved between Jena and Berlin, and Trakl between Salzburg, Vienna and Innsbruck. In Der Bettler Sorge contrasts the city world of newspaper readers, critics and prostitutes with the aspirations of the poet, who wishes to elevate the world from its shallowness and transience towards more lasting spiritual

values. The stage directions for the fifth act read 'Hinter dem Vorhang schallt gedämpft der Lärm der Großstadtstraße' and it is against this background that the poet finally turns his back on the demands of city life; having taken employment for ten weeks he now vows never to return to 'des Malmwerks eiserne Fresse' (II, p.84).

Rilke's encounter with the metropolis is recorded, through the figure of Malte, far more profoundly. Malte's vulnerability to its noises and its speed, so clearly illustrated in the passage from the beginning of Malte analysed earlier, grows into a feeling of anxiety, which is then gradually intensified throughout the book by the perplexing variety of his impressions of Paris life. The work is, in short, a perfect example of Simmel's notion that:

Die psychologische Grundlage, auf der der Typus großstädtischer Individualitäten sich erhebt, ist die Steigerung des Nervenlebens, die aus dem raschen und ununterbrochenen Wechsel äußerer und innerer Eindrücke hervorgeht ... die rasche Zusammendrängung wechselnder Bilder, der schroffe Abstand innerhalb dessen, was man mit einem Blick umfaßt, die Unerwartetheit sich aufdrängender Impressionen.<sup>13</sup>

It is, moreover, worth mentioning in this context that literary documentations of this theory are by no means restricted to the writers dealt with here. Many Expressionist writers, for instance, are concerned with similar themes, and perhaps the most striking parallel to Malte's sense of exposure is to be found in the poem 'Da sind die Straßen ...' by Ernst Wilhelm Lotz:

Lärm stößt an Lärm. Schmerzelle Klingeln schellen,  
zersägend das Gehör. Wagen mit Eisen  
erschüttern. Die Elektrische mit grellen  
Schleiftönen nimmt die Kurve in den Gleisen.

Und meiner Nerven Netz, so fein besaitet,  
drin Perlen hängen aus dem ewigen Meer:  
es ist als Teppich in den Staub gebreitet,  
und gräßlich wälzt der Tag sich drüberher.<sup>14</sup>

In Lotz' poem the unfeeling material world triumphs over and destroys the last bastions of the soul ('Perlen ... aus dem ewigen Meer'), and this corresponds with Simmel's picture of the human spirit's struggle for survival against the onslaughts of materialistic capitalism. In the development of Malte's reflections, however, this model is reversed, for it becomes

apparent that the spiritual values are not so much located in Malte himself as in the forces that threaten him from outside, in the strangeness of the city, which then imperceptibly merges with a more transcendent 'Otherness'. When seen in this light, Malte's world bears more resemblance to that of Georg Heym, who, in his use of daemonic imagery in poems like 'Die Dämonen der Städte', also fuses together the chaos of city life with the sense of a disturbing metaphysical reality.<sup>15</sup>

Trakl does not deal with the city as frequently as Rilke or Heym, but when he does, as, for example, in 'An die Verstummen', he too gives it an unmistakably daemonic colouring:

O, der Wahnsinn der großen Stadt, da am Abend  
An schwarzer Mauer verkrüppelte Bäume starren,  
Aus silberner Maske der Geist des Bösen schaut;  
Licht mit magnetischer Geißel die steinerne Nacht verdrängt.  
O, das versunkene Läuten der Abendglocken.

Hure, die in eisigen Schauern ein totes Kindlein gebärt.  
Rasend peitscht Gottes Zorn die Stirne des Besessenen,  
Purpurne Seuche, Hunger, der grüne Augen zerbricht.  
O, das gräßliche Lachen des Golds.

Aber stille blutet in dunkler Höhle stummere Menschheit,  
Fügt aus harten Metallen das erlösende Haupt. (I, p.124)

Here again, though, it is not the lifelessness of material things that opposes the aspirations of the soul or of 'humanity', for the things themselves are suffused with an insane dynamism. Human characteristics are transferred to the inanimate world and a reversal of roles takes place. The trees stare and money laughs, while the eyes of the starving are no longer able to see and the suffering of the prostitute renders her incapable of happiness. Within the framework of Trakl's characteristic interplay of opposites - here the fifth, tenth and eleventh lines counteract the despair of the rest of the poem - the poet's inability to perceive order in the madness of the world around goes hand in hand with his perplexity in the face of something transcendent. The arbitrariness of God's anger accentuates the distance of the divine from the human, and the location of the soul's place of refuge - 'in dunkler Höhle' - is an indication of its remoteness from the turmoil of the outside world.

On the one hand, therefore, Simmel's analysis is extremely

applicable for these writers do record the impact of the metropolis, in its hectic speed and noise, in the monotony of its work, and in its acceleration of the growth in the power of money. At the same time, however, none of these writers, at least up to the stage to which we have followed them so far, seems to offer the possibility of Simmel's 'my-stische Einswerdung' by means of a unified world of art. In fact, instead of shying away from the dualisms inherent in modern life, they reproduce them in their work, and yet on a different level. In other words, Simmel's discovery of a dualism between the encroachment of the material world and the 'culture-creating' human spirit or soul becomes transformed into a dualism between the threatening nature of the 'Other' in all its various aspects (whether it is described in terms of God or demons, man's confrontation with it is essentially the same) and the human self. The tensions of city life are neither evaded nor reproduced in a strictly realistic manner, but take their place within a broader, religious framework. Thus, in spite of its wealth of insight, Simmel's analysis of art and religion, anchored as it is in the comforting notion of the spirit's promise of unity, is not able to account for the less optimistic spiritual outlook that was already beginning to make itself felt during his lifetime.

A younger contemporary of his, the art historian Wilhelm Worringer, addresses himself more directly to the notion of a radical transcendence in both art and religion in his book Abstraktion und Einfühlung, written in 1908. Worringer's preface to the 1948 edition of this book reveals that he came into personal contact with Simmel and felt intellectually indebted to him, but the nature of this debt is not clearly described. Judging from their work, however, it seems that the basic resemblance between them is that they both see the crucial importance of tracing the influence of man's social environment upon his culture, and this conviction underlies Worringer's description of art history as a rotation between opposite poles. He believes that a concept of religion which deals in terms of a sharp division between a transcendent and a material order of reality emerges in those historical periods in which man's relationship to the external world is characterised by insecurity. In art this is reflected in a tendency towards abstraction. Mimetic or 'empathetic' art, on the other hand, is

the more typical form of expression of ages in which man feels more 'at home' in his environment:

Während der Einfühlungsdrang ein glückliches pantheistisches Vertraulichkeitsverhältnis zwischen dem Menschen und den Außenwelterscheinungen zur Bedingung hat, ist der Abstraktionsdrang die Folge einer großen inneren Beunruhigung des Menschen durch die Erscheinungen der Außenwelt und korrespondiert in religiöser Beziehung mit einer stark transzendentalen Färbung aller Vorstellungen.<sup>16</sup>

The connection between abstraction in art and literature and a transcendental or cosmic world-view will be discussed in the second half of this study; for the moment the nature of the religious outlook itself is the important factor. Worringer touches upon this again later in his book when he writes: 'Die Einheit von Gott und Welt ist nur ein anderer Name für die Einheit von Mensch und Welt'.<sup>17</sup> If this is the case, then it follows that when man feels alienated from the world his concept of God is transformed and he begins to think in terms of distance and separation.

Worringer does not provide us with the detail of Simmel's analysis of the social roots of alienation, a shortcoming which somewhat diminishes the force of his argument, but he does suggest a possible explanation for a trend in literature and art to which his own treatise points. According to his model the presence of a religious dualism between the transcendent and the immanent (whether it be between God and man or soul and world) has to be seen as a projection by man of his own sense of insecurity. The question as to why artists should find it necessary to project their own historical situation on to a different plane finds its answer in Worringer's reference to the human desire for salvation:

In der transzendentalen Färbung der religiösen Vorstellungen dokumentiert sich aufs klarste ein starkes, vom tiefsten Weltinstinkt bedingtes Erlösungsbedürfnis. Und entsprechend geht dem Weg vom starren Transzendentalismus zur immanenten Gottauffassung ein langsames Abflauen des Erlösungsbedürfnisses parallel.<sup>18</sup>

Yet it is precisely this concept of 'Erlösungsbedürfnis' that betrays the fact that Worringer, in spite of his greater awareness of the dualistic problem, represents no great advance on Simmel when it comes to applying their ideas to the writers



being considered here. In the final analysis, Worringer's abstract artist only projects a metaphysical world in order to find a place of refuge in it - 'Denn diese abstrakten, von aller Endlichkeit befreiten Formen sind die einzigen und höchsten, in denen der Mensch angesichts der Verworrenheit des Weltbildes ausruhen kann'.<sup>19</sup> This bears a close resemblance to Simmel's tendency to see art or 'Geist' as a defence against the rapidity and impersonality of modern life.

Thus, even though their work sheds so much light upon the social background of religious dualism, Simmel and Worringer, in their use of terms such as 'mystische Einswerdung' and 'Erlösungsbedürfnis', do not really further our understanding of the more disturbing religious world of, for example, Rilke, Trakl and Sorge. The sense of 'Otherness' with which they find themselves confronted cannot be explained simply in terms of a projection of a longing for salvation; in Malte as well as in Trakl's poetry it is man's perplexity and distance from God which occupy the central position and do so throughout. Even Sorge, for whom salvation is a more important concept, first undergoes a profound spiritual crisis which also involves an awareness of man's separation from God, and only later has an experience of conversion. In other words, none of these writers posits a dualism in religious terminology merely in order to resolve it by means of a religious salvation; there are aspects of this dualism which remain untouched by such an interpretation.

Neither Simmel nor Worringer, of course, was attempting to deal directly with a particular literary or artistic development during their own time, but many of the analyses of the Expressionist period that have since been put forward have tended to remain within their interpretative model. Expressionism has usually been described as an evocation of man's 'essence' or of the realm of 'Geist' in the face of the pressures of modern society. Critics ideologically as far apart as Lukacs and Martini, for example, have in fact based their assessments of the literary achievements of Expressionism upon the same type of approach.<sup>20</sup>

In a recent study, however, Expressionismus by S. Vietta and H.-G. Kemper, this traditional interpretation appears to be thrown into question:

Der literarische Expressionismus hat im Laufe der Forschungsgeschichte eine Vielzahl von Begriffsbestimmungen erfahren. Dabei scheint die Hauptschwäche jener Definitionsansätze, die ihn als 'subjektiv visionäre Ausdruckskunst', als 'Schrei', 'Revolte', 'Aufbruch' bestimmen, daß sie zu einseitig ausgehen von der lärmenden Rhetorik, dem lautstarken, von Lukacs 'hohl' genannten Pathos, mit dem diese Epoche die Idee einer Erneuerung des Menschen propagierte.<sup>21</sup>

The issues discussed by Vietta in the first half of the book have great bearing on the argument of this chapter and, although he does not set out to treat the specifically religious aspects of Expressionism, the nature of his approach and his decision to concentrate upon authors such as Trakl and Heym make his contribution doubly relevant in this context.

Vietta considers it misleading to think of Expressionist art in terms of Worringer's model - to see it, that is, as an 'Ausdruckskunst' in which, to use Worringer's words, 'sich der Geist wieder als selbtherrlich erklärte gegenüber dem Naturerlebnis'.<sup>22</sup> Vietta himself approaches it from a different angle:

Denn die wichtigste Intention der expressionistischen Maler war es nicht, die Welt mit inneren Gesichtern und Halluzinationen zu überziehen, sondern gerade durch den allerdings stark verfremdeten Blick die latenten und das heißt für sie 'eigentlichen' Aspekte der Wirklichkeit bloßzulegen.<sup>23</sup>

and then applies this idea to literary Expressionism, maintaining that its main value lies not in any tendency to abstraction but in its mimetic function. The 'O Mensch' type of Expressionism, which messianically proclaimed a new man who would be the embodiment of all the values of 'Geist', is, for Vietta, less significant than a profound crisis of identity experienced by many writers of the period. He refers to this as 'Ichdissoziation', a disintegration of the perceiving subject when faced with the confusion of the 'objective' external world and thus a realistic reflection of the social situation of writers at that time. This dissociation of the self comes to the surface in the 'Reihungsstil' of early Expressionist poets such as van Hoddiss, Lichtenstein and Trakl, in the mythological landscapes of Heym, in the social criticism of Kaiser and Sternheim, and in the disorientation felt by both the characters and readers of Kafka's fiction. Vietta, too, believes that one important cause of this psychological crisis is to be

found in the increased pace of modern life, which in Germany was felt more strongly than elsewhere, as its technological development accelerated very rapidly within a short period of time. He documents this admirably with reference not only to the modernisation of transport in the metropolis but also to the growth in influence and circulation of the mass media.

Apart from this the main advantage of Vietta's study is that he takes the emphasis away from the pathos of so-called 'Messianic' Expressionism and lays more weight upon the problems of the period that gave rise to it. In so doing he brings to the fore writers such as Lichtenstein, Ehrenstein, Trakl, van Hoddis, and Heym, whose work has generally been considered to be of more literary value than traditional representatives of Expressionism like Hasenclever and von Unruh, but who have nevertheless often fitted only uncomfortably into previous attempts to find a uniformity within the period. Vietta does not wish to ignore the Messianic elements in Expressionism but insists that they be viewed against the background of the dissociation of the self:

Beide Aspekte: Strukturkrise des Ich und der Versuch einer Erneuerung des Menschen gehören aber wesensmäßig zusammen. Erst die 'Dialektik' von Ichdissoziation und Icherneuerung kennzeichnet die Signatur dieser Epoche in ihrer ganzen Komplexität. Erst die Grundlagenkrise der modernen Subjekte führt zu den typisch expressionistischen Aufbruchs- und Erneuerungsversuchen.<sup>24</sup>

The latter aspect lacks, according to Vietta, the intellectual rigour of the former and against its will becomes a symptom of 'Ichdissoziation' rather than a solution to it.

The weaknesses of Vietta's analysis are basically twofold, although it must be stressed that they do not affect the basic validity of his argument but merely its exposition and practical application in certain areas. Firstly, considering that 'Ichdissoziation' occupies such a central position, Vietta is on occasions far from clear in his definition of the concept. Sometimes he refers to it as a passive experience of the confusion of the period and on other occasions as an 'ideologiekritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Moderne'.<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, the question as to what the self is dissociated from is not given an adequate answer. Is there a split between the self and the external world, similar to that mentioned by Simmel, or is there, as Vietta also sometimes implies, a crisis

within the self which results in a blurring of the distinction between self and world? Explanations such as the following tend to confuse rather than clarify:

Die im expressionistischen Reihungsstil zu Tage tretende Dialektik macht deutlich, daß die vom Subjekt gesetzte, aber ihm entfremdete Wirklichkeit in ihrer Diffusität zersetzend auf das Wahrnehmungssich einwirkt, dieses dissoziiert, um so auch die im Wahrnehmungsakt gegebene Objektwelt zu dissoziieren.<sup>26</sup>

A concept that is used to account for the variety of authors that Vietta deals with needs to be defined with greater precision.

More important in this context, however, is his weakness in dealing with the religious side of Expressionism. His criticism of the optimistic Messianic writers is certainly quite justified and these could well be categorised among those mentioned at the beginning of this chapter who reflect an idealistic 'liberal' view of man's spiritual capabilities. Yet there is no place within Vietta's framework for those who emphasise a dualism or a crisis of the self, but who do so in religious terminology, for those who do not proclaim salvation or a new man and yet give voice to something more than a psychological or social reality. It is significant that W. Rothe's essay, which does examine such writers, is mentioned by Vietta in the course of his discussion on Messianic Expressionism and not in the section on the crisis of the self, which is where it belongs. This may be the result of Vietta's personal lack of interest in the theological developments within the period, which is revealed in his disparaging comment: 'Geht doch auch die christliche Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert selbst verschlungene Wege'.<sup>27</sup> A statement such as this could be glossed over were it not for the fact that he attempts to deal with figures such as Heym and Trakl, for whom the religious question is a vital one. The presence of the religious dimension in Trakl's work, for example, is scarcely registered, an omission which is all the more startling in Kemper's longer analysis of Trakl in the second section of the book: Kemper finds it necessary to summon the aid of a range of European thinkers from Hegel to Habermas in order to understand the Austrian poet, but an interpretation that pays so little attention to the occurrence of religious imagery can hardly

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hope to be satisfactory. Vietta, on the other hand, does admit that Heym's poetry is metaphysically orientated, but then he summarily accounts for this as a tension between 'Metaphysiksbedürfnis und "leerer Transzendenz"'.<sup>28</sup> The latter phrase, borrowed from Hugo Friedrich, remains undefined but the quotation from Heym which follows - 'Man könnte vielleicht sagen, daß meine Dichtung der beste Beweis eines metaphysischen Landes ist, das seine schwarzen Halbinseln weit herein in unsere flüchtigen Tage streckt' - seems to indicate not an empty transcendence but a spiritual dimension which is disturbingly real.<sup>29</sup> All this serves to indicate that Vietta's intention to break away from the traditional approach to Expressionist literature has not been followed through with sufficient consistency, for when it comes to the religious aspects of this period he too explains all forms of religious expression in terms of an 'Erlösungsbedürfnis'.

Thus, in spite of certain differences in approach, Simmel, Worringer, and Vietta have all used an analysis (in Worringer's case perhaps only a vague awareness) of the social situation of the modern writer in order to account for his inclination towards religious values. This type of examination, furthermore, is an extremely valuable one. The intertwining of social and religious factors in the writers considered has provided sufficient justification for looking at developments in modern society in conjunction with religious beliefs. Yet there remains a very basic discrepancy between the conclusions reached by Simmel, Worringer and Vietta and the evidence accumulated in the course of this study. On their models they can only speak of those who, because of their sense of social alienation and consequent psychological need for salvation, turn to God as a form of refuge. On the other hand, the work of Rilke, Trakl and Sorge, as well as a number of Expressionist writers, suggests that the more obvious connection is between the individual's alienation from his environment and a sense of distance from God, or between his vulnerability to his physical surroundings and his experience of the disturbing or daemonic nature of God. The psychological 'projection' theory allows only for the notion of God as a refuge, and so in Vietta's study the confrontation with God as something 'Other' remains untreated; for him, any form of religious utterance, regardless of its theological content, becomes relegated to the same level as the pathos of Messianic Expressionism.

The prominence of a dualistic religious outlook in the literary figures discussed demonstrates the necessity of placing more emphasis on the religious content of their work than has been the case with approaches that have too hastily translated this into psychological or sociological terminology. This is not to undermine the vital importance of an author's social environment, but to understand the emergence of religious dualism at this time one has to consider the manner in which this environment interacts with a previously-held framework of religious belief. Social factors do not produce religious attitudes from a vacuum, but help to mould and transform religious beliefs and values that are already present. The separation of God from man and of soul from world must therefore also be viewed against the background of the conceptions of God and the soul that were then prevalent. We have already outlined in the first chapter the developments in liberal theology which helped to shape these conceptions, but this was by no means the only intellectual tradition which influenced the religious thinking of the period. It had been accompanied throughout the nineteenth century by a philosophical critique of religion in Germany which, from the Enlightenment down to Nietzsche, had been steadily gathering momentum, and which was to play a considerable role in determining the intellectual atmosphere at the beginning of this century. The concurrence of these two traditions is further complicated by a marked tendency in the Expressionist period to search for solutions to religious questions by turning away from prevailing traditions in order to find new roots in neglected aspects of the German or European past; some of the most recurrent sources of inspiration in this respect are the German mystics, Baroque poets, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky.

There is little possibility, therefore, of explaining the occurrence of dualistic structures by means of a simple formula; it must be seen as the result of a complex interplay of factors, as the combined impact of both a social environment and a many-faceted intellectual tradition. Yet the fact that these structures do recur, and with such close parallels between writers and theologians, shows that they each absorbed and responded to a similar situation in a similar way. Although we have been able so far to establish the nature of the religious dualism and to place it to a certain extent within its social context, it would be impossible to trace in detail the

way in which the social and intellectual background manifests itself in each individual writer. The work of Barth and the dialectical theologians is particularly illuminating in that it provides one of the clearest expositions of this process. Barth's work, in its treatment of both contemporary social and religious issues, not only contains further evidence for the presence of dualistic structures, but also acts as an ideal focal point for considering the more general intellectual situation of the time.

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References:

1. Ebner, Werke, I, p.55.
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  3. See above, chapter 1, p.16.
  4. 'Das Christentum und die Kunst', Morgen, (1907), pp.234-43 (p.235).
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  9. pp.191-7.
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  13. 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', p.188.
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  20. Lukacs, 'Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus', in Marxismus und Literatur, edited by Fritz Raddatz, 3 vols (Hamburg, 1969), II, pp.7-42. F. Martini, Deutsche Literaturgeschichte, (Stuttgart, 1960), see p.512.
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  22. Expressionismus, p.47.
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  25. p.23.
  26. p.39.
  27. p.199.
  28. p.59.
  29. pp.59-60.
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## 6. Karl Barth and dialectical theology.

Although Karl Barth's first major publication did not appear until the year 1919, the ideas that were to be the driving force behind his early theology began to take shape at least four years earlier. In his recent biography of the theologian, Eberhard Busch demonstrates more conclusively than any previous account that it was in fact the years 1915-16 that marked the decisive turning point in Barth's career.<sup>1</sup> The first edition of his commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans was published in 1919, the second edition, drastically altered, in 1922, and the sermons and lectures collected in the volume Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie are also taken mainly from the period 1919-22. These provide a rounded picture of the stage which Barth had reached by that time, but do not shed much light upon the nature of the development that led up to it. Busch uses this published material in conjunction with letters, unpublished sermons and lectures to trace the genesis of his theology step by step, and by portraying Barth's personal struggle with the intellectual and social problems of the period he also enables us to compare Barth's experience more tellingly with that of his contemporaries.

By 1915 Barth had become deeply conscious of an impasse which seemed to prevent any further progress in his thinking; this lay in a growing sense of perplexity that stemmed from two quite different areas. On the one hand his position as a pastor in the small Swiss industrial community of Safenwil had brought him into contact with a variety of human problems; apart from the tasks of counselling and religious education that were directly connected with his work, he also became actively involved in social issues within his parish, supporting the formation of trades unions and demands for higher wages. Yet, far from being able to encompass these activities within the framework of a unified religious or political outlook, he found himself again and again faced with what he was to describe in Der Römerbrief as 'das Rätsel des Da-Seins', or life's 'verwirrende kaleidoskopartige Bewegtheit und Gespanntheit seiner Linien' (Rb pp.144,411).

At the same time his studies in theology and reading of the Bible led him into similar straits. Instead of offering him an unambiguous solution to a complex situation, his exam-

ination of the writings of Paul, for example, merely intensified his confusion:

Paulus - was muß das für ein Mensch gewesen sein und was für Menschen auch die, denen er diese lapidaren Dinge so in ein paar verworrenen Brocken hinwerfen, andeuten konnte! ... Und dann hinter Paulus: was für Realitäten müssen das sein, die den Mann so in Bewegung setzen konnten! Was für ein abgeleitetes Zeug, das wir dann über seine Sprüche zusammenschreiben, von deren eigentlichen Inhalt uns vielleicht 99% entgeht!<sup>2</sup>

He found that the apostle's letters were permeated with a reality characterised by its 'unüberwindliche Fremdheit' and 'unerreichbare Ferne' (Rb, p.3). In short, Barth had become caught in the critical situation of being able to understand neither the people to whom he was supposed to be preaching nor the content of the message which was to be proclaimed. In 1922 he writes in retrospect:

Zu den Menschen, in den unerhörten Widerspruch ihres Lebens hinein sollte ich ja als Pfarrer reden, aber reden von der nicht minder unerhörten Botschaft der Bibel, die diesem Widerspruch des Lebens als ein neues Rätsel gegenübersteht.<sup>3</sup>

It is fascinating to note that Barth here is describing his dilemma in a manner that closely resembles that of the poet Georg Trakl. When these lines are placed side by side with those from 'Maria Magdalena' quoted in chapter two a remarkable similarity can be seen:

Die Götter lieben es, uns Menschen unlösbare Rätsel aufzugeben.  
Die Erde aber rettet uns nicht vor der Arglist der Götter; denn auch sie ist voll des Sinnbetörenden. Mich verwirren die Dinge und die Menschen. (I, p.197)

Both poet and theologian, whether they turn to the human or to the spiritual world, can see only ambiguity, and Trakl's perception, like Barth's when confronted with the phenomenon of Paul, can comprehend only a small fraction of reality.

The sense of perplexity was accompanied, for Barth as well as for the poets, by an unavoidable crisis of language. At the basis of Barth's early thought lay the notion of a gulf which separates God from man, and this remained unchanged from the early sermons through to the second edition of Der Römerbrief, whether it was described as an 'unendlicher qualitativer Unter-

schied' (Rb, p. xiii) or in terms of God as 'das ganz Andere' (Rb, p. 90). Yet in spite of this distance Barth had become aware that man is addressed by God - 'Der Gott, der uns allen fremd ist, kann und will sich auch uns allen bekannt geben' (Rb, pp. 44-45). The problem of language was rooted, therefore, not in man's endeavour to bridge this gulf by talking about God, but in his attempt to understand the manner in which God spans it by speaking to him. Barth saw that if there was to be any communication between man and God it had to be initiated by the latter, and that this could only be described as a miracle. God confronts human reality in a movement which is 'senkrecht von oben' (Rb, p. 6) - 'aber sie berührt sie wie die Tangente einen Kreis, ohne sie zu berühren' (Rb, p. 6). Man is incapable of understanding this miracle - 'so gewiß der Mensch für das Wunder kein Organ hat, so gewiß alles menschliche Erfahren und Verstehen gerade dort aufhört, wo es - in Gott - anfängt' (Rb, p. 96) - and is thus left in the position 'menschlicher Zeuge zu sein von Dingen, von denen doch nur Gott selbst Zeugnis geben kann' (Rb, p. 128).

Barth's attempt to speak meaningfully about the movement of God to man is closely related to the dilemma portrayed by Sorge at the end of Der Bettler. The poet's crisis of language is also brought about by his experience of 'der Blitz aus der Hand Gottes', which breaks into his existence from outside, undermining the validity of his previous poetic symbols. Sorge seeks to catch the fleetingness of the moment in which this happens by the analogy of the young couple's glimpse of a falling star. In place of the falling star Barth chooses as his example the impossibility of drawing a bird in flight:

Denn unsere Stellung zur Lage ist tatsächlich ein Moment einer Bewegung, dem Augenblicksbild eines Vogels im Fluge vergleichbar, außer dem Zusammenhang der Bewegung ganz und gar sinnlos, unverständlich und unmöglich. (AdT I, p. 9)

Although Barth is speaking here from the point of view of a theologian, his perplexity was not of a purely intellectual or academic nature, but was something that affected him far more deeply. Throughout the year 1915 he was troubled by the discovery that questions which began on an abstract level soon assumed quite different proportions; the incomprehensible movement between God and man could in no way be treated as a static object to be examined, but began itself to pose questions to the observer:

Was weiß man denn von letzter 'Infragestellung' auf dem Boden der Skepsis, sofern darunter die Offenheit der Frage: ob Gott ist? verstanden wird? Ist man bei dieser Frage ... nicht noch immer gründlich bei sich selber und in sich selber unerschüttert? Wird die Sache nicht erst dann lebensgefährlich, wenn und weil Gott ist, weil die entscheidende Frage sich dann gegen einen selbst kehrt, weil dann das Anfangen und das Weiterkommen, die 'Skepsis' und der vermeintliche Glaubensmut ... auf die Waage zu liegen kommt und endgültig (was bei der skeptischen Frage ja notorisch nicht der Fall ist) als zu leicht erfunden wird? Das ist die Frage, die ich heillosen Weise als Student und junger Pfarrer nicht kannte, die Frage, die dann etwa um 1915 herum 'wie ein gewappneter Mann' über mich gekommen ist.<sup>4</sup>

Here again one is reminded of Barth's affinity to the writers already considered, on this occasion to the threatening or disturbing atmosphere that characterises the critical stages in the development of Rilke, Sorge and Trakl. Barth was still concerned with this at the beginning of 1916, and in a sermon on the book of Ezekiel deals primarily with the 'großen Unruhe, die unvermeidlich ist, wenn Gott mit uns redet'.<sup>5</sup>

In short, Barth was beginning by this time to recognise the paradoxical nature of the problem of God. He came to see his sense of perplexity in the face of a spiritual reality not merely as a negative or alienating experience, but also as the basis for an existential encounter with God; in a similar way the inability of man to speak about God opened up for him the possibility of God speaking to man. This two-sided or paradoxical aspect of man's relationship to God only became apparent to Barth when he was prepared to be not only the investigator but also the object of investigation; the relationship between the subject (the theologian) and the object (God) then became radically transformed, and the theologian found the presuppositions behind his previous thinking about God thrown into question. It is this that Busch sees as the decisive turning-point in Barth's early development:

Und die Entdeckung, die er jetzt machte, war die, daß schon das Erkennen der grundsätzlichen Schwierigkeit, von Gott zu reden, als solches sachgemäßes Erkennen Gottes ist. Er empfand diese Entdeckung als eine tiefgreifende Wende gegenüber seinem bisherigen Theologisieren.<sup>6</sup>

From this point onwards the centrality of God becomes the main burden of Barth's thought, and the emphasis is gradually taken away from the human subject in order to make room for the

activity of God. It is in another sermon from January 1916 - 'Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes' - that this starts to emerge with greater force; here Barth stresses the importance of a change in orientation in order that 'wir Gott überhaupt wieder als Gott erkennen' and this develops later in the same year to an awareness that it is 'Nicht die rechten Menschengedanken über Gott, sondern die rechten Gottesgedanken über den Menschen' which lie at the heart of the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

This brief discussion of the most critical stage in Barth's early development has served simultaneously to show how close his situation is to that of the literary writers studied so far; it has again become apparent that each of them is dealing with the same themes - the separation of God from man, the problem of language, and the sense of disturbance in the face of a numinous reality. Barth, moreover, himself recognises the presence of these concerns in other areas of society and culture, and consequently his work does not merely illuminate his personal encounter with them but also takes on a broader perspective. He realises that they have dimensions beyond the sphere of academic theology and is able to direct attention, both explicitly and implicitly, to some of their causes. It is in this sense that his work can act as a focal point for further discussion of the background to the repeated occurrence of dualistic thought in the period.

One of his speeches which deals specifically with social and cultural issues is 'Der Christ in der Gesellschaft', delivered at Tambach in 1919. Here he states clearly that the distance between the human and the divine is of vital importance not only for himself but also for his contemporaries - 'Die tödliche Isolierung des Menschlichen gegenüber dem Göttlichen ist's, die heute an mehr als einem Punkte sehr ernstlich in Frage gestellt wird' (AdT I, p.15). It is perhaps necessary to point out that Barth is not here adopting the pose of a moralising preacher lamenting the state of modern society, but that he goes on to base his statement upon the evidence of conscious reactions within society itself against beliefs concerning man's relationship to God that are now felt to be untenable. He is, in other words, aware of a deep sense of disillusionment on the part of his generation with the prevalent spiritual outlook and attempts to locate this disillusionment in specific cultural and social phenomena, including Expressionist art:

Mögen wir mit allem Recht den Kopf schütteln über den phantastischen Freiheitsdrang der heutigen Jugend, das Befremden und der Widerstand dagegen darf jedenfalls nicht der letzte Sinn unserer Haltung ihr gegenüber sein; es ist die Autorität an sich, gegen die sich die moderne Jugendbewegung aller Schattierungen richtet. ... Mag das Heiligste in Gefahr sein bei der Auflösung der Familie, die wir heute im vollen Gang sehen, wir dürfen ... nicht verkennen, daß es sich letztlich um den Angriff auf die Familie an sich handelt, die wahrlich kein Heiligtum, sondern der gefräßige Götze des bisherigen Bürgertums gewesen ist. Mögen wir den Produkten der modernen expressionistischen Kunst mit tiefster Abneigung gegenüberstehen; es ist doch gerade hier besonders deutlich, daß es diesen Menschen um das Etwas, um den Inhalt, um die Beziehung des Schönen auf das Eine im Leben zu tun ist im Gegensatz zu einer Kunst an sich ... (AdT I, pp.15-16)

These lines follow on from Barth's reflections on the isolation of modern man from God, and he wishes to trace the causes of this spiritual crisis to a loss of faith in 'die Dinge an sich'.

In order to understand precisely what he has in mind one must remember that the theology of the nineteenth century had attempted to halt the decline in religious faith by adapting it to the situation of its contemporaries and had accordingly, as seen in the first chapter, set out from 'the facts of human experience'. In their endeavours to establish concrete links between the human and the spiritual they had laid great emphasis upon certain more 'elevated' aspects of human existence - on man's religious consciousness, on standards of ethical behaviour, and even on artistic beauty. Gogarten was to reject this emphasis in 1920 as the worship of idols as opposed to the worship of God, because he believed that it was impossible for the finite to move beyond its own sphere.<sup>8</sup> Barth speaks here not only in terms of idols but also of 'things in themselves', human values or institutions that had falsely been invested with spiritual qualities. The collapse of confidence in these things was seen by Barth and his colleagues to be the result of two parallel processes, the one socio-political and the other intellectual, and these will now be considered in turn.

The liberal stress upon human values and institutions had, throughout the previous century, been inevitably accompanied by an identification of theology with phenomena associated more closely with one particular social class or even with a particular political interest. This can be noticed in Schleiermacher's deep

conviction of the spiritual value of the family unit,<sup>9</sup> or again in Ritschl's assertion that salvation is impossible outside the institution of the church.<sup>10</sup> As theologians stemming from a bourgeois background it is not surprising that, in their attempts to establish links between the human and the spiritual, they should highlight social institutions more respected by the upper classes than the lower. This also emerges in their identification of Christianity with the progress of western culture; these were understood as two inseparable parts of the process which Troeltsch was to refer to as the 'Erhebung der Menschheit zu Gott'.<sup>11</sup> Harnack, in the final section of Das Wesen des Christentums, expresses similar sentiments:

Wenn wir aber mit festem Willen die Kräfte und Werte bejahen, die auf den Höhepunkten unseres inneren Lebens als unser höchstes Gut, ja, als unser eigentliches Selbst aufstrahlen ... und wenn wir dann auf den Gang der Geschichte der Menschheit blicken, ihre aufwärts sich bewegende Entwicklung verfolgen und strebend und dienend die Gemeinschaft der Geister in ihr aufsuchen - so werden wir ... Gottes gewiß werden.<sup>12</sup>

Examples of the 'summits of our inner life' were generally sought in the Reformation and the achievements of bourgeois culture, particularly in the philosophy and literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was even a tendency among theologians to restrict their perspective not only to certain class interests but also to national ones. Earlier in the same lecture Harnack makes the strange remark that the Germans could boast of having, in the Reformation, played a major role in the advancement of the church, whereas the Slavs could not.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of the working class in the nineteenth century gradually became a challenge to this unquestioning identification of Christianity with social and political interests. With its increasing awareness of an identity distinct from that of the middle class came a loss of interest in the religious attitudes and institutions that were associated with the latter. At the same time the advance of industrialisation and the movement of the population away from villages and small towns into the cities had a damaging effect upon the unity of a social order in which work, family and church were closely connected. R. Pascal summarises the outcome of this process in his book From Naturalism to Expressionism:



Where social change was greatest and most directly felt, in the great industrial cities, the old belief crumbled with the old social community of parson, squire and village parish (in 1907 almost one half of the population did not live in the parish in which they had been born). Where social change was slower - in small towns and villages - there was more stability of faith.<sup>14</sup>

These factors had thus helped to bring about a decline in religious belief which was not restricted merely to the working class, but spread out to affect wider areas of society.

Rilke, in Malte Laurids Brigge, also draws a connection between the passing of a social order and the break-up of religious beliefs. One of the basic structural features of the book is the constant juxtaposition of present and past, of the isolation of the writer in the city and the unified world of house and family. 'Ich würde so gerne unter den Bedeutungen bleiben, die mir lieb geworden sind' (VI, p.756) writes Malte, but he recognises that his previous values belong to a world which is irretrievably lost:

O was für ein glückliches Schicksal, in der stillen Stube eines ererbten Hauses zu sitzen unter lauter ruhigen, seßhaften Dingen und draußen im leichten, lichtgrünen Garten die ersten Meisen zu hören, die sich versuchen, und in der Ferne die Dorfkuhr ... Aber es ist anders gekommen, Gott wird wissen, warum. Meine alten Möbel faulen in einer Scheune, in die ich sie habe stellen dürfen, und ich selbst, ja, mein Gott, ich habe kein Dach über mir, und es regnet mir in die Augen. (VI, pp.746-7)

The old order had been for Malte one of shared values and beliefs, where death was still seen as an integral part of life and where God was still 'etwas Gemeinsames' (VI, p.728). The only place in which he can now find the same sort of communal belief is the churches of Russia with their icon walls, in a land, that is, which had been relatively untouched by social change. Malte sees himself as marking the culmination of a long family tradition - 'heute Brigge und nimmermehr' (VI, p.855) - and also perceives the same fate in some of the people with whom he comes into contact in Paris. At the beginning of the second book he describes the existence of girls from 'good families' and who are now living in the city; Malte's reflections upon their situation bear very closely on the subject of the decline of the family and the loss of religious belief:

Sie sind aus guter Familie. Aber wenn sie jetzt beim Zeichnen die Arme heben, so ergibt sich, daß ihr Kleid hinten nicht zugeknöpft ist oder doch nicht ganz. Es sind da ein paar Knöpfe, die man nicht erreichen kann. Denn als dieses Kleid gemacht wurde, war noch nicht davon die Rede gewesen, daß sie plötzlich allein weggehen würden. In der Familie ist immer jemand für solche Knöpfe. Aber hier, lieber Gott, wer sollte sich damit abgeben in einer so großen Stadt. Man müßte schon eine Freundin haben; Freundinnen sind aber in derselben Lage, und da kommt es doch darauf hinaus, daß man sich gegenseitig die Kleider schließt. Das ist lächerlich und erinnert an die Familie, an die man nicht erinnern will. Es läßt sich ja nicht vermeiden, daß man während des Zeichnens zuweilen überlegt, ob es nicht doch möglich gewesen wäre zu bleiben. Wenn man hätte fromm sein können, herzlich fromm im gleichen Tempo mit den andern. Aber es nahm sich so unsinnig aus, das gemeinsam zu versuchen. Der Weg ist irgendwie enger geworden: Familien können nicht mehr zu Gott. (VI, p.831)

For such people it was no longer possible to believe, as Schleiermacher still could, the family could comprise 'alle Kräfte, die das Unendliche beseelen'.<sup>15</sup> In Trakl's poetry the opposite appears to be true, for here the images of the mother and father are characterised by the complete absence of any spiritual hope, as, for example, in the opening lines of 'Traum und Umnachtung': 'Am Abend ward zum Greis der Vater; in dunklen Zimmern versteinerte das Antlitz der Mutter und auf dem Knaben lastete der Fluch des entarteten Geschlechts' (I, p.147).

The combination of factors which had wrought such deep-rooted social change and which had simultaneously effected the erosion of religious belief certainly contributed strongly to Barth's own difficulties as a pastor. The task of convincing the members of an industrial community of the importance of a faith which for them had become associated with values belonging to a past order was no easy one. His many years as a student under leading liberal theologians such as Harnack, Jülicher and Herrmann had, moreover, not left him with any practical ways of resolving the problem. Naturally there was a certain number of theologians and churchmen who had a deeper social awareness and who sought to liberate Christianity from its bourgeois trappings. Such attempts were, however, infrequent, and met with little success, partly because they 'were led by educated bourgeois and envisaged a continuing bourgeois guidance'.<sup>16</sup> The most notable example of one who sought to combine Christianity with socialist aims was Friedrich Naumann, who in 1895 founded the periodical Die Hilfe. Naumann was conscious of the speed of

social change - 'es ändert sich Leben und Lebensauffassung von unten her nach oben hin'<sup>17</sup> - and of the necessity of applying the Christian faith to the problems of modern society. Barth, along with many others, had set his hopes on him as one who recognised in the New Testament a message 'so radikal, so revolutionär, so deutlich gerade auf eine Weltveränderung hinzielend, daß ihm darüber das schöne kirchliche Gleichgewicht zwischen Gott und Welt aus den Fugen zu gehen drohte' (AdT I, p.39). In the course of time, however, both sides of Naumann's programme, the 'christlich' and the 'sozial', lost direction; the former became transformed into a vague concept of religiosity while the latter became embroiled in nationalist interests. Barth, in 1915, was horrified to hear him comment that 'Alle Religion ist uns jetzt recht, heiße sie Heilsarmee oder Islam, wenn sie nur dazu taugt, uns den Krieg durchhalten zu helfen' (AdT I, p.42).

For Barth, as well as for many of his contemporaries, the outbreak of the war and the manner in which the public and the intellectuals reacted to it speeded up a process that had already long been under way: it accelerated the passing of an old social order and increased their disillusionment with the religious outlook that belonged to it. For Rilke the first of these two consequences was more applicable; after his initial but short-lived enthusiasm for the war he soon realised that it marked the end of an epoch whose order and traditions had been very dear to him. He describes its effects upon him in a letter of 1917: '... wie vieles Schöne und Grosse, wie vieles sinnvoll Meinige, wenn ich es erinnern will, schlägt sich mir auf wie eine kreuz und quer durchstrichene Seite'.<sup>18</sup> Barth, however, was more troubled by the response of the intellectuals in Germany. His disappointment in Naumann was merely an echo of his earlier dismay at the 'Manifesto of the 93 intellectuals' and the articles and comments in Die christliche Welt which followed it. Here he felt that the association of Christianity with socio-political interests had taken on its ugliest form; he expresses horror at the speed at which religion and academic research could be transformed into 'geistige 42cm. Kanonen'.<sup>19</sup> This 'ethical' failure on the part of the liberals caused him to question more radically the bases of their theology as a whole: '... eine ganze Welt von Exegese, Ethik, Dogmatik und Predigt, die ich bis dahin für grundsätzlich glaubwürdig ge-

halten hatte, kam damit ... bis auf die Grundlagen ins Schwanken'.<sup>20</sup> Haecker, too, in essays written during the war years for Der Brenner ('Der Krieg und die Führer des Geistes', 'Wandel der Tragik') follows exactly the same line of thought as Barth, criticising the dubious association of 'die sogenannte "christliche" Welt' with the State (6, p.74). Then, in 'Ausblick in die Zeit', in 1919, he claims that it is blasphemy to identify God with the interests of a particular nation and delivers a scorching attack on the theology of his time, an attack which in his next essay 'Übersicht' was to be directed at more specific targets: 'Aber die offizielle, publizistische protestantische Theologie und Kirche ist Schmach und Elend. Die Harnack und Troeltsch christliche Theologen zu nennen ist doch eine Schmeichelei' (6, p.356).

The outcome of this disillusionment for Barth was that it made the present task of theology a much more urgent one: if it was to find a way out of its crisis it was absolutely essential for it to loosen the restrictive bonds tying it to the interests of one class or one State. One way of achieving this, in Barth's view, was through active social commitment. He too felt the need for Christian involvement in 'der wirklichen Problematik des wirklichen Lebens' and the consequence of this during his first years at Safenwil was, in his own words, that 'mein eigentliches Studium sich auf Fabrikgesetzgebung, Versicherungswesen, Gewerkschaftskunde und dergl. richtete und mein Gemüt durch heftige, durch meine Stellungnahme auf Seiten der Arbeiter ausgelöste, lokale und kantonale Kämpfe in Anspruch genommen war'.<sup>21</sup> He believed that the aims of the Socialist movement constituted an important part of the application of the Gospel, and for this reason became a member of the S.P.D. in 1915. He found support for his political commitment among other adherents of the movement loosely referred to as 'religiöser Sozialismus', and particularly from Ragaz and Kutter. Barth was apprehensive, however, about the tendency on the part of the former to identify Socialism too closely with the notion of the kingdom of God.<sup>22</sup>

Barth's doubts on this score stemmed from his realisation that the problem of allying Christianity with a particular class was not to be resolved simply by allying it with a different one; there were, in his opinion, deeper issues involved, which called into question any attempt to associate

Christianity with a social class or historical phenomenon. Barth explains his reservations in the speech to the 'religiös-soziale Konferenz' at Tambach mentioned earlier in this chapter; here he criticises the 'Bindestrich' mentality, which seeks an easy combination of the human and the spiritual:

Schnell zur Hand sind alle jene Kombinationen, wie 'christlich-sozial', 'evangelisch-sozial', 'religiös-sozial', aber höchst erwägenswert ist die Frage, ob die Bindestriche, die wir da mit rationaler Kühnheit ziehen, nicht gefährliche Kurzschlüsse sind. (AdT I, p.5)

and points out that the temptation to 'stick God on' ('das Göttliche aufzukleben') to social or political movements cannot be distinguished in principle from the nineteenth-century confusion of divine and human values:

Ja, Christus zum soundsovielten Male zu säkularisieren, heute z.B. der Sozialdemokratie, dem Pazifismus, dem Wandervogel zu Liebe, wie ehemals den Vaterländern, dem Schweizertum und Deutschtum, dem Liberalismus der Gebildeten zu Liebe, das möchte uns allenfalls gelingen. Aber ... wir möchten doch eben Christus nicht ein neues Mal verraten. (AdT I, p.6)

Yet while it was the social developments over the previous century that had led Barth to question the identification of Christianity with bourgeois interests, his unwillingness to replace this by a fusion of Christianity and Socialism was strengthened by the second of the two parallel processes referred to earlier, by changes within an intellectual tradition or, more specifically, by the influence of the nineteenth-century critique of religion in Germany.

Germany, more than any other nation, could boast of a strong tradition of religious criticism, which extended from the Aufklärung to the beginning of the twentieth century and came from both inside and outside the church. The different forms which this criticism assumed - for example, D.F. Strauss' reduction of Christianity to myth, Feuerbach's description of it as a projection of human values, Marx's explanation of its social causes, and Nietzsche's and Overbeck's 'historical' refutation - are clearly and accurately summarised in Karl Löwith's From Hegel to Nietzsche, and his outline of their ideas need not be repeated here.<sup>23</sup> More important in this context is the fact that for most educated people at the be-

ginning of the twentieth century Nietzsche counted as the main representative of this tradition; in fact he exercised such an influence upon the Expressionist period that Gottfried Benn felt justified in commenting:

Eigentlich hat alles, was meine Generation diskutierte, innerlich sich auseinanderdachte, man kann sagen: erlitt, man kann auch sagen: breittrat - alles das hatte sich bereits bei Nietzsche ausgesprochen.<sup>24</sup>

It was not only Nietzsche's ideas on the Apollonian and Dionysian in art that were taken up and discussed, nor the moral and philosophical outlook of Also Sprach Zarathustra, but above all his onslaught upon Christian doctrine, expressed most aggressively in later works such as Zur Genealogie der Moral and Der Antichrist. It was this aspect of his work that lay behind Rilke's early militant anti-Christian stance, as well as Sorge's anti-religious phase, reflected in fragments such as 'Gedanken über verschiedene Dinge' (I, pp.215-9).

The intellectual atmosphere of Barth's school and university years was also dominated by the figure of Nietzsche - 'Es waren die Jahre, in denen Haeckel und Nietzsche - "Gibt es einen Gott?" - in aller Munde waren'<sup>25</sup> - and Barth's commentary, Der Römerbrief, shows that he had absorbed not only Nietzsche's critique of religion but also that of Marx (Rb, pp.218-9). For Barth, however, it was Nietzsche's colleague at Basle, the theologian Franz Overbeck, who marked the culmination of this critical tradition, and who posed the questions which would have to be answered if theology was to continue to exist. Overbeck was influenced to a certain extent by Nietzsche's work but argued his own case against Christianity in a much more sober and detached manner. Nietzsche's attack had been directed at a variety of fronts - the life-negating character of Christian morality, its metaphysical orientation, and so on - but the methodological thread that runs through his invectives from beginning to end is what he refers to as the 'historical' refutation:

Die historische Widerlegung als die endgültige. - Ehemals suchte man zu beweisen, daß es keinen Gott gebe - heute zeigt man, wie der Glaube, daß es einen Gott gebe, entstehen konnte und wodurch dieser Glaube seine Schwere und Wichtigkeit erhalten hat: dadurch wird ein Gegenbeweis, daß es keinen Gott gebe, überflüssig.<sup>26</sup>

Overbeck echoes the idea that an historical explanation of belief in God dispenses with the necessity of disproving his existence in his assertion that the history of Christianity contains nothing divine or miraculous:

Die beste Schule, um an dem Dasein eines Gottes als Weltlenkers zu zweifeln, ist die Kirchengeschichte, vorausgesetzt, diese sei die Geschichte der von Gott in die Welt gesetzten Religion des Christentums und es werde demnach angenommen, er habe ihre Geschichte gelenkt. Augenscheinlich hat er dies nicht getan, in der Kirchengeschichte ist nichts wunderbar, in ihr erscheint das Christentum der Welt so unbedingt preisgegeben, wie nur irgend ein anderes Ding, das in ihr lebt.<sup>27</sup>

He then goes on, however, to pose the more fundamental question of whether it is even theoretically conceivable for Christianity to have a footing in history from which one might be able to deduce its validity. His reply is an emphatic negative: 'Das Christentum unter den Begriff des Historischen zu stellen, heißt zugeben, daß es von dieser Welt ist und in ihr, wie alles Leben, nur gelebt hat, um sich auszuleben'.<sup>28</sup> This negative conclusion is based on Overbeck's contention that Christianity was never intended to be a 'this-worldly' religion, but was, in its early phase, totally dominated by the expectation of the imminent return of Christ. The emergence of Christianity into the world of pagan culture served as a death blow to its belief in the parousia, which has since then played only a negligible role in the history of the church; in the modern period it has almost totally disappeared: 'Nichts liegt der Gegenwart ferner als der Glaube an ein nahes Weltende'.<sup>29</sup> Having lost its prime ingredient, that which made it more than mere 'religion', Christianity could now only expect to go the way of all flesh and await its own 'sanftes Verlöschen'.<sup>30</sup> Overbeck's judgement upon Christianity expressed, according to Löwith, 'neither satisfaction nor regret; it simply described the process as a matter of record'.<sup>31</sup>

For Barth the importance of Overbeck's work lay in its immediate relevance to two seemingly different, but nonetheless related, areas. Firstly it helped to clarify his own doubts about aligning Socialism with Christianity, making him realise that this would be just one more attempt to achieve the impossible task of adapting Christianity to modern thought. By the same token, however, it set the final seal on his disillusionment

with liberal theology. Overbeck had crystallised the results of the nineteenth-century critique of religion and addressed its findings directly to the theological world of his time, with the implication that, if his definition of Christianity was correct, the liberals' attempt to anchor faith in a human reality did not contribute to the progress of Christian belief but to its extinction. He describes the self-defeating nature of their endeavours as follows:

Das moderne Christentum selbst verrichtet nur Totengräberarbeit, indem es im Schweiß seines Angesichts die Kluft, die hier zwischen Theorie und Praxis besteht, erweitert. Es glättet nach Kräften an der christlichen Dogmatik, indem es sie dem modernen Denken konformiert. Damit tilgt es aber nur die letzten Spuren, die das Christentum noch im Leben hat.<sup>32</sup>

This conclusion gave rise to Barth's conviction that theology must now be prepared to discard its old presuppositions and examine itself in the light of Overbeck's 'Unerledigte Fragen an die heutige Theologie', the title of Barth's review, published in 1920, of Overbeck's posthumously edited writings on Christentum und Kultur. In the same review Barth maintains that the liberals had built up their thought upon shaky foundations and that theology, 'wenn es überhaupt fernerhin dieses Wagnis 'Theologie' geben soll, zunächst besser täte, mit zusammengebissenen Zähnen den Weg in die Wüste anzutreten'.<sup>33</sup>

Thus socio-political developments combined with those within an intellectual or critical tradition to influence the shape of Barth's early thinking. This combination did not result in an 'Erlösungsdrang', as Vietta and others have suggested in a literary context, or in an escape into a secure religious world-view, but rather in a total rejection of the security offered by the prevailing religious options. Orthodox theology had scarcely tried to narrow the gulf between the religious and the secular world and had rigidly remained within its own traditions; liberal theology had made the attempt, but the fundamental weaknesses of its methodology were becoming plain for all to see. The parallel influences of social developments and the critique of religion which have been considered in this chapter strongly contributed to a widespread disillusionment with these two alternatives; what they helped to produce was a more radical conception of God and religion.



Barth was not alone in his call to theology to accept the need for repentance and to set out on its path into the desert; Gogarten saw the consequences of the failure of liberal theology in much the same terms: 'Versteht man noch nicht, daß unsere Stunde ... wahrscheinlich die Stunde der Buße ist?' (AdT II, p.101). From outside the circle of the dialectical theologians similar sentiments were also being expressed; a year before Barth's review of Overbeck, Haecker had interpreted contemporary developments in the same way: 'Der Sinn aber, den unser Glaube diesen Dingen gibt, ist der, daß ein Gericht ergeht über die sogenannte 'christliche' Welt ...' (6, p.64). There is no evidence that the dialectical theologians had any knowledge of Haecker's work at this stage, or vice versa; the parallels that so often arise between them are to a large extent due to their common rejection of the liberal tradition.

The reaction against liberalism in theology was often conducted with the same iconoclastic zeal that characterised the Expressionist writers' condemnation of the previous generation with its ideals and values. Gogarten, in his article 'Zwischen den Zeiten', is particularly unsparing in his criticism of the older generation of theologians: 'Eure Gedanken waren uns fremd, immer fremd. Wenn wir sie dachten und gebrauchten, war es uns, als wenn uns eine Leere von innen her würgte. Wo wir Euch hörten, hörten wir den besten, treuesten Willen, aber es klang unseren Ohren hohl, hohl' (AdT II, p.95). Barth's letters to Thurneysen leave the strong impression that the new theological generation was living in a completely different world to that of the old.<sup>34</sup> Harnack, too, from his side of the fence, had obviously come to the same conclusion when he wrote, in the course of a series of questions and answers to Barth published in 1923 in Die Christliche Welt, 'daß Ihre Antworten auf meine Fragen nur die Größe der Kluft zeigen, die uns trennt' (AdT I, p.333).

At first the dialectical theologians felt that their task was not immediately to propose new alternatives to the traditions they had rejected; '... kann man mit ein und demselben Atem Buße tun und sein Programm für das Kommende entwickeln?' asks Gogarten (AdT II, p.101). Instead of putting forward a new programme they wanted to clear the ground of all that was hollow and invalid in the old ones. From the vantage point of old age Barth was to look back with a smile upon his early

enthusiasm for such demolition work: 'Wie wurde da aufgeräumt und eben fast nur aufgeräumt'.<sup>35</sup> They quickly came to realise, however, that the 'clearing away' was itself already part of a new alternative, and began to discover that the removal of false religious values and beliefs at the same time provided the opportunity for God to reveal his true nature. More than this, they felt that the positive and negative effects of God's revelation of himself to man were so interwoven that they could scarcely be separated. To adopt for a moment Barth's terminology, God confronts man simultaneously with a 'No' and a 'Yes'; he shows man the extent of the gulf that separates him from God and at the same time he bridges it: 'Eben darum gibt es Gnade ... als Geschenk des Christus, der die Distanz zwischen Gott und Mensch überbrückt, indem er sie aufreißt' (Rb, p.7). It is from this two-sided or paradoxical notion of God's relationship with man that the label 'dialectical' theology originates. From this perspective, moreover, Barth and his colleagues were able to see the breakdown of nineteenth-century religious values and presuppositions in a different light: instead of lamenting the decline of nineteenth-century religion and the inroads made by materialist world-views, they were able not only to accept such developments but to affirm and welcome them as a manifestation of man's dialectical encounter with God. They felt that an integral part of God's activity was to reveal the total inadequacy of any human attempt to establish links between man and God. Theology was now to have a role similar to that of John the Baptist in the New Testament, through whom 'every mountain and hill shall be brought low' in order to 'prepare the way of the Lord'.

In effect this is merely a broader application of Barth's insight in 1915/16 that to realise the difficulty of speaking about God is already in itself knowledge about God; already here the positive and the negative are inextricably bound together. This discovery which had represented a turning-point for Barth in his time at Safenwil was now in the early 1920s being extended to the whole spectrum of theological thinking. Barth had begun to apply it to social and cultural issues in the references of his 1919 Tambach speech to the current rejection of 'die Dinge an sich', but in the second edition of Der Römerbrief and in an article and a speech by Gogarten in 1920 it is expounded more systematically by means of the notion of krisis. Barth introduces the word in the first chapter of his commentary:

Gott ist der unbekannte Gott. Als solcher gibt er allen Leben und Odem und alles. Und so ist seine Kraft weder eine Naturkraft noch eine Seelenkraft, noch irgendeine von den höheren und höchsten Kräften, von denen wir wissen oder möglicherweise wissen könnten ... sondern die Krisis aller Kräfte, das ganz andere, an dem gemessen sie etwas sind und nichts, nichts und etwas, ihr erstes Bewegendes und ihre letzte Ruhe, ihr sie alle aufhebender Ursprung und ihr sie alle begründendes Ziel. (Rb, p.11)

Barth borrows the word krisis from the Greek, where it means judgement, and in doing this he is able to convey the double meaning of human crisis and God's judgement, a word-play which is not possible with the German 'Gericht'. Everything temporal comes under God's judgement, but precisely because it is the judgement of a God who desires man's salvation it also takes on a positive meaning. It is this dialectical view of God's relationship with man, and its relevance to cultural issues, that Gogarten tries to describe in his speech 'Die Krisis unserer Kultur' of 1920:

... es ist ein totales Entwerten alles dessen, was unser gewöhnliches Leben ausmacht und unsere gewöhnliche Wirklichkeit konstituiert ... Und dieses Wegsehen, dieses allen Dingen gestorben sein ist zugleich ein höchstes, unbedingtes Werten alles dessen, was es für uns gibt, desselben, das wir total entwerteten. (AdT II, pp.107-8)

In the same speech he goes on to describe the krisis as 'Gottes vernichtende, schaffende Tat' (AdT II, p.121).

Thus on both an individual as well as on a social or cultural level the realisation that God's activity comprises both constructive and destructive aspects is the fundamental characteristic of what is sometimes even referred to as 'the theology of crisis'. Yet although the mode of thinking of these theologians represents a clean break with the liberal tradition, it was not one which grew out of the theological vacuum. Barth often liked to trace his theological ancestry by listing the names of past writers with whom he felt the closest affinity, and this habit of his demonstrates that, in spite of his rejection of the immediate theological past, he still considered himself to be a part of a certain tradition. On one occasion he acknowledges his debt to 'die Religion des 39. Psalms, des Hiobs, Luthers und Kierkegaards (Rb, p.240) and on others the names of Jeremiah, Calvin, Grünewald and

Dostoevsky are also woven into his 'theological' lineage. For our present purposes there is no need to examine Barth's indebtedness to the Old Testament writers he mentions, but a brief consideration of some of the others can help towards an understanding of the emergence of the notion of krisis at this particular time, and can also indicate one of the more tangible causes of the parallels between the developments in theology and literature in this period.

It was, of course, not unusual, for Protestant theologians to place themselves in the tradition of Luther, but while nineteenth-century theologians had tended to draw inspiration from Luther's emphasis upon the faith of the individual believer, at the beginning of the twentieth century a shift becomes apparent in the reception and understanding of Luther's thought. This was aided to a certain degree by Otto's comments on the numinous in Luther in Das Heilige,<sup>36</sup> but more so by the Berlin church historian, Karl Holl, who in 1917, for the quatercentenary of the German Reformation, lectured on Luther's concept of religion.<sup>37</sup> Holl emphasised that it was the holiness of God and not the faith of man that stood at the centre of Luther's thought. Although Holl was by no means as radical as Barth and Gogarten and was later to criticise them openly, here he voiced an opinion that was shortly to be echoed by the dialectical theologians. In Luther they found support for their concentration upon the distance between God and man, a distance which becomes fully disclosed in the act of salvation. In other words, in the writings of the Reformer they found evidence, albeit in a different terminology, for the idea of a paradoxical krisis. The following lines from Luther are frequently quoted - by Barth in Der Römerbrief (p.14) and by Gogarten in 'Die Krisis unserer Kultur' (AdT II, p.109):

... also tut Gott in allen seinen Werken: wenn er uns lebendig machen will, so tötet er uns; wenn er uns will fromm machen, trifft er uns das Gewissen und macht uns erst zu Sündern; wenn er uns will gen Himmel aufrücken, stößet er uns zuvor in die Hölle.

For Luther, the life that proceeded from God had to be accompanied by its opposite in man; without death there could be no resurrection.

All these features of Luther's thought are also to be found in a central position in the work of Kierkegaard. The Danish writer had, like Barth, also discovered that 'You cannot have the truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you'.<sup>38</sup> Because of this, to be a Christian signified for him that one must concede God the active role in the relationship between God and man; in some lines quoted by Barth he writes: '... er (Gott) ist das unendliche Ego, daß unmöglich umgebildet werden kann, um dir zu gefallen, sondern du mußt umgebildet werden, um ihm zu gefallen' (Rb, p.424). Barth admired 'der dialektische Mut Kierkegaards' (Rb, p.234), his courage in saying that God's activity consisted not only in comforting but also in disturbing. Kierkegaard had been prepared to attack a Christendom that had lost the belief in this 'offence', and to criticise a religion which 'weder tief genug wundet noch heilt ... die den unendlichen qualitativen Unterschied vergißt' (Rb, p.73). He believed that in the experience of the individual the gulf between God and man should lead to a sense of 'infinite resignation', which then 'by virtue of the absurd' would open the way to faith. It is not difficult to see how Kierkegaard's outlook could be affirmed by the theologians of krisis, for in works such as Fear and Trembling, The Sickness unto Death and The Concept of Dread he is constantly intent upon showing that the apparently negative aspects of dread and despair are in fact an integral part of man's encounter with God.

Kierkegaard's works were translated into German in the late 1890s and in the first decade of this century. This undertaking was begun by Christian Schrempf, who, not unlike Carl Dallago of Der Brenner, was expecting to find in Kierkegaard echoes of his own anti-clerical liberalism. Schrempf gave up after translating Der Augenblick in 1909, having come to the conclusion that there was as much in Kierkegaard that opposed his position as there was in support of it.<sup>39</sup> Others, however, continued with the work, among whom was Haecker, and by 1920 the most important of Kierkegaard's books had all appeared in German, along with numerous reviews, essays and partial translations which were published in periodicals of the time. This surge of publications was at one and the same time a reflection and a cause of Kierkegaard's influence in Germany during this period, in literary as well as theological circles. Rilke was

acquainted with his work, Kafka's admiration of Kierkegaard is well documented in the Tagebücher 1910-23, and it is quite probable that Trakl too was introduced to his thought through his contact with the Brenner circle.<sup>40</sup> As far as the theologians are concerned, Kierkegaard played a decisive role in the development of Brunner and Gogarten as well as of Barth. The latter was later to record his impact as follows:

Das erste Buch dieses Mannes, das ich mir - es war im Jahr 1909 - kaufte, war der 'Augenblick'. Ich nehme an, daß ich es damals auch gelesen habe. Aber tieferen Eindruck kann es mir ... nicht gemacht haben ... Ernstlich und in größerer Breite ist er erst um 1919, in der kritischen Wende zwischen der ersten und der zweiten Auflage meines 'Römerbriefs' in mein Denken eingetreten, um dann auch in meinen literarischen Äußerungen in wichtiger Rollesichtbar zu werden ... Was uns bei ihm besonder anzog, erfreute und belehrte, war die in ihrem Schneiden und Scheiden so unerbittliche Kritik, mit der wir ihn aller den unendlichen qualitativen Unterschied von Mensch verwischenden Spekulation ... zu Leibe gehen sahen. So wurde und war er uns in jener zweiten Phase der Revolution, in der wir uns befanden, einer von den Hähnen, deren Stimme uns aus der Nähe und aus der Ferne den Anbruch eines nun wirklich neuen Tages anzukündigen schien.<sup>41</sup>

Greater even than the influence of Kierkegaard on Barth was that of Dostoevsky. The fact that the Russian novelist is referred to in his commentary on Romans more frequently than any other writer is almost certainly due to the enthusiasm of Barth's friend Thurneysen, whose book on Dostoevsky appeared a year before the second edition of Der Römerbrief. The admiration on the part of the two theologians was concentrated mainly upon what they described as Dostoevsky's 'Todesweisheit', his knowledge that one can only learn from death how to understand life, and that the new life which God has to offer entails a path of brokenness, humility and self-abnegation. The motif of death and resurrection, which was never very far below the surface in Luther and Kierkegaard, is here brought into the foreground and runs like a thread through Dostoevsky's fiction. The development, for example, of the hero of Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov, takes the form of a process in which he first elevates himself to a virtually God-like position, as one who stands above the common moral order, and then experiences the complete destruction of his false beliefs about his own superior moral stature, but yet through this engulfing

crisis finds the sparks of a new life based upon humility. In the last lines of the novel Dostoevsky describes Raskolnikov and Sonia Marmeladov leaving the prison camp: 'They were both pale and thin; but in those sick and pale faces the dawn of a new future, of a full resurrection was shining'. The same theme is evident at the very beginning of The Brothers Karamazov, in the Bible verse which Dostoevsky chooses as a motto for the novel - 'For except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, how can it bring forth fruit?'. These novels had also recently been translated into German, and reviews of Dostoevsky together with extracts from his letters and fiction were being published in a large number of periodicals, including Die Aktion, Die Argonauten and Der Brenner.<sup>42</sup> Again, he was widely read and admired in literary circles; the works of Kafka and Trakl, for example, bear the imprint of their enthusiasm for the Russian novelist.

What emerges most clearly from the combined influence of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky on this generation of writers is the prevalence of the death and resurrection motif. In the First World War period the writings of these two men worked together with a loss of faith in an idealistic view of human capabilities in helping to produce an outlook on life whose basis was the death of such optimism. As Barth writes, speaking for his contemporaries as well as for himself:

Die letzte Erfahrung, die wir in dieser Welt gewinnen können, und das Apriori aller Erfahrung, treffen sich in dem Satze: 'Ich aber starb.' ... Welchen andern Weg zur Anschaulichkeit des Unanschaulichen können wir denn als Menschen ... gehen, als den schmalen Weg der 'Todesweisheit'? (Rb, pp.233-4)

At the end of the Duineser Elegien there is a strong suggestion that Rilke was also aware of the necessity of this narrow path - 'Einsam steigt er dahin, in die Berge des Urleids' - and of the fact that what men are inclined to perceive as opposites often belong together. The same awareness is suggested towards the close of Trakl's prose poem 'Offenbarung und Untergang', where the motif of death and resurrection is already implicit in the title:

... und da ich anschauend hinstarb, starben Angst und der Schmerzen tiefster in mir; und es hob sich der blaue Schatten des Knaben strahlend im Dunkel, sanfter

Gesang; hob sich auf mordenen Flügeln über die grünenden Wipfel, kristallene Klippen das weiße Antlitz der Schwester. (I, p.170)

In Guntwar Sorge uses a similar structure; here he expresses in a more programmatic, and more clichéd, way the idea that the life of the soul is accompanied by the death of the body: 'Die Seele wächst, der Leib verdirbt / Die Flügel werden, der Mensch erstirbt' (II, p.172).

Clearly, theological ideas and literary themes and motifs grew out of the same soil and were nourished by the same influence. Yet whereas poets such as Trakl and Rilke were often content to leave the reader to interpret the suggestive overtones of the death and resurrection motif, the theologians applied the concept of krisis clearly and systematically to every area of human experience. This does not mean to say that in their work the dualism between God and man is in this way bridged and that they do not after all share this mode of thinking with the writers discussed so far. On the contrary, they apply the concept of krisis precisely because they want to reveal every human attempt to span the gulf between the human and the divine as inadequate, and in so doing they rather reinforce the distance between the two. In their endeavour to point unambiguously to God as 'das ganz Andere' they feel it important to emphasise that God's grace works independently of every mode of human experience. This is then followed through in three major areas - in the cultural experience of man in general, in the religious experience of the church, and in the experience of the individual. This inevitably raises the question as to which channels then remain for man to acquire knowledge of God, in the opinion of the dialectical theologians, if each of these is excluded. To answer this in a way which does justice to their work and to avoid a misunderstanding of their position, it is helpful first to consider their treatment of these three areas in which knowledge is not to be sought.

In view of the fact that the liberal theologians had tended to see Western culture as one of the higher rungs on a ladder stretching from man to God, the dialectical theologians were determined to state clearly that this culture, even in its greatest achievements ('alles dessen, was der Mitteleuropäer schätzt' (Rb, p.43)) stands on the same level as everything



else when confronted with the question of God. Gogarten follows up the implications of this conviction in 'Die Krisis unserer Kultur'. Here he shares Barth's belief that the culture of his time is undergoing a profound crisis, and in response to this crisis he claims that religion must choose one of two possible alternatives: it can either be a religion which is an integral, immanent part of Western culture or it can stand completely outside it: 'Es bleibt also der Gegensatz zwischen dieser Religion, die die Seele der Kultur sein will, und der anderen, die eine absolute Krisis dieser und jeder Kultur ist' (AdT II, p.114). If it takes the first option, it is bound to fall with the culture of which it is a part; in the second case, however, religion itself constitutes the crisis by which the culture is threatened:

Für die Religion, die sich selbst nicht verlor, kann eine Krisis der Kultur niemals Schicksal sein, sondern immer nur Aufgabe, zu vollziehen, was diese Krisis nur beginnt und auch nur dann beginnt und dann auch wieder nur gleichnisweise beginnt, wenn die Religion es vollzieht: nämlich das Gericht. (AdT II, p.119)

Gogarten, therefore, also concludes that theology is not to lament man's present crisis situation but must interpret it in terms of God's judgement or krisis. This is very much in line with Barth's view that religion is the place 'wo nicht die Gesundheit, sondern die Krankheit des Menschen erkennbar wird ... wo Kultur nicht sowohl begründet, als vielmehr samt ihrer Partnerin Unkultur gründlichst in Frage gestellt wird' (Rb, p.240).

From statements such as these it appears that God's revelation to man is to be sought in religion and not in culture; yet even a cursory reading of Barth's Der Römerbrief shows that this would be an inaccurate representation of his views. The ninth chapter of his commentary is entitled 'Die Not der Kirche', and here it becomes evident that he places the religion of the church on the same level as art and culture:

Es ist sentimentale liberale Selbsttäuschung, zu meinen, daß etwa von Natur und Geschichte, von Kunst, Moral, Wissenschaft oder sogar Religion aus direkte Wege zu der unmöglichen Möglichkeit Gottes führen ... Aber immer erst, wenn die Sackgasse der kirchlichen Menschlichkeit wieder einmal glücklich zu Ende gegangen ist, pflegt sich die Frage nach Gott mit wirklichem Ernst und Radikalismus einzustellen. (Rb, pp.321-2)

In other words, the church too comes under the krisis of God, for it is one more attempt to encompass God in the sphere of world and time - 'Kirche ist der mehr oder weniger umfassende und energische Versuch, das Göttliche zu vermenschlichen' (Rb, p.316) and because of this 'Sie ist gerichtet durch das, was sie aufrichtet. Sie zerbricht an dem, worauf sie gegründet ist' (Rb, p.326). Barth's reflections on the function of the church always return to the same paradox; even where he describes it as a possible channel for divine revelation, he immediately excludes any suggestion of its potential mediating capacity by reminding the reader that any imprint of the divine which the church may bear is due solely to the 'unmögliche Möglichkeit Gottes'. In one of his most positive comments on the church he writes 'Kirche ist die nicht zu umgehende geschichtliche Fassung, Leitung und Kanalisierung' but continues 'des selbst nie Geschichte werdenden göttlichen Tuns an den Menschen' (Rb, p.105). The church is as much separated from God as every other historical institution is separated from the non-historical activity of God, and thus stands on the same side of the abyss as man himself. It is plain to see why a contemporary Catholic theologian who otherwise welcomed and affirmed Barth's contribution nevertheless balked at his treatment of the church in chapters nine to eleven of his commentary.<sup>43</sup>

At the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum Barth also differs from the Pietist emphasis upon the individual experience of the believer; here too he excludes the possibility of God becoming 'visible' in human reality. When dealing with the concept of grace in the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle, Barth takes pains to distinguish it from any inward 'spiritual' or 'emotional' processes. Man is not the recipient of grace because he 'irgend etwas "erlebt" hat mit Gott, irgendwie in seiner Seele, in seiner Gesinnung, in seinem Verhalten anschauliche Spuren des Unanschaulichen, Eindrücke einer Begegnung mit der Gnade Gottes aufzuweisen hat' and the obedience of faith is 'nicht die Kraft eines Entschlusses, einer Tendenz, einer Begeisterung' (Rb, p.193). If this were so he could easily be categorised into one of the types 'von denen Religionsgeschichte und Religionspsychologie zu erzählen wissen' (Rb, p.193). Barth often warns of the danger of such a 'psychological' misunderstanding of faith and therefore attacks attitudes, often to be found in Pietist groups, which lay themselves open to

it - 'den religiösen Übermut, der im Taumel seiner Erlebnisse von Gott redet und sich selbst meint' (Rb, p.23). If God's revelation is to retain its quality of 'Otherness' it must be immune from psychological explanation. The dialectical theologians are concerned lest their Christianity be interpreted in terms of an 'Erlösungsdrang', and thus from the outset endeavour to prevent this misconception from arising. Gogarten writes:

Hier ist freilich alles Gnade, alles Wunder. Man komme hier nicht mit psychologischen Erklärungen, man hüte sich sogar vor psychologischen Verdeutlichungen. Darauf kommt es jetzt gerade an, durch diesen letzten Kreis mit Rücksichtslosigkeit hindurchzustoßen ... (AdT II, p.118)

As the dialectical theologians appear otherwise to be relatively unaware of the parallel developments in the literature of their time it is interesting to note that Gogarten then supports his comments with a quotation from Ludwig Rubiner's Der Mensch in der Mitte - 'Aber die letzte Barrikade gegen das Leben im Geiste, gegen die unbedingte Freiheit zu Gott, gegen unseren Weg zum Absoluten: ist die Seele' (AdT II, p.118).

In these three areas of human experience Barth therefore develops his basic maxim that the 'Other' 'wäre in keiner Beziehung sein ganz Anderes, wenn es nicht in jeder Beziehung ... für jenes erkannt wäre' (Rb, p.90). By taking to its logical conclusion his presupposition that sin and grace are incommensurable - 'nicht nur Punkte auf verschiedenen Ebenen, sondern Punkte in verschiedenen Räumen' (Rb, p.170) - he also systematically reinforces his own comment that 'Religion ist ausbrechender Dualismus' (Rb, p.251). Yet Barth knows that this cannot be his final position; the notion of krisis after all entails that God judges man in order to redeem him, and the very reference to God's grace implies that there is a relationship between God and man that transcends this dualism. Up to this point, however, we have only gathered evidence of Barth's conviction that this relationship is instigated by God and can be based on no human achievement or experience; to escape the danger of dualism, though, he must indicate some point of contact where the activity of God does or can become manifest in the sphere of human reality. He is in fact well aware of the danger and the most concise formulation of his response to it is found in the following passage, which, because of its central importance, is quoted at length:

Es bleibt uns nur noch übrig ... vorsichtig, aber nachdrücklich darauf hinzuweisen, daß die eigentümliche Wucht dieses Nein aus einem Ja stammt, das in sich die Verneinung alles Ja und Nein, alles Diesseits und Jenseits, alles 'Sowohl - als auch', aller Dualitäten, Spannungen, Polaritäten, Allogenitäten und Antinomien ist, daß es also eine positive Unmöglichkeit ist, die im Bisherigen, öfters als bloße Negation verhüllt, der Möglichkeit der Sünde entgegengetreten ist. - 'Wenn wir mit Christus starben, so glauben wir.' Glaube ist das erste und letzte, das einzige und entscheidende Material jener Psychologie der Gnade, die das Nicht-Gegebene sich getraut. Glaube ist der unvergleichliche, der unwiderrufliche, der nicht rückgängig zu machende Schritt über die Grenze vom alten zum neuen Menschen, von der alten zur neuen Welt. (Rb, p.181)

From this exposition of a verse from Romans VI it emerges, then, that Barth sees faith as the point of contact between the two worlds and that the object of this faith is the figure of Christ. His attitude to the mediation of Christ is a subject in its own right and will be dealt with in the following chapter in conjunction with that of Bultmann; here we must first consider what he means by faith. In the lines that follow those quoted it again appears that faith, as 'letzte menschliche' and 'erste göttliche Möglichkeit', represents the possibility of a link between God and man that has so far been lacking. Yet a representative selection of Barth's attempts to describe faith demonstrates that the solution he offers is less straightforward: 'Der Glaube ist ja Hohlraum, Beugung vor dem, was wir nie werden' (Rb, p.62), 'Glaube ist ... immer und immer aufs neue der Sprung ins Ungewisse' or 'der Sprung ins Leere' (Rb, pp.73-4), it is 'der Stand in der Luft, außerhalb aller uns bekannten Standmöglichkeiten' (Rb, p.68), 'kein Boden, auf den man sich stellen, keine Ordnung, die man befolgen, keine Luft, in der man atmen kann' (Rb, pp.84-5), 'Glaube kann ja keine Begebenheit werden, kein Ding, das einmal anfang zu sein und dann so fortfuhr da zu sein' (Rb, p.483), 'er ist allen möglich, weil er allen gleich unmöglich ist' (Rb, p.74), and finally, we cannot reckon with belief 'wir können nur glauben, daß wir glauben' (Rb, p.126).

Barth is obviously being cautious in case faith too be understood as a human achievement; perhaps he is afraid that to talk solely of a leap of faith suggests that the gulf is narrow enough for man to be able to span it unaided, and it could be this that motivates him to imply that it is a leap man cannot be sure of taking but can only believe that he takes. Evidently his caution raises more problems than it

avoids, for here, even where he is referring to the one possible point of contact between God and man, he cannot escape falling back into the paradox inherent in the notion of krisis itself, a paradox which, unless placed in a context which establishes its sense, becomes an actual instead of an apparent contradiction and thus does not bridge the gulf but only provides further proof that it exists.

This is in effect a similar criticism to that made by Bultmann in an early review of the second edition of Der Römerbrief in 1922, where he asks the questions:

Aber ist nicht die Paradoxie überspannt? Ist der Glaube, wenn er von jedem seelischen Vorgang geschieden, wenn er jenseits des Bewußtseins ist, überhaupt noch etwas Wirkliches? Ist nicht das ganze Reden von diesem Glauben eine Spekulation, und zwar eine absurde? ... Was soll dieser Glaube, dessen ich nicht bewußt bin, von dem ich höchstens glauben kann, daß ich ihn habe? Ist diese behauptete Identität zwischen meinem anschaulichen und unanschaulichen Ich nicht in der Tat eine Spekulation nach Art der gnostischen oder anthroposophischen, die auch von Beziehungen meines Ich zu höheren Welten reden, Beziehungen, die jenseits meines Bewußtseins wirklich und mir in Wahrheit höchst gleichgültig sind? (AdT I, pp.130-1)

Bultmann, it must be said, was basically sympathetic to dialectical theology and is often numbered among its adherents; some of his early essays, for example, are included in the second volume of Moltmann's anthology Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie. Therefore it is not surprising that in this review he takes great pains to search Der Römerbrief for possible answers to the problem of paradox. In spite of his efforts, however, he finds himself forced to re-state the criticism implicit in the questions quoted above. He is concerned that Barth has merged two concepts which Protestant theology should see as distinct entities, justification and faith. One can believe that one is justified, writes Bultmann, but to believe that one has faith is an absurdity. He insists that faith must at some point be concretely grounded in human experience - 'eine Bestimmtheit meines Bewußtseins' - and continues 'und das bedeutet doch: der Glaube kann nicht ohne Erkenntnis sein; was aber der Glaube als Erkenntnis ist, scheint mir bei Barth zu kurz zu kommen' (AdT I, p.132).

If Bultmann finds his doubts about Barth's paradox upheld then his accusation of Gnostic or anthroposophic speculation which accompanied them must also be considered, an accusation

which is particularly significant against the background of a widespread popularity of mystical thought at the time. The first two and a half decades of this century witnessed an unprecedented spate of publications of mystical writers in Germany. Between 1907 and 1920 as many as four different translations of the classic mystical anthology, Theologia Germanica, appeared, along with three different editions of the writings of Meister Eckhardt in roughly the same period, and in addition to this, selections from writers such as Suso, Tauler, and Böhme were also published at this time.<sup>44</sup> Eugen Diederichs Verlag, Jena, played a leading role in responding to and encouraging this vogue, and took the opportunity to issue an anthology of Gnostic writings, Dokumente der Gnosis, edited by W. Schultz in 1910, as well as two volumes by E.H. Schmitt, Die Gnosis, outlining the nature of the Gnostic religion and its survival in various forms up to the present. These were followed in 1924 by a further study of the same title by H. Leisegang, not to mention the host of more academic treatments of the same object that appeared in the years in between.<sup>45</sup> Yet it is unlikely that the understanding of Gnosticism conveyed by Schultz, Schmitt and Leisegang is what Bultmann had in mind when he detected Gnostic tendencies in Barth's thought. They are drawn to Gnosticism because of its mystical aspects, and Leisegang, for example, sees in it an organic view of the world, contrasting this sharply with a dualistic outlook inherent in 'das rational-wissenschaftliche Denken'.<sup>46</sup> This is of course a long way from Barth, who was anyway suspicious of mysticism in whatever guise it manifested itself. In his commentary he rejects the mystical way as being yet another attempt on the part of man to establish communication with God - 'Auch der 'negative Weg' der Mystik ist ein Holzweg, wie alle 'Wege' Holzwege sind' (Rb, p.299). Bultmann was sufficiently acquainted with Barth's thought not to have misunderstood him in this way. His comparison would appear to be based on rather a different understanding of Gnosticism to that which was enjoying popularity at the time he was writing, and is probably reflected much more accurately in an analysis of the same subject produced by one of his own students, Hans Jonas, in 1934. The following definition of the basic tenets of Gnostic thinking is taken from a later English version of Jonas' original work, Gnosis und spätantiker Geist:

The cardinal feature of Gnostic thought is the radical dualism that governs the relation of God and world, and correspondingly that of man and world. The deity is absolutely transmundane, its nature alien to that of the universe, which is neither created nor governs and to which it is the complete antithesis: to the divine realm of light, self-contained and remote, the cosmos is opposed as the realm of darkness ... The transcendent God Himself is hidden from all creatures and is unknowable by natural concepts. Knowledge of Him requires supernatural revelation and illumination and even then can hardly be expressed otherwise than in negative terms.<sup>47</sup>

There is a vast difference between this description and the considerably more optimistic account given by Leisegang, but what is even more striking is that Jonas' definition not only corresponds, as we shall see, to a large extent with central features of Barth's thought, but also draws together many of the ideas characteristic of the other writers that have been discussed - the two-tier dualism mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, the conception of God as totally 'Other', the inability of human language to speak meaningfully of this reality except in negative terminology, and the necessity of revelation if there is to be any communication between God and man. One cannot of course hope to summarise the complex relationship of ideas between writers and theologians at this time under one heading. Yet the term Gnosticism can act as a useful defining category or point of reference in order to describe with greater precision a tendency which is noticeable to a greater or lesser degree in the writers studied so far. It can also help to distinguish the direction of their religious thinking from the longing for a mystical 'Erlösung' which was prevalent at the time.

Rilke and Otto in no way share the world-negating features of the Gnostic outlook as described by Jonas, but they do emphasise the unfathomable distance between God and man and are very much aware of the problems this causes for religious language. They experience God as someone 'Other', but yet in the final analysis do not want to reject all human tools for understanding him. They both retain a belief in possible points of connection between the human and divine, in spite of the distance between the two, and for this reason can still find value within human reality. Otto believes that man is in possession of an a priori faculty for perceiving the numinous and often does not sharply

distinguish this faculty from the existence of the numinous itself. The same equivocality was seen to be present in Rilke as well, and this is almost certainly because he holds on to the belief that art, or the language of poetry, can itself narrow the gulf which separates man from an understanding of spiritual reality. Malte often seems to despair of this possibility, but it is clear from Rilke's correspondence with Sorge that he had not lost all confidence in art as 'der größte irdische Kreis' which merges with the eternal. His later poetry, as will be seen in the last chapter, reflects the ultimate triumph of this view over the dualistic attitude that comes to the surface in Malte.

The picture that has so far emerged from Trakl's poetry is more pessimistic because its world-negating dualism is more firmly entrenched than it is in Rilke. The silence and remoteness of God are mitigated by no experience or hope of salvation and he finds nothing in human reality to alleviate his despair. He does, it is true, refer to the soul in a positive way, but this is isolated from the world in the same way that God is. In one of his letters Trakl suggests that the soul can only escape its isolation and find its freedom after the body has died:

Ich sehne den Tag herbei, an dem die Seele in diesem unseeligen von Schwermut verpesteten Körper nicht mehr wohnen wollen und können, an dem sie diese Spottgestalt aus Kot und Fäulnis verlassen wird, die ein nur allzugetreues Spiegelbild eines gottlosen, verfluchten Jahrhunderts ist. (I, p.519)

This negation of the physical world is far more radical than anything in Rilke and means at the same time that the tendency towards a Gnostic outlook becomes more marked. This can be demonstrated by comparing the above quotation with a further extract from Jonas:

As alien as the transcendent God is to 'this world' is the pneumatic self in the midst of it. The goal of Gnostic striving is the release of the 'inner man' from the bonds of the world and his return to his native realm of light.<sup>48</sup>

In his later work Trakl too begins to see art as a possible means towards this 'release', but this can only be understood on the basis of the dualism already outlined and will be considered, along with Rilke, in the final chapter.



In those writers who adopt a position within a framework of religious belief the picture changes in certain details but not in its essential characteristics. Sorge's outlook is strongly dualistic both before and after his conversion to Catholicism; he is concerned from beginning to end with the soul dreaming of 'das Himmlische', and in his later phase he is no less or more world-negating than he was previously - he merely extends the dualism from soul and world to include God and world. The introduction of the necessity of revelation does not diminish this in any way but increases it, for it seals off the possibility of man himself being able to establish communication with the divine. What distinguishes Sorge from Rilke and Trakl is that the experience of this dualism as negative comes over less frequently in the former. Only in the last acts of Der Bettler does one meet with a figure who actually despairs of the possibility of finding salvation; for most of the time his characters seem to assume that they are recipients of it. This could also be said of Haecker and Ebner to a large degree, but the significance of this should not be exaggerated. All three are aware of the negative manifestations of the division between God and man and, even though they move beyond this to a conception of divine grace, it remains the basis of their thinking, without which the term grace would for them become devoid of meaning. As such they should, along with Rilke and Trakl, be clearly distinguished from the popular mysticism prevalent at the time and typified by Dallago, who glosses over or ignores the concept of a dualism and instead bases his thinking upon an organic view of existence, upon the notion of an 'Anschluß' which provides a way to the apprehension of the spiritual.

The dualistic tendencies present in these writers are taken further by Barth. In his systematic application of the 'Otherness' of God to all areas of life he severs virtually all possible connections between God and world, and in so doing moves even closer to a Gnostic position. He does not develop this to the extent of saying that God did not create the world, as many Gnostic writers did, but he does make a total division between 'Kosmos', or the fallen world, and the world as created by God. This is the basis on which he rejects any form of 'natural theology' (Rb, pp.146-7). When he deals, for example, with Paul's comment in the first chapter of the Epistle to the

Romans that something can be known of God through his manifestation of himself through the created world, Barth gives this short shrift by immediately interpreting it as a reference to the resurrection of Christ (Rb, p.21). In this context it is also interesting to note that Barth does not rely upon the concept of the human soul in his commentary. God's activity does not, in his opinion, find a homing point in the soul but rather is 'eine Mitteilung, die Glauben an Gott ... voraussetzt, indem sie ihn schafft' (Rb, p.4). Here too, in his endeavour to secure his theology from all psychologising explanations, he goes further than the other writers - he allows no last bastion of the self, even in the form of the soul, to lessen the distance between God and man.

While he was preparing the second edition of Der Römerbrief, Barth read a book recently written by Harnack on Marcion, who in the second century constituted the most dangerous Gnostic threat to the early Christian church. Barth was immediately struck and taken aback by the resemblances between Marcion's thought and his own, and writes in his preface:

Als ich mitten in der Arbeit war, erschien Harnacks Buch über Marcion. Wer es kennt und in meinem Buch auch nur blättert, wird gleich wissen, warum ich es erwähnen muß. Gewisse frappante Parallelen machten auch mich, als ich die ersten Rezensionen jenes Werkes zu Gesicht bekam, stutzig. (Rb, p.xvi)

One does not have to read far in Harnack's book to notice where these similarities lie:

Daher verkündete er (Marcion) diesen Gott consequent und ausschließlich als den guten Erlöser, zugleich aber als den Unbekannten und den Fremden. Unbekannt ist er, weil er in keinem Sinn an der Welt und an dem Menschen erkannt werden kann; fremd ist er, weil ihn schlechterdings kein naturhaftes Band und keine Verpflichtung mit der Welt und dem Menschen verbindet, auch nicht mit seinem Geiste. Als ein in jedem Sinn fremder Gast und fremder Herr tritt dieser Gott in die Welt ein. Er ist eine ungeheure Paradoxie, und so darf auch die Religion selbst nur als solche empfunden werden ...<sup>49</sup>

It is not possible here to follow up the comparison between Barth and Marcion in detail, but the rejection of the soul ('Geist') which emerges from this description, the Otherness or alienness of God, and the centrality of paradox in Marcion are already enough to justify Bultmann's subsequent warning concerning the Gnostic direction of Barth's theology.

In short, therefore, Barth's early theology helps us detect a pattern in the variety of features already noted in other writers. It shows how a combination of social, political and intellectual developments was able to work upon a tradition of religious belief already present to produce a mode of religious thought in which a certain uniformity can be detected. To describe this as an 'Erlösungsdrang' would be an over-simplification, for it is a term which does not sufficiently take into account the prominently negative or disturbing quality of their outlook. The Gnostic view of an alien or unknown God who confronts man within a world that otherwise bears no traces of his existence is, as long as it is used merely as a term of definition, more appropriate, for it also contains the dualistic features that are to be found in varying degrees in all of these writers. It is a religious outlook which does not seek primarily to take refuge from the complexity of life, but in the first instance attempts to define the human situation more profoundly by taking into account man's isolation within the material world and by attempting to understand this within a broader spiritual framework. Only when the dualism has been established in both these areas is it possible to seek and to find ways in which it can be resolved. For this reason it has been important to establish the dualistic basis of thought in these writers before moving on to consider their subsequent attempts to find a resolving mediation. For the creative writers this is then generally sought in terms of the poetic image, and for the theologians in the figure of Christ as mediator. This search for mediation, and the way in which it is influenced, in both writers and theologians, by a common attitude to history, will provide the theme of the following two chapters.

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8. See above, chapter 1, p.12.
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7. The early Christology of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann.

A final judgement on the extent of the dualistic tendencies in early twentieth-century theology cannot of course be reached without considering in detail the importance it attached to the figure of Christ. In a sermon from the year 1916 Barth declares that it is through Christ that the two separate worlds of God and man are brought together:

Nicht wie wir von Gott reden sollen, steht in der Bibel, sondern was er zu uns sagt, nicht wie wir den Weg zu ihm finden, sondern wie er den Weg zu uns gesucht und gefunden hat, nicht das rechte Verhältnis, in das wir uns zu ihm stellen müssen, sondern der Bund, den er mit allen, die im Glauben Abrahams Kinder sind, geschlossen und in Jesus Christus ein für allemal besiegt hat.<sup>1</sup>

In a certain sense these lines are not at all remarkable, for they reiterate the belief that Christ stands at the centre of the Christian faith, a belief that has been held consistently over the two thousand years of its historical development. It is also true, however, that the specific nature of Christ's function has been interpreted in a variety of ways throughout the history of the church, just as the conception of God has often changed from one period to another, and that the early twentieth century represents one of the most marked transitions in this process. It is, moreover, no coincidence that this transition corresponds to a significant change, in the same period, in the creative writers' understanding of the role of poetic language. Before specifying the nature of that change we shall, in this chapter, conclude our discussion of the theologians by attempting to clarify the transformation in Christology that was brought about by the work of Barth and Bultmann, by asking whether their view of Christ was strong enough to transcend the basic dualism of their theology, and by examining the extent to which their theological contribution can be seen as a response to the intellectual situation of their time.

At first sight it seems that Barth's reference to God's revelation through Christ is in line with the orthodox Reformed theology of Calvin. Insofar as Calvin conceded that man could have a certain limited knowledge of God through his perception of the natural world, his theology is not so radically dualistic

as that of Barth; yet he does emphasise that man can have no spiritual knowledge of God, especially in the formulation that was to be taken up by Haecker and Barth - 'finitum non est capax infiniti'. In the second book of his Institutes of the Christian Religion he takes pains to demonstrate that man is 'void of all power of spiritual intelligence' and that 'everything proceeding from the corrupt nature of man is damnable';<sup>2</sup> his theology does not, however, remain confined within this dualism, but he uses it as a basis upon which he can build his understanding of Christ. In the same book he moves on to show how that apparently insuperable distance between God and man is in fact bridged by Christ, who appeared as 'very God and very man'.<sup>3</sup> He elaborates the two natures of Christ in some detail, explains that they are both vital if he is to fulfil the role of mediator, and concludes that in the New Testament 'the true substance of Christ is most clearly declared in those passages which comprehend both natures at once'.<sup>4</sup>

This is certainly closer to Barth's 'neo-orthodoxy' than the view of Christ which emerged and grew to prominence with liberal theology in the nineteenth century. As a result of the liberals' turning away from the more metaphysical elements of earlier Christian teaching in order to seek roots in the 'facts of Christian experience', the notion of God's transcendence receded and with it the necessity of Christ as a mediator who makes God's transcendence accessible to man in his immanence. Systematic theologians began to re-interpret the New Testament on the basis of this understanding. Schleiermacher, for example, while admitting in his Reden über die Religion that 'alles Endliche höherer Vermittlung bedarf',<sup>5</sup> criticises the language of conventional Christology and prefers to see Christ's redeeming powers in terms of his consciousness of God. This consciousness is also available to other men quite independently of Jesus: 'nie hat er behauptet, das einzige Objekt der Anwendung seiner Idee, der einzige Mittler zu sein'.<sup>6</sup> Ritschl also rejects the orthodox view of Christ and complains that too much stress has always been placed on redemption through Christ to the detriment of 'das universelle sittliche Gottesreich'.<sup>7</sup> He emphasises those aspects of Jesus' character that are humanly comprehensible: 'Jesus hat ohne Zweifel ein bis dahin nicht dagewesenes religiöses Verhältniß zu Gott erlebt und

seinen Jüngern bezeugt' and claims that he is not to be judged by categories that can be applied to nobody else as this renders him unintelligible.<sup>8</sup> Comments such as these support the conclusion of H.R. Mackintosh that Ritschl saw that Christ was in history, but failed to see that he was not of history, a shortcoming which 'led him in effect to replace the action of the exalted Lord on the church by a merely posthumous influence'.<sup>9</sup>

Although Ritschl was himself antagonistic to the endeavours of many of his contemporaries to investigate more thoroughly into the historical existence of Jesus, it is easy to see how the sudden profusion of 'lives of Jesus' in the nineteenth century supplement the approach to Christology embarked upon by Schleiermacher and himself. If the older view of Christ as mediator is played down in favour of the posthumous influence of his religious consciousness, then it is essential to have as accurate and detailed an historical picture of his personality and consciousness as possible. The application of the historical-critical method to biblical texts by scholars such as Semler, Griesbach and Eichhorn in the later part of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth had shown how historical research could be used to trace the development from the facts of Jesus' existence to the theological significance of Christ expounded in the letters of Paul. On this basis, parallel to the movement in systematic theology away from orthodox Christological formulations towards an emphasis upon the person of Jesus, nineteenth-century research 'begab ... sich auf die Suche nach dem "historischen Jesus", d.h. nach dem Jesus, wie er "ursprünglich" und "wirklich" gewesen ist, bevor der Glaube der Urgemeinde, vorab Paulus, ihn zum "biblischen Christus" umgestaltete'.<sup>10</sup> In his book Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung, published in 1906, Albert Schweitzer recounts the development of this search from the writings of Reimarus in the late eighteenth century down to the most recent studies in his own time, and at the same time highlights the major advances it brought about in the field of New Testament scholarship. He shows how the question of the mythological encrustments within the Gospel tradition was brought to light by D.F. Strauss, how Holtzmann and others struggled with the problem of the relationship between the synoptic and the Johannine accounts, and how the eschatological awareness of Jesus was finally rescued from obscurity by Johannes Weiss in his Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes.<sup>11</sup>



Yet Schweitzer, in spite of his praise for its achievements, can in the end only arrive at a negative evaluation of the search for the historical Jesus: 'Dieses Buch kann zuletzt nicht anders, als dem Irrewerden an dem historischen Jesus, wie ihn die moderne Theologie zeichnet, Ausdruck zu geben ...'.<sup>12</sup> Far from establishing an objective core of historical truth, each writer had in fact projected his own impressions and beliefs on to the figure of Jesus, and usually these beliefs were moulded by the prevalent liberal Christology - 'So fand jede folgende Epoche der Theologie ihre Gedanken in Jesus, und anders konnten sie ihn nicht beleben'.<sup>13</sup> Following on from the conclusions of Weiss, Schweitzer himself suggests that little more can be known about the character of Christ with historical accuracy than that he was an eschatological preacher who proclaimed the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God as a concrete reality. As such Jesus' ideas were far removed from the spiritual interpretation of the Kingdom of God offered by nineteenth-century theology.

Notwithstanding his controversial conclusion, Schweitzer's book did not exert an immediate influence upon the theological world of his time, but had to wait until its negative appraisal was taken up in the theology of Bultmann and Barth before it could produce a radical change in Christological thinking. At the time that these two theologians were beginning their career, therefore, the predominant view of Jesus was still strongly determined by theological liberalism, into which the new eschatological approach had made only minor inroads. H. Windisch could write in 1911, five years after the appearance of Schweitzer's survey:

Der typische Jesus der modernen Kritik nach der Schulung, die ich durchgemacht habe, ist ein Mensch, der viele Irrtümer seiner Zeit teilt, auch in bezug auf religiöse Fragen, der tief von eschatologischen Ideen durchdrungen ... der aber durch die Gewalt seiner Gottergriffenheit und durch Klarheit und Schärfe seiner Sittenlehre auch moderne Gemüter zu ergreifen vermag.<sup>14</sup>

The content of this 'typical' Jesus bears the unmistakable imprint of Harnack's influence, who, in Das Wesen des Christentums, proffers a psychological explanation for the eschatological features in the Gospel accounts by claiming that this is the way in which every great cry for repentance arises, and who

summarises his own understanding of Christ as follows: 'Jesus ist überzeugt, Gott so zu kennen, wie keiner vor ihm, und er weiß, daß er den Beruf hat, allen anderen diese Gotteserkenntnis - und damit die Gotteskindschaft - durch Wort und Tat mitzuteilen'.<sup>15</sup> This position, which in essence represents no great advance on that of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, was still generally regarded as the most acceptable in the second decade of this century, and it was with this position that Barth and Bultmann were shortly to come into conflict.

The best introduction to the view of Christ upheld by the dialectical theologians can in fact be found in the very place where this conflict came to a head - in the exchange of questions and answers between Harnack and Barth which appeared in Die Christliche Welt in 1923 (reprinted in AdT I, pp.323-47). The discussion was sparked off by Harnack, who, in his dismay at the neglect of historical scholarship in recent theology, directed fifteen questions to 'die Verächter der wissenschaftlichen Theologie unter den Theologen'. The fourteenth of these concentrates upon the Christological issue:

14. Wenn die Person Jesu Christi im Mittelpunkt des Evangeliums steht, wie läßt sich die Grundlage für eine zuverlässige und gemeinschaftliche Erkenntnis dieser Person anders gewinnen als durch kritisch-geschichtliches Studium, damit man nicht einen erträumten Christus für den wirklichen eintausche? Wer anders aber vermag dieses Studium zu leisten als die wissenschaftliche Theologie? (AdT I, p.325)

Harnack's concern that knowledge of Christ be based upon a scientifically reliable foundation receives from Barth the following reply:

14. Die Zuverlässigkeit und Gemeinschaftlichkeit der Erkenntnis der Person Jesu Christi als Mittelpunkt des Evangeliums kann keine andere sein als die des von Gott erweckten Glaubens. Kritisch-geschichtliches Studium bedeutet das verdiente und notwendige Ende der 'Grundlagen' dieser Erkenntnis, die keine sind, weil sie nicht von Gott selbst gelegt sind. Wer es etwa noch nicht weiß (und wir wissen es alle immer noch nicht), daß wir Christus nach dem Fleische nicht mehr kennen, der mag es sich von der kritischen Bibelwissenschaft sagen lassen: je radikaler es erschrickt, um so besser für ihn und die Sache. Und das mag dann etwa der Dienst sein, den 'geschichtliches Wissen' bei der eigentlichen Aufgabe der Theologie leisten kann. (AdT I, pp.328-9)

Here the immense importance for Barth of Schweitzer's demonstration of the failure of the nineteenth-century quest for the historical Jesus is already apparent. It established for him that the basis of belief in Christ could by no means be an historical one. Yet his alternative, that the only reliable source is faith, could scarcely hope to satisfy Harnack's strict standards of scholarship. In the second phase of the debate, his open letter to Barth, Harnack claims that the latter has fallen foul of the doctrine 'vom exklusiven innern Wort' and 'vielen andern subjektivistischen Theorien' (AdT I, p.330). If this is the only reliability that remains, he continues, then the whole future of the theological study of the Gospel is placed in question: 'Wenn Ihre Weise zur Herrschaft gelangen sollte, wird es (das Evangelium) aber überhaupt nicht mehr gelehrt, sondern ausschließlich in die Hand der Erweckungsprediger gegeben, die ihr Bibelverständnis frei schaffen und ihre eigene Herrschaft aufrichten' (AdT I, p.333). Barth repudiates this attack in his second, and final, reply to his former theological teacher by insisting that the object of the Christian faith is in a certain sense an historical reality in that God became flesh in Christ, but adds 'Aber daraus folgt für mich keineswegs, daß dieses Geschehen auch Gegenstand menschlich-geschichtlicher Erkenntnis sein kann' (AdT I, p.338). The activity of God, according to Barth, cannot be perceived unless it is revealed to us by faith, and the channel of this revelation is 'das Zeugnis' or 'das Kerygma', the proclamation of the risen Christ which is to be found in the New Testament and the preaching of the church. Only on the basis of this understanding, he claims, can one find an alternative to the shaky foundations of the historically knowable Jesus, who was merely 'die Hülle einer Menschenmöglichkeit' through which God was able to act (AdT I, p.338):

Die geschichtliche Wirklichkeit Christi (als der Offenbarung, als des 'Mittelpunkt des Evangeliums'!) ist nicht der 'historische Jesus' ..., freilich auch nicht ein, wie Sie sagten, 'erträumter' Christus, wohl aber der Auferstandene ... (AdT I, p.339)

Barth, in other words, does not deny the importance of the historical reality but his understanding of historicity appears to differ from that of Harnack.

At this point in his reply Barth makes reference to the Reformation. He once more justifies his acceptance and affirmation of the negative results of the quest for the historical Jesus and then turns to the theology of the Reformers to support him on this point:

Die reformatorische Theologie hatte diese negative Disziplin darum nicht nötig, weil sie noch den Mut hatte, das Ärgernis der Offenbarung nicht zu umgehen und darum die Frage nach einem historisch erkennbaren Mittelpunkt des Evangeliums überhaupt nicht aufwarf. Wir haben sie nötig, weil wir auf der Flucht vor dem Ärgernis auf diese unmögliche Frage verfallen sind. (AdT I, p.340)

This attempt by Barth to break down the barriers of misunderstanding between his own thought and that of the previous theological generation by invoking a common source of influence and inspiration raises again the question of the relationship, touched upon at the beginning of this chapter, between his own Christology and that of Calvin. To a certain extent these lines lend weight to the impression of similarity noted earlier: Barth is correct in his observation that Reformed theology, like his own, was not concerned to establish a clear relationship between faith and history. The bearing of historical reality upon individual belief first became an important issue more than two centuries later with Lessing and was then to be taken up in the work of Kierkegaard. On the other hand, however much Barth might wish to ignore the endeavours of the nineteenth-century writers to establish a connection between faith and history, their work, even in its failure, did bring the problem once more into the foreground and because of this Barth, unlike Calvin, cannot afford not to treat it. Precisely because he does deal with it, moreover, his argumentation seems, at a certain point, to move in a different direction from that of Calvin. The latter constantly strives to explain that in Christ two natures, the human and the divine, are merged into one, and that when describing the role of Christ as mediator one does not speak 'of the divine or human nature simply'.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to this, Barth often finds it necessary in this exchange with Harnack to distinguish between two different aspects - between the earthly Jesus and the risen or exalted Christ. Whether this is merely a distinction for the sake of clarity or an actual separation is central to a discussion of

the dualistic tendencies in Barth. If the latter is the case then it appears that he shares neither the liberal concept of Christ as a supreme embodiment of man's spiritual aspirations, nor the more orthodox view that in Christ two otherwise distinct natures become united. This, in turn, would signify that his division between the earthly and the spiritual world remains unmediated.

The open correspondence between Barth and Harnack does not provide sufficient evidence in itself to be able to resolve this question, although it does serve to reveal two basic presuppositions which govern the dialectical theologians' attitude to Christ. These can be summarised in the following way: firstly, historical or empirical perception of Jesus' existence cannot lead to an understanding of his spiritual significance; secondly, this significance can only be apprehended through faith as revelation. These two points concerning the possibilities of perception indicate the framework within which Barth works out his ideas, for they determine to a large extent the way in which the figure of Christ can be represented. It is only when these have been considered more closely, using a wider range of material from his early work, that the direction of his Christology can be properly defined.

With respect to the first of these points it is essential to note that Barth disclaims the possibility of perceiving Jesus historically not merely because the 19th. century demonstrated this impossibility in practice, but also because he was convinced that it was theoretically and fundamentally impossible. Barth's conviction can best be explained as another example of the notion of krisis, in which the positive and the negative manifestations of God's activity become combined. In this case the failure of nineteenth-century research to establish a clear picture of Christ signified for Barth at the same time that one more illusory link between God and man had been removed, opening the way for a clearer apprehension of God's grace. Barth would therefore affirm its failure in the same way as he welcomed the results of the critique of religion. In his view there is no conceivable way that man can know God apart from God's revelation of himself. The fact that God reveals himself through Christ does not in any way mitigate the absoluteness of this contention, for God, according to Barth,

does not do so in order to make his nature any more accessible to human comprehension - 'Jesus als der Christus kann innerhalb der historischen Anschaulichkeit nur als Problem, nur als Mythos verstanden werden' (Rb, p.6). Jesus is no exception to the rule that nothing human can lessen the gap between God and man, for, if he were, the 'unendlicher qualitativer Unterschied' (Rb, p.xiii) between the two would then be undermined, and the concept of grace would be replaced by that of human ability. The Gospel is therefore 'nicht Erlebnisse, Erfahrungen und Empfindungen, und wären es solche höchsten Ranges, sondern schlichte objektive Erkenntnis dessen, was kein Auge gesehen, kein Ohr gehört. Also aber auch eine Mitteilung ..., die Glauben an Gott, an Gott selbst, voraussetzt, indem sie ihn schafft' (Rb, p.4). Communication can only be achieved beyond human understanding and perception, when man is aware of his inability and is ready for the creation of faith within him. In order to explain what he means by this we must move on to the second of Barth's presuppositions: that the significance of Jesus can only be apprehended through faith as revelation.

Barth offers a concise account of the positive side of his Christology in the first few pages of Der Römerbrief. Here, in his exegesis of the first chapter of Paul's letter, the following lines form the centre of Barth's argument:

Jesus ist 'kräftig eingesetzt als Sohn Gottes nach dem Heiligen Geist durch seine Auferstehung von den Toten.' Dieses sein eingesetztsein ist die wahre Bedeutung Jesu, als solche freilich gerade historisch nicht zu bestimmen. (Rb, p.5)

Although it cannot be historically defined, Barth does not wish to locate this true significance in a metaphysical realm, and therefore he proceeds to clarify the relationship of the risen Christ to man: 'Sofern Jesus sich offenbart und entdeckt wird als der Messias, ist er ja schon vor dem Ostertag "eingesetzt als Sohn Gottes", so gewiß er es auch nach dem Ostertag ist' (Rb, p.6). In this way Jesus is to be understood as a revelation of God which is addressed to man in his existence, and which man can recognise. The question then remains as to which form this recognition can take if it is not historical perception. Barth answers this a few pages later, where he firstly repeats his claims that God's activity has no tangible, recognisable content, but then describes it as a 'presupposition' only recognisable to the 'spirit':

Die Kraft Gottes, die Einsetzung Jesu zum Christus ... ist im strengsten Sinn Vor-aus-Setzung, frei von allem greifbaren Inhalt. Sie geschieht im Geiste und will im Geiste erkannt sein. Sie ist selbstgenugsam, unbedingt und in sich wahr. (Rb, p.12)

He then points out that this presupposition is the basis of the proclamation spread abroad by the early church. He does not discuss the reasons for accepting it, for it is true in itself, but moves on to an explanation of the phrase 'im Geiste erkannt sein'. Here again he distinguishes this apprehension in the spirit from any form of perceptual recognition and declares 'Die Heilsbotschaft fordert "Glauben"'. Faith is required because the revelation of God through Jesus can only be humanly understood as a contradiction - 'daß es ... nur als Widerspruch auftreten, vernommen und angenommen werden kann' (Rb, p.14). Jesus shows men the impossibility of communion with God and yet points to the 'contradiction' that through God this can nevertheless be achieved. It is upon this contradiction that faith is based, as it must accept the fact that grace is 'Geschenk des Christus, der die Distanz zwischen Gott und Mensch überbrückt, indem er sie aufreißt' (Rb, p.7).

Here one is reminded of Barth's concept of faith as paradox discussed in the previous chapter. In fact he seems to interchange the two notions of contradiction and paradox and can, for example, use both in his description of Christ (Rb, p.5). Faith is the paradox by which man understands himself to be redeemed although he is lost; the object of faith is Christ, the paradox by which God reveals himself to man, even though this remains for man an impossibility. We have already shown in Chapter 6 that if faith remains a paradox in the sense of an unresolved contradiction it is incapable of bridging the dualistic relationship between God and man, and the same must be said of Barth's view of Christ. Barth offers no vantage point or foothold within human reality from which the paradox of the Gospel can be assessed, understood or resolved:

Die Heilsbotschaft erklärt sich nicht und empfiehlt sich nicht, sie bittet nicht und unterhandelt nicht, sie droht nicht und verspricht nicht. Sie verweigert sich selbst überall da, wo sie nicht um ihrer selbst willen Gehör findet. (Rb, p.14)

The fact that he is dealing here with a world that is sealed off from direct contact with empirical reality is emphasised in

his book Die Auferstehung der Toten, published two years after the second edition of Der Römerbrief: 'Daß Offenbarung Offenbarung ist, das kann freilich nur durch Offenbarung selbst bewiesen werden'.<sup>17</sup> Man is thus left with the choice of accepting the existence of this spiritual world or of rejecting it as a scandal:

Die Heilsbotschaft ist nur glaubwürdig, sie kann überhaupt nur geglaubt werden. Darin besteht ihr Ernst, daß sie sich zur Wahl stellt: dem, der dem Widerspruch und dem Verharren im Widerspruch nicht gewachsen ist, zum Ärgernis - dem, der der Notwendigkeit des Widerspruchs nicht ausweichen kann, zum Glauben. (Rb, p.14)

These lines make it clear that the paradox of Christ can be recommended not because it represents a possibility - Barth states quite clearly that God can never become world or man (Rb, pp.6,62) - but because it is a necessity.

The notion of Christ as a necessary paradox has profound implications for the representation of Christ in Barth's work. In the first place he shows no interest in making him familiar as an historical personality, in stark contrast to the nineteenth-century lives of Jesus: 'Eine Möglichkeit unter andern Möglichkeiten ist Jesus von Nazareth ... Eine Geschichte in der Geschichte, dinglich unter Dingen, zeitlich in der Zeit, menschlich in der Menschheit ist sein Leben' (Rb, p.78). He does not attempt to depict him as an outstanding figure but stresses instead that he was 'keinesfalls Genie ... keinesfalls Held' (Rb, p.72). In place of this Barth concentrates his attention on Christ's death and resurrection, not as historical occurrences, for 'Ort und Zeit ist vollkommen gleichgültig',<sup>18</sup> but as those events in which Jesus is declared to be the Christ. They are nevertheless events from which all physical elements are totally removed. The manner in which Barth divests the resurrection of its physical manifestations is best demonstrated in Die Auferstehung der Toten. In this book, which is a commentary on I Corinthians XV, Barth refers to the resurrection as:

(die) Tat Gottes, die kein Auge gesehen, kein Ohr gehört, die in keines Menschenherz gekommen ist, nicht äußerlich und nicht innerlich, nicht subjektiv und nicht objektiv, nicht mystisch, nicht spiritistisch und nicht platt-historisch, sondern als geschichtliche Tatsache, die als solche nur in der Kategorie der Offenbarung zu fassen ist und in keiner andern ...<sup>19</sup>



He has, however, to account for the fact that Paul, in his letter, uses the Greek verb ὤφθη when he relates that Christ appeared to a large number of his followers after the resurrection. Barth interprets Paul's use of 'appear' as follows:

Er, der Gekreuzigte und Auferstandene erschien, die Grenze der Geschichte und des Menschen, das Ende und der Anfang in einem. Alle Vorstellungen über die Art des Sehens dieser Erscheinung sind unvollziehbar, sie können alle nur auf die Leugnung des ὤφθη hinauslaufen (ob man von Visionen oder von äußerer Sichtbarkeit redet), oder dann eben zurückführen zu dem Sehen, das nur das Grab zum Gegenstand hat.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, what the disciples 'saw' must remain totally indescribable, an enigma. Barth refers almost disparagingly to that type of seeing which only has the grave as its object, because for him the physical facts of Jesus' death and burial have no significance for the spiritual meaning of his death and resurrection. He claims that if it were possible to prove, as a result of historical investigation, that the grave of Jesus was not found empty by his disciples, this could in no way affect his faith: 'Was hilft das so oder so bewiesene Grab bei Jerusalem im Jahre 30? Christus gestorben für unsere Sünden, Christus am dritten Tage auferweckt, Christus Ende und Anfang, ist damit nicht bewiesen ...'.<sup>21</sup> Thus he interprets Paul's epistle accordingly, and maintains that Paul had no intention of presenting an 'Auferstehungsbericht' based on an historically perceivable reality.

In summarising Barth's Christology it would therefore be justifiable to conclude that he, unlike Calvin, does not differentiate between two natures of Christ in order to show their ultimate unity, but that he draws a sharp dividing line between the physical Jesus of history and the risen Christ. The former interests him only insofar as he can use it show where the spiritual significance of Christ does not lie. The latter he describes in a language in which all concrete, physical and historical elements are consistently removed:

Unanschaulich, ungeschichtlich, nicht-gegeben ist auch diese Qualifikation des Menschen, die Einsetzung des aus Davids Stamm Geborenen zum Sohne Gottes durch die Kraft der Auferstehung ... Fleisch und Blut kann das nicht offenbaren. (Rb, p.160)

Christ becomes an intangible, disembodied figure who can only be described either in terms of what he is not or, as in the following lines, as an abstract formula:

Gelegt sind in Jesus die Koordinaten ewiger Wahrheit: verbindend hier was gewohnheitsmäßig auseinanderstrebt: Mensch und Mensch, scheidend dort, was gewohnheitsmäßig ineinanderfließen will: Mensch und Gott. (Rb, p.88)

This is not a figure that can be visualised by the imagination but an almost algebraic description of Christ's function in paradoxically connecting and <sup>icd</sup>dividing the human and the spiritual dimensions.

In his review of Der Römerbrief quoted at the end of the last chapter Bultmann describes Barth's representation of Christ in similar terms and claims that for Barth Jesus is reduced to a symbol or a sign (AdT I, p.139). More instructive for a comparison of Barth's Christology with that of Bultmann, however, is Bultmann's review of Die Auferstehung der Toten,<sup>22</sup> for here some of the basic similarities are revealed which brought them together in the early 1920s in the cause of dialectical theology, and yet at the same time certain disagreements are already apparent, which were to lead to their paths diverging from the late 1920s onwards. Bultmann's review is an interesting mixture of enthusiastic approval and serious criticism of Barth's book. He fully endorses Barth's notion that, in the relationship between God and man, God can be the subject only and not the object, and as a result agrees with Barth that the salvation God offers through Christ can in no way be seen as a human possibility open to perceptual understanding (GuV, p.41). He believes that Christ's role as the bringer of revelation is a unique one and should not be confused with anything lying within man's capabilities: 'Das Wunder der Auferweckung Christi bedeutet für Paulus die Behauptung der besonderen Kategorie Christus. Denn wenn Christus nur als vollendete Erscheinung des persönlichen Lebens gilt . . . , so bleibt er im Rahmen des Menschlichen' (GuV, pp.53-4). Both theologians also share the view that to try and prove or disprove the resurrection historically is irrelevant compared with the existential choice of whether or not to allow one's life to be governed by it (GuV, p.54). Much as Bultmann welcomes Barth's conclusions, however,

he strongly disapproves of the way in which they are reached. Barth assumes not only that his view of Christ is the same as Paul's, but also that Paul consistently and logically represents this view in his letter. Bultmann agrees on the first point but cannot accept that Paul's own arguments are totally consistent, and for this reason he disapproves of Barth's attempts to gloss over those statements of Paul which do seem to place emphasis upon the objective historicity of the resurrection. He dismisses Barth's exegetical endeavours in this area in the following way:

Das alles scheint mir wohl oder übel unhaltbar zu sein, ich kann den Text nur verstehen als den Versuch, die Auferstehung Christi als ein objektives historisches Faktum glaubhaft zu machen. Und ich sehe nur, daß Paulus durch seine Apologetik in Widerspruch mit sich selbst gerät ... (GuV, pp.54-5)

According to Bultmann, Paul is forced to wrap up his basic understanding of Christ 'in der Begrifflichkeit einer Weltanschauung' (GuV, p.52), and it is the responsibility of the commentator to distinguish between this and the central core of his theology. Thus he praises Barth for having correctly isolated the central core - that is, the special, ahistorical significance of Christ - but rebukes him for not using 'Sachkritik', a critical exegesis of the text which removes the layers of thought which were determined solely by the time in which Paul was writing.

Bultmann's review makes it clear that the relationship between his theology and that of Barth is by no means a straightforward one, and this conclusion is confirmed when the essay is read in conjunction with Bultmann's other early writings, for it soon emerges that not only his praise of Barth but also his criticisms rest upon presuppositions which are crucial to an understanding of his view of Christ. If an over-simplified account of this is to be avoided the differences as well as the agreement between the two theologians must be taken into consideration, and in order to do this it is necessary to look firstly at some of the presuppositions upon which his review is based.

One of the foundations of Bultmann's theology is the same conviction of the qualitative distinction between God and man that is so important for Barth. In a sermon from 1917, 'Vom

geheimnisvollen und offenbaren Gott', he can already be seen to be moving away from the prevalent liberal view of God, but at this stage he expresses himself in language more comparable to that of Otto's Das Heilige, published in the same year. He describes God, for example, as the infinite source of terror as well as the infinite source of grace.<sup>23</sup> By the early 1920s, however, Bultmann associates himself much more closely with the views of the dialectical theologians and their more radical distinction between God and man. He supports Barth's attempts to distinguish God from all human processes and in several of his early essays argues the case for dialectical theology.<sup>24</sup> Bultmann's sympathies with the dialectical theologians are also reflected in other writings from this period, and particularly in his adoption of some of their characteristic terminology. In 'Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?', for example, he asks: 'Denn wenn ich von mir selber rede, rede ich dann nicht vom Menschen? und gehört nicht zum Gottesgedanken ebenso bestimmt der Gedanke, daß Gott das "ganz Andere", die Aufhebung des Menschen ist?' (GuV, p.28).

At the same time Bultmann's separation of God and man is accompanied by another, possibly more important, feature of his thought - a separation within the self. While this is not to be found in an explicit form in Barth's work (it was, in fact, noted in the last chapter that Barth seeks to avoid a concept of the soul which could lead to such a division), in Bultmann it is central from the start, and this often affects the way in which both theologians speak of God. When Barth mentions the 'Otherness' of God he frequently does so in a manner which pays little regard to man's perception of this 'Otherness'; for him the Gospel is 'Botschaft von einem Gott, der ganz anders ist, von dem der Mensch als Mensch nie etwas wissen noch haben wird' (Rb, p.4). Bultmann on the other hand is always careful to relate God's 'Otherness' directly to the human situation:

Und diesem als Gegebenheit gesehenen menschlichen Wesen gegenüber besteht der Satz, daß Gott das ganz Andere ist. Aber eben nur so hat dieser Satz seinen Sinn, d.h. er hat seinen Sinn nur in strenger Bezogenheit auf den ersten Satz, daß Gott die unsere Existenz bestimmende Wirklichkeit ist. (GuV, p.29).

Barth's experience of the complexity of human existence helped, it is true, towards his understanding of God, but as a result of this experience God became increasingly central to his thought while the problematical nature of the human situation receded. For Bultmann the awareness of existence as a riddle which cannot be resolved is always in the foreground of his thinking. He claims that it is not possible for man to achieve a vantage point from which his existence can be comprehended or controlled:

Hier wird nämlich die menschliche Existenz nicht in dem Allgemeinen gesehen, das dem Menschen als Exemplar der Gattung Mensch zukommt, sondern in seinem individuellen Leben, das sich in der Zeitlichkeit bewegt mit ihren Momenten des Einmaligen und Unwiederholbaren, mit ihren Ereignissen und Entscheidungen. Das heißt, das unsere Existenz für uns nicht verfügbar, gesichert ist, sondern ungesichert, problematisch. (AdT II, p.56)

From here Bultmann moves on, not to emphasise, like Barth, the centrality of God, but to distinguish between two possibilities within man's existence. One alternative he describes as man in his historical situation, bound up within the complex structures of human inter-relationships which govern his existence, and the other as man in his existential reality. Bultmann's interest focusses upon the latter, or, to use his own words, not on the historical man who 'nur im Allgemeinen durch jene "Erlebnisse" im Miteinander von Ich und Du charakterisiert ist' (GuV, p.110) and 'nicht vom empirischen Menschen (von seinen Erlebnissen und dgl.), sondern vom existentiellen Menschen, den es nicht in der Abstraktion, sondern nur in seiner Wirklichkeit gibt' (AdT II, p.77). This notion of man's existential reality, sometimes referred to by Bultmann as man's 'Geschichtlichkeit' in contrast to his 'Geschichte', makes its appearance early on in his work and gradually, as a result of his friendship in Marburg with Heidegger, comes to be expressed in increasingly existentialist terminology. The relationship between the two potential modes of being of the self as described by Bultmann is summarised by S. Ogden in his introduction to an English translation of some of Bultmann's essays:

According to Bultmann, the essential thing that must be said about man is that he is an 'existing' self or person in the general sense clarified by existentialist philosophy. This means, fundamentally, that man's inmost reality - his being

a self or an 'I' - completely transcends not only the external world with which he is always inextricably involved, but also the inner world that is defined by his own subjective feelings and experiences. As 'experience', he is something radically other and more than the reality disclosed within the basic subject-object correlation of rational consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

It is in this sense that one can speak of a separation or a dualism within the self in Bultmann's work.

From Ogden's description it sounds as though Bultmann's concept of existential reality is something of an indefinable abstraction, and yet this would appear to be contradicted by Bultmann's own concern to emphasise that it is in fact not his concept but the notion of 'empirical man' which is abstract; he insists in 'Die Frage der "dialektischen" Theologie' that 'Die Wahrheit um die es hier geht, ist nicht abstrakte Möglichkeit, sondern konkrete Wirklichkeit' (AdT II, p.75). When we examine the way in which Bultmann relates these concepts to his understanding of Christianity, however, it is easier to see what Ogden has in mind. According to Bultmann it is vital that man penetrates beyond the world of his 'experiences' to an insight into the 'reality' of the situation in which he finds himself, and this is only possible through the Christian proclamation:

Aber all diese 'Erlebnisse': Vertrauen und Ehrfurcht, Mißtrauen und Empörung, Liebe und Dankbarkeit, Haß und Undank, Treue und Stolz, Untreue und Reue, kurz: unsere eigentliche geschichtliche Existenz im Miteinander von Ich und Du, - sie werden uns eigentlich erst erschlossen im Wort der Verkündigung. Diese lehrt uns sehen (indem sie es einfach sagt), als welche wir in diesen Erlebnissen sind, wie wir in ihnen vor Gott stehen. (GuV, p.109)

An integral part of 'seeing' one's existence is to see it as before God, and this is to be aware of its questionability. Yet at the same time it is to be aware that this questionability is resolved, or, to express it in Christian terminology, that existence is seen simultaneously as sinful and as justified:

Da der Mensch aber über seine Existenz gar nicht verfügt ... so sieht er die Frage, unter der er steht (nämlich, daß er Sünder ist), nur dann, wenn Gott sie ihm zeigt. Zeigt Gott sie ihm aber, so ist die Frage die Antwort, und zwar nicht, indem die Frage beseitigt oder 'aufgehoben', d.h. im weiteren Prozeß des Erkennens als ein Schritt auf die Antwort hin verstanden wäre, sondern die Antwort muß eben die Frage sein ..., d.h. der Sünder ist der Gerechtfertigte. (AdT II, p.75)

This is a proclamation which does not recommend itself to man in terms of visible proofs or consequences but merely confronts him with the choice of whether or not to accept it:

Die Verkündigung bringt, indem sie Gehorsam fordert und Vergebung schenkt, nicht eine magische Verwandlung in unserm Leben hervor. Sie bringt nichts in unser Leben hinein als ein neues Etwas. Sie öffnet uns nur über uns selbst die Augen, - natürlich nicht zu einer Betrachtung, sondern so, daß dies Hören ein Ereignis unseres geschichtlichen Lebens ist und zur Tat der Entscheidung wird, so oder so. (GuV, p.109)

Thus this 'authentic' existence, as Bultmann sometimes calls it, which is effected by an acceptance of the Christian proclamation, may not be an abstraction according to Bultmann's understanding of the term, but it cannot be denied that it is a rather tangible concept, a reality which cannot be observed, only proclaimed. He constantly reiterates that 'Es ist also nicht so, daß sich etwas Besonderes, Konstatierbares in unserm Leben ereignete ...', but that something nevertheless happens which has no visible or external manifestations - 'Aber dies hat sich ereignet, daß all unser Tun und Reden von dem Fluche erlöst ist, uns von Gott zu trennen' (GuV, pp.36-7). Thus, in spite of Bultmann's claim for its historicity, it seems that he is recommending the same spiritual world of faith, sealed off from empirical reality, that was present in Barth. It is in this sense that it is justifiable to describe his outlook as dualistic, a dualism which is reflected in Ogden's formulation of the presuppositions behind Bultmann's thought:

Just as man in his finite 'historicity' transcends the whole sphere of the subject-object correlation, so also does God ... transcend all that falls within the macrocosmic counterpart of this same sphere.<sup>26</sup>

Although Bultmann tends to concentrate, in contrast to Barth, upon the dualism within the self rather than upon the dualism between God and world, this does not prevent both theologians arriving at the same notion of an autonomous world of faith. Further parallels in their thinking can be discovered when their representations of Christ are compared, again in spite of the fact that Bultmann's Christology is much more firmly based in his view of man. Bultmann takes the terms 'Geschichte' and 'Geschichtlichkeit', which he had used in

his account of man's existence, and applies them to the significance of Christ. He believes that there is little to be gained from a consideration of Christ from a purely historical angle and, like Barth, supports this view on both practical and theoretical grounds. On a practical level he maintains that a knowledge of the historical Jesus is impossible due to a lack of reliable sources:

Denn freilich bin ich der Meinung, daß wir vom Leben und von der Persönlichkeit Jesu so gut wie nichts mehr wissen können, da die christlichen Quellen sich dafür nicht interessiert haben, außerdem sehr fragmentarisch und von der Legende überwuchert sind, und da andere Quellen über Jesus nicht existieren.<sup>27</sup>

These lines are taken from the introduction to his monograph Jesus, written in 1926, and are followed by the remark that most of the so-called lives of Jesus published during the previous one and a half centuries had, for this reason, been 'phantastisch und romanhaft'; he adds 'Man erhält davon einen starken Eindruck, wenn man zum Beispiel die von Albert Schweitzer glänzend beschriebene Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung ... liest'.<sup>28</sup> Yet for Bultmann all this is an interesting but not totally necessary validation of something he had already perceived to be true - that even with the best of sources the attempt to establish Jesus' spiritual significance through historical scholarship would still be a fruitless undertaking. In the same introduction he explains that an historical study ('Betrachtung') can in the final analysis only rediscover in history what man already knows; it relies upon a method or world-view as its starting-point and consequently is only in a position to comprehend history insofar as it corresponds to and conforms with its own picture of the world.<sup>29</sup> The fact that he repeats this argument in another essay from the same period reflects its important role in his thinking:

Die Wirklichkeit, von der wir gewöhnlich reden, ist das Weltbild, das seit Renaissance und Aufklärung unter Nachwirkung des Weltbildes der griechischen Wissenschaft unser Denken beherrscht. Wir sehen etwas als wirklich an, wenn wir es in dem einheitlichen Zusammenhang dieser Welt verstehen können ... (GuV, p.31)

He continues in the same essay to point out that an approach to history of this kind is not only futile but also harmful,



for it takes man's attention away from the questions of his own existence:

Denn dies Weltbild ist entworfen unter Absehung von unserer eigenen Existenz; wir selbst werden dabei vielmehr als ein Objekt unter andern Objekten betrachtet und in den Zusammenhang dieses Weltbildes, das abgesehen von der Frage nach unserer eigentlichen Existenz gewonnen ist, eingestellt. (GuV, p.31)

An historical study which has Jesus as its object would thus be particularly inappropriate, for it would be an attempt to examine a body of teaching analytically and thus would inevitably overlook the personal challenge of Jesus' message.

These problems can only be avoided, in Bultmann's opinion, when all endeavours to locate Jesus' significance in terms of 'Geschichte' are replaced by a readiness to be addressed by him in terms of 'Geschichtlichkeit'. Instead of a detached analysis of history he advocates the necessity of entering into a dialogue with it.<sup>30</sup> In his account of 'Geschichtlichkeit' as a willingness on the part of man to be shown at one and the same time the questionability as well as the meaning of his existence it was seen that Bultmann placed great emphasis upon the role of the Christian proclamation, and it is in this context that his Christology must be understood. The concept of proclamation is of vital importance to Bultmann because it suggests a mode of communication in which man is personally addressed and confronted with a decision - 'weil das Angesprochensein durch Gott mein Jetzt zum Jetzt der Entscheidung macht' (GuV, p.42). At the centre of this proclamation is Jesus himself, or, more precisely, the claim that God through Jesus pronounces sinners to be justified - 'daß durch Christus unsere Gerechtigkeit geschaff't ist, daß er um unseretwillen gekreuzigt und auferstanden ist' (GuV, p.260). Through the proclamation of this 'salvation event' ('Heilsereignis') - in other words, through the crucified and risen Christ - man is offered the possibility of 'authentic' existence, which is what the New Testament refers to as 'new life': 'Das neue Leben ist eine durch das Heilsereignis geschaffene geschichtliche Möglichkeit und ist Wirklichkeit, wo es im Entschluß ergriffen wird' (GuV, p.259).

The main thrust of Bultmann's Christology is to be found in his determination to preserve the Gospel's character as

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The main thrust of Bultmann's Christology is to be found in his determination to preserve the Gospel's character as

proclamation; he distinguishes it from all views in which a Christological 'content' is emphasised to the detriment of Christ's ability to address man in his historicity. An excessive concentration upon content, in his view, distracts man from the immediacy of the challenge; at the same time it stems from a desire to make Christ's message more acceptable, for in its rational explanation of the significance of Christ it seeks to provide an alternative foundation for salvation to that of faith. Bultmann condemns the search for foundations as a modern form of 'Werkgerechtigkeit', the aspiration to establish a relationship with God on the basis of human capabilities, and therefore declares 'Es muß also radikal damit gebrochen werden, sich nach außen oder innen (nach 'Erlebnissen') umzusehen nach einer Begründung für das Wort der Verkündigung' (GuV, p.107). In place of an exposition of the content of Christ's message which seeks to recommend it to man's reasons or emotions Bultmann consistently emphasises the dynamic nature of the Christian proclamation, the fact that Jesus in his existential ('geschichtlich') importance speaks to man in his historicity ('Geschichtlichkeit'). This naturally has profound implications for the way in which Bultmann himself describes Jesus in his work.

The nature of Bultmann's ideas causes him to rely to a large extent upon negatives in his Christology, for his understanding of Christ is governed to a large extent by a negation of what he sees as other theologians' misunderstandings. The views that he rejects fall roughly into three groups. In the first place Bultmann, like Barth, has no interest in Jesus as an outstanding personality or as the possessor of a unique religious consciousness. In the introduction to Jesus he warns the reader not to look for this type of portrayal in his work:

Es fehlen demgemäß in der folgenden Darstellung sämtliche Wendungen, in denen von Jesus als großem Mann, Genie oder Heros die Rede ist; er erscheint weder als dämonisch noch als faszinierend, seine Worte werden nicht als tief, sein Glaube nicht als gewaltig, sein Wesen nicht als kindlich bezeichnet.<sup>31</sup>

In 'Zur Frage der Christologie' this attitude finds more extreme expression, when Bultmann takes up St. Paul's statement that he no longer regards Christ 'according to the flesh';<sup>32</sup> Bultmann

echoes these words and uses them in support of his own Christological programme - 'Aber der Χριστός κατὰ σάρκα geht uns nichts an; wie es in Jesu Herzen ausgesehen hat, weiß ich nicht und will ich nicht wissen' (GuV, p.101). Bultmann in fact remains so consistent in his lack of interest for the personal details of Jesus' existence in his monograph that he has been criticised by Ernst Lohmeyer for writing 'ein Buch von Jesus ohne Jesus'.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, and again the similarities with Barth are apparent, Bultmann believes that the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection can in no way be proved or falsified on the basis of historical investigation, for they are not ordinary historical facts. He warns us not to overlook the fact 'daß die Verkündigung von Jesus redet als einem zwar nicht historisch feststellbaren, aber geschichtlichen Faktum ...' (GuV, p.107), because this would represent one more attempt to restrict the meaning of Christ to propositions that can be weighed up by the reason, thus preventing him from confronting man in the proclamation. Thirdly, Bultmann believes that the significance of Christ is neither to be discovered nor enhanced through the construction or elaboration of theological dogma. In reply to the question 'Was heißt denn Christologie?' he writes 'Sie ist nicht der theoretische Exponent der praktischen Frömmigkeit, ist nicht Spekulation und Lehre über das göttliche Wesen Christi, sondern sie ist Verkündigung, Anrede' (GuV, p.260). There is, in other words, no place for the rationalistic exposition of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ that characterised the orthodoxy of the post-Reformation period. Neither is there any validity in interpreting Christ in terms of practical religion after the manner of the Pietists. Both of these would again minimise the dynamic nature of the Christian message and detract from its historicity ('Geschichtlichkeit').

Many of Bultmann's more positive statements about the role of Christ convey the impression that he would like, if it were possible, to eliminate from the proclaimed message all content which goes beyond the mere fact that it is proclaimed. In 'Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments', for example, he writes 'Nicht das Was, sondern das Daß seiner Verkündigung ist das Entscheidende' (GuV, p.265) and he explains this more fully in a letter to Barth of 1926:

Hier erscheint Jesus als der Offenbarer, der - was offenbart? Daß er der Offenbarer ist. Nun meinen Sie nicht, ich wolle da-rauf hinaus, daß er doch etwas offenbaren müsse, daß sein 'Wort'

einen zu verstehenden Inhalt haben müsse, den man verstehen, wissen und besitzen kann, sodaß man ihn als den Offenbarer nicht mehr braucht. Keineswegs; man geht Jesus nicht wie einen Lehrer oder Hierophanten um etwas an, sondern man kommt zu ihm.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, however, his early essays on Christology reflect that he is aware of the impossibility of carrying this out consistently, for he often finds himself forced to go beyond the simple statement that Christ is the 'revealer'. Yet even when he explains the nature of the proclamation more specifically he restricts its content to a bare minimum, in keeping with his aim to concentrate upon its function as dialogue and address. An example of this is to be found in the continuation of his answer to the question 'Was heißt Christologie?': 'Und der Inhalt der Christologie ... ist die Botschaft seines Gesendetseins, die Botschaft, daß dieses Gesendetsein die für die Welt entscheidende Tatsache ist, die κρίσις zum Gericht und zum Heil' (GuV, p.264). He thus prefers to express the positive significance of Christ as briefly as possible, usually in short formulae centering upon the act of salvation through his death and resurrection. To ensure that these are not seen as abstract theological statements he nearly always relates them immediately to the situation of the hearer and takes pains to stress that even this minimal doctrinal content is made 'historic' because it is inextricably connected with the dynamic character of salvation in the act of its proclamation:

Sofern die Lehre Verkündigung, Anrede, ist, steht sie nicht neben dem Heilsereignis, weder als dessen theoretische Erklärung, noch auch als einfache historische Mitteilung, sondern sie gehört zum Ereignis selbst ... (GuV, p.260)

In his descriptions of Christ Bultmann shows a preference for a small number of words which are carefully chosen in order to underline that his function is not to be seen as something static. Apart from the terms 'Geschichtlichkeit' and 'Verkündigung', which have already been discussed, he relies heavily upon the word 'Ereignis', and this emerges most strikingly in the following lines:

Weder als menschliche Persönlichkeit kommt Jesus in Frage ... noch als himmlisches Gottwesen ... Christus kommt in Frage als geschichtliches Ereignis, als das Ereignis das geschah, als die Zeit erfüllt war ... (GuV, p.259)

Here again the accent is placed upon the event or 'happening' of salvation rather than on a theological or historical explanation of what took place. A similar function is fulfilled by the words 'Tat' and 'Wort'; when Bultmann writes 'daß dieser λόγος nicht eine Idee von der Gnade Gottes verkündigt, sondern eine Tat Gottes, die schon getan ist und wieder getan wird, jetzt, indem das Wort zu uns gesagt wird' (GuV, p.211) he is declaring the mere facts of communication and revelation through Christ, to whom he often refers simply as 'der Träger des Wortes' or as 'das Wort' itself.<sup>35</sup>

From this brief survey of Bultmann's Christology it can be seen that there are numerous points of coincidence between his ideas and those of Barth, but for the sake of simplicity these can be narrowed down to two major areas. Firstly, Bultmann reproduces the same radical distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith that was to be found in Barth. He sees the former as belonging to the irrecoverable past, and warns against confusing this with the Christ who becomes present in the proclamation:

Man darf also nicht hinter das Kerygma zurückgehen, es als 'Quelle' benutzend, um einen 'historischen Jesus' mit seinem 'Messiasbewußtsein', seiner 'Innerlichkeit' oder seinem 'Heroismus' zu rekonstruieren. Das wäre gerade der Χριστός κατὰ σάρκα der vergangen ist. Nicht der historische Jesus, sondern Jesus Christus, der Gepredigte, ist der Herr. (GuV, p.208)

In Jesus he goes so far as to say that it would make little difference to him if it had not been Jesus but the early church who had originally proclaimed the message of God's forgiveness.<sup>36</sup> This position corresponds exactly to his division between history and historicity which lies at the heart of his thinking, and thus it has the effect of reinforcing rather than resolving his dualistic view of the self and of God.

This point is substantiated when it is seen together with the second main area of convergence with Barth, with the fact that the language Bultmann uses to clarify the role and significance of Christ is permeated by the same atmosphere of intangibility characteristic of Barth's work. All concrete and physical aspects are removed from Bultmann's portrayal of Christ; he is not concerned with what Christ 'is', either in an historical or in a theological sense, nor with what man 'is', but with the elusive movement of communication that transpires between the

two in the word or proclamation. It is at this point that his work has been frequently criticised. Gustav Wingren, the Swedish theologian, for example, reproaches Bultmann for removing the bodily elements at every point in his theology.<sup>37</sup> Zahnrt sums up some of the criticisms by modern theologians in the following way:

Hier ist keine Gestalt und kein Gesicht mehr. Die Personhaftigkeit Jesu wird nur noch abstrakt behauptet, aber nicht mehr konkret dargestellt. Mit Recht kritisiert Günther Bornkamm darum 'Jesus Christus ist zur bloßen Heilstatsache geworden und hört auf, Person zu sein.' Und diese Heilstatsache, die keine Person mehr ist, sondern nur noch ein 'inhaltsleeres Paradox' soll mich überwinden und zum Glauben rufen!<sup>38</sup>

These comments could be applied equally well to Barth's Christology, and the relationship between the two theologians is underlined still further by the reappearance here of the term paradox, a concept which not only encapsulates the intangibility of Christ for both theologians but which is also symptomatic of the dualism in their thinking.

Although, as we saw in the previous chapter, Bultmann is critical of Barth's use of paradox, it is nevertheless a term which appears in his own work. In 'Die Frage der "dialektischen" Theologie' he discusses the extent to which its usage is appropriate within a theological context. Here he concedes that one has to exercise caution in applying the word on account of its openness to misunderstanding, and then attempts to clarify it by pointing out that when it is used in reference to revelation it is not the content but the event of resurrection which is paradoxical:

Im Ernste kann aber ja gar kein Zweifel sein, daß, sofern wir vom Paradox reden, das paradoxe Geschehen gemeint ist, nämlich das Geschehen, daß Gott dem Sünder gnädig ist. Als Satz ist das nicht im mindesten paradox, sondern das Verständlichste von der Welt; als Geschehen aber ist es das Unverständlichste. Dies also, daß der Satz (denn nur im Satze läßt sich vom Geschehen reden!) von der Gnade Gottes für den Sünder als wahrer gesprochen werden kann, ist das Paradox. (AdT II, p.84)

Bultmann's attempt to distinguish between a paradoxical sentence and a paradoxical event clearly brings him into difficulties, symptomised by the comment interposed in brackets, for in fact the term can only be meaningful when it refers to the logic of a sentence, not to an action itself. The cause of this difficulty

can be traced to the fact that Bultmann, like Barth, does not use paradox in the sense of an apparent contradiction but equates it with incomprehensibility as such ('das Unverständlichste'), and for this reason can apply it to an action. What is demonstrated by their use of paradox in this sense is that neither theologian portrays Christ as a mediator through whom the incomprehensible, intangible world of God becomes comprehensible or tangible. He is presented instead as one in whom the opposition or contradiction between two worlds is brought to a head, as one who confronts man with the challenge to accept, by an act of pure faith, the reality of God as something totally independent of human perception and understanding. As Wingren writes, in his account of Barth's concept of God:

God is in heaven. He withdraws, as it were, from every outward form and disappears into inaccessibility. Nothing material is an organ, a tool, or a means which God holds in his hand and uses for his creative work in the present.<sup>39</sup>

The similarities in the view of Christ presented by both theologians do not, therefore, seem to be greatly affected or diminished by Bultmann's tendency to lay more emphasis upon the dualism within the self. This tendency is, however, the cause of a major difference in their theological method, and it is here that the motivation behind Bultmann's criticism of Barth's Die Auferstehung der Toten is to be sought. For Bultmann an awareness of the distinction between man in his 'Geschichtlichkeit' and man in his 'Geschichte' is of central importance for the way in which the whole of the New Testament is read. In his essay 'Das Problem einer theologischen Exegese des Neuen Testaments' (AdT II, pp.47-71) he applies this distinction to the exegesis of the New Testament in a manner which foreshadows his approach to history in Jesus, written a year later. He criticises all approaches to the New Testament in which the claim of the text upon the existential situation of the reader is neglected: 'In allen diesen Fällen vermag das Wort des Textes nicht im eigentlichen Sinne zum Interpretieren zu sprechen, da er von vornherein und grundsätzlich über alle Möglichkeiten dessen, was gesagt werden kann, verfügt' (AdT II, p.53). The important factor for Bultmann is that the reader recognises this 'word' and allows himself to be addressed by it. The 'word', however, is not to be equated unquestioningly with the written word of



the biblical text 'da das Wort des Textes nie die Sache selbst, sondern Ausdruck für die Sache ist' (AdT II, p.71). The biblical writers expressed their message through the medium of the world-view of their time but this is merely of historical interest and, unlike the actual heart of the message, is incapable of confronting man in his historicity. The theologian, according to Bultmann, has the responsibility of isolating the essence of the New Testament - what the writers mean as opposed to what they say - and to achieve this he must practise 'Sachkritik':

Der Charakter dieser Sachexegese wird noch genauer dadurch bestimmt, daß sich für sie die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer Sachkritik herausstellt, einer Kritik nämlich, die zwischen Gesagtem und Gemeintem unterscheidet und das Gesagte am Gemeintem mißt. (AdT II, p.53)

While Bultmann's exegetical method is rooted in his endeavour to relate the New Testament to the situation of man in his historicity, Barth's concept of biblical revelation grows out of his emphasis upon the centrality of God. This leads to certain fundamental disagreements with Bultmann, which he outlines in his preface to the third edition of Der Römerbrief:

Bultmann hat den Einwand erhoben, ich sei ihm zu wenig radikal: die Kritik von der Sache aus ... müßte sich auch gegen gewisse Aufstellungen des Paulus selbst richten, weil auch Paulus selbst nicht immer 'aus der Sache heraus' rede. 'Es kommen auch andere Geister in ihm zu Worte als das pneuma Christou.' Gewiss will ich mit Bultmann nicht streiten darüber, wer von uns der Radikalere ist - aber ich muß doch wirklich noch ein wenig weiter gehen als er und sagen: Was im Römerbrief zu Worte kommt, das sind überhaupt nur die 'ändern', die von ihm angeführten jüdischen, vulgärchristlichen, hellenistischen und sonstigen 'Geister' ... Ist der Geist Christi etwa ein Geist, der als konkurrierend neben ändern Geistern vorgestellt werden kann? Also schließe ich, kann es sich auf keinen Fall darum handeln, den Gott Christi, die 'Sache' in der Weise gegen die 'ändern Geister' auszuspielen. ... Sondern darum handelt es sich, zu sehen und deutlich zu machen, wie der 'Geist Christi' die Krisis ist, in der sich das Ganze befindet. (Rb, pp.xix,xx)

For Barth there is no justification in separating essentials from non-essentials in the New Testament; because its words also stand under the krisis they are at one and the same time the words of man and the words of God - but in both cases in their entirety. This more absolute view of biblical revelation leads Barth to a position which, as he admits in the same preface, has certain affinities with the doctrine of verbal inspiration as expounded by Calvin (Rb, pp.xxi-xxii).

Their differing approaches to the subject of revelation were to become decisive for the subsequent development of Barth's and Bultmann's theology. Bultmann's distinction between the intentions of the biblical authors and their means of expression gradually led into his programme of demythologisation (that is, the distinction between the basic Christian proclamation and its mythological encrustations) which was to exercise such a large influence on German theology in the period immediately after the Second World War. Barth's views, on the other hand, resulted in an increasing emphasis upon 'Die Lehre des Wort Gottes' as the foundation of Christian theology, and it is to this theme that the first two volumes of his life's work, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, were to be devoted.

In the early 1920s, when dialectical theology was at its height, Barth was already aware of a number of disagreements between himself and Bultmann, but was prepared to dismiss these as being of secondary importance; it was not until the beginning of the following decade that he started to realise how crucial these differences were to the whole direction of their thought. In a letter to Bultmann of 1931 he expresses his fears:

daß Sie mit Ihrer Verhältnisbestimmung von Anthropologie und Theologie des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts so wenig los geworden sind, daß sie das alte unverschämte Diktat der modernen Philosophie unter dem neuen Heideggerschen Vorzeichen so wenig erkannt und abgewiesen haben, daß ich mich bei Ihnen schließlich einfach in dasselbe Diensthaus Ägyptens zurückversetzt fühle, das wir nach meiner Auffassung mit der Absage an Schleiermacher und mit dem neuen Anknüpfen an die Theologie der Reformatoren verlassen haben sollten.<sup>40</sup>

In these lines Barth shows his concern that Bultmann, as a result of his desire to relate God to man in his historicity, has re-introduced an anthropocentric bias into his theology and has thus fallen back into the outlook of nineteenth-century liberalism. On the basis of this suspicion he comes to the conclusion that the similarities in their thought in the previous decade had perhaps been only coincidental, that they had been like ships that pass in the night.<sup>41</sup>

The similarities in their thought in the early 1920s - particularly those which have been discussed in this chapter - were, in spite of Barth's retrospective doubts, not coincidental, but can be traced to an aspect of Barth's theology which we have

not yet considered. For all his emphasis upon the centrality and 'Otherness' of God, Barth too has to describe how God relates to man in his concrete situation. On one level he does this by invoking the necessity of faith in Christ, which, as shown in the previous chapter, transpires in a seemingly intangible dimension. Yet at the same time he attempts to clarify and consolidate his understanding of faith by means of a view of history which closely resembles Bultmann's division between 'Geschichte' and 'Geschichtlichkeit'. In so doing, he too, although unconsciously, introduces ideas into his theology which are subject to the same criticism of anthropocentrism that he was later to level at Bultmann.

Barth often refers to the encounter with God through which man's faith comes into being as a 'moment'; he explains that it is 'keine mögliche, sondern die unmögliche Möglichkeit ist, der Augenblick ohne Vorher und Nachher, kein Standpunkt ... sondern die Entscheidung' (Rb, p.114). This moment does not belong to the normal temporal sequence but is qualitatively different from the normal flow of time that comes before and after (Rb, p.86). A close reading of Barth's commentary shows, moreover, that this 'moment' is not only to be linked with the creation of personal faith but is also set by Barth in a broader context. His belief that man in his historical situation can be confronted with the supra-historical 'moment' is extended to a general view of history which also entails two different concepts of time. The best example of this is offered by his interpretation of Romans IV, where he discourses on the theme 'Vom Nutzen der Historie' (Rb, p.116ff.). Here he takes up an idea of Nietzsche that the whole of history is conditioned and given meaning by the non-historical ('das Unhistorische'), or by what Barth sometimes refers to as primal history ('Urgeschichte'). According to Barth it is only through primal history that man is able to achieve a meaningful dialogue with the past - 'Sie ist hörende und redende Historie. Sie ist voll Gleichzeitigkeit' (Rb, p.123). He believes that it is 'Urgeschichte' which permeates the Bible narratives, confronting men not with the wisdom or facts of a by-gone age - this would be 'Geschichte' in its normal sense - but with something that concerns them vitally. Thus Adam and Abraham, for example, regardless of whether their existence can be historically proved, can be of direct relevance to man in his contemporary situation (Rb, pp. 123, 148-9).

Barth's 'Urgeschichte' fulfils a similar function, therefore, to Bultmann's 'Geschichtlichkeit', enabling man to enter into an existential dialogue with history. In addition to this it has, like Bultmann's concept, an obvious relevance to the division between the Jesus of history and the risen Christ. In the course of explaining the futility of trying to understand the resurrection from an ordinary historical point of view Barth writes that Christ:

hat ... als solcher die Relativität der geschichtlichen Dinge, ihre grundsätzliche Bedrohtheit durch die Zeit, so hat er den Tod hinter sich ... Gerade weil und indem seine Auferstehung das 'unhistorische' Ereignis  $\kappa\alpha\tau'\epsilon\xi\omicron\chi\eta\nu$  ist, 'herrscht der Tod nicht mehr über ihn'. (Rb, p.185)

The whole spiritual significance of Christ is thus seen by Barth in terms of 'Urgeschichte', for his resurrection is 'die "unhistorische" Beziehung seines ganzen historischen Lebens auf seinen Ursprung in Gott' (Rb, p.175). For Barth, therefore, both the resurrection of Christ and the creation of faith in man take place on a non-historical plane; both must be seen as 'moments' - 'Eben das ist aber der Sinn des kritischen Augenblicks (der Auferstehung oder des Glaubens) ...' (Rb, p.143). Only because the resurrection takes place as a 'moment' beyond history is it possible for man to encounter the living Christ, but also in the 'moment'. This corresponds to Bultmann's idea that man can only be affected in his 'Geschichtlichkeit' by events - the death and resurrection of Christ - which also possess the character of 'Geschichtlichkeit'. In the case of both theologians the representation of Christ is directly linked with their understanding of man, and in both cases the latter tends to be dualistic, for Barth too divides very sharply between man's historical, empirical existence and his non-historical existence ('Urgeschichte') which can only be realised through the 'moment'. He sees the two as radically different and mutually exclusive (Rb, p.142).

One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this comparison of Barth and Bultmann is that they both develop their view of Christ against the background of the problem of time or history. Christ is presented in their work as an intangible figure from whom all personal characteristics have been removed, precisely because they believe in a non-historical sphere which is equally intangible. In spite of

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slight differences in approach and terminology, their Christology arises from a negative attitude to history in the empirical sense. W. Pannenberg makes this same point at the beginning of his essay 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte' where he advocates a theology which is more firmly rooted in history:

Diese Voraussetzung christlicher Theologie muß heute nach zwei Seiten innerhalb der Theologie selbst verteidigt werden: einerseits gegen die Existenztheologie Bultmanns und Gogartens, die die Geschichte auflöst in die Geschichtlichkeit der Existenz; andererseits gegen die These, daß der eigentliche Glaubensgehalt übergeschichtlich sei, eine Auffassung ... die sachlich schon in der gegen die Historie abgegrenzten heilsgeschichtlichen Theologie Hofmanns vorliegt und heute besonders in der Gestalt von Barths Deutung der Inkarnation als 'Urgeschichte' lebendig ist ...<sup>42</sup>

He then goes on to criticise Barth for devaluing history and moving away from the historically oriented outlook of the Old and New Testaments. Pannenberg's criticism can be supported by many passages from the dialectical theologians which demonstrate quite clearly that their attitude to history in the normal sense is totally negative. Barth describes man as being sold to time:

Da ist er an die Zeit verkauft. Da liegt er wie ein Kieselstein auf dem Grunde des 'Stroms der Zeit', ruhelos davoneilend und kommend gehen ihre Wellen über ihn dahin. (Rb, p.483)

and this thought is echoed by Bultmann in 'Zur Frage der Christologie': 'Wir sind den Mächten ausgesetzt, die die Geschichte bestimmen ...' (GuV, p.111). Death and not life is seen as the supreme law of history:

Was in der Geschichte möglich, wahrscheinlich, notwendig oder wirklich ist, das ist vergänglich, verweslich, sterblich, darüber herrscht der Tod. (Rb, p.184)

and because of this subjection to death and mortality nothing within time can claim to have absolute value. Barth speaks of 'die Relativität der geschichtlichen Dinge' (Rb, p.185) and in consequence can refer to history as characterised by 'Undeutlichkeit, Unrichtigkeit und ... Fraglichkeit' (Rb, p.184). All this is of course diametrically opposed to the conception of history which is reflected in liberal theology, to Troeltsch's

optimistic account of history as the elevation of humanity to God and to Harnack's belief in its 'aufwärts sich bewegendende Entwicklung'.<sup>43</sup> Bultmann explicitly rejects this historical optimism when he writes 'daß wir den Entwicklungsgedanken preisgeben müssen, wo es sich um die wirkliche Erfassung der Geschichte handelt. Denn er setzt voraus, daß die Möglichkeiten für den Menschen als übersehbar, verfügbar gelten' (AdT II, p.63). In dialectical theology, therefore, the belief in a progressive development within history is replaced by an awareness of man's helplessness within history and his inability to comprehend its meaning.

Our concern here is not, however, like Pannenberg, to assess the extent to which these ideas coincide with a biblical view of history, but to suggest some possible reasons for a devaluation of history in the normal sense at this particular time. As far as the specific causes are concerned we can only refer back to the political and social factors indicated in the previous two chapters. Certainly the First World War contributed largely to the emergence of a pessimistic view of history, and Bultmann's 1917 sermon 'Vom geheimnisvollen und offenbaren Gott' provides added documentation on this point.<sup>44</sup> In addition to this and the rapid acceleration of social change in the nineteenth century, the increasing application of the historical method to theology also played a significant role. Both in the philosophical critique of religion and in the fields of New Testament criticism and 'Leben-Jesu-Forschung' the historical method had made major inroads into orthodox Christian beliefs and values. All of these factors combined to produce a deep sense of uncertainty in the face of the relativising forces of history. Barth and Bultmann do not attempt to stand against the tide of these intellectual developments by simply re-affirming the Christology of the Reformation period, when the historical problem did not exist, but in response to it they adopt a 'two-tier' view of history. On the one hand they allow the Jesus of history to be whittled away by critical research. Bultmann smiles at the efforts of some theologians to salvage a few certain facts from the engulfing fire of historical criticism and writes: 'Ich lasse es ruhig brennen; denn ich sehe, daß das, was da verbrennt, alle die Phantasie-Bilder der Leben-Jesu-Theologie sind, und daß es der  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \sigma\acute{o}\phi\eta\alpha$  selbst ist'. (GuV, p.101). On the other hand, however, they project

Christ in his spiritual significance on to a non-historical plane immune from all falsifiability and relativism. Barth refers to the resurrection as non-historical because:

... sollte also die Auferstehung in irgendeinem Sinn selber ein Faktum der Geschichte sein, dann würde keine noch so starke Beteuerung und keine noch so verfeinerte Überlegung zu verhindern vermögen, daß auch sie in das Schaukelspiel von Ja und Nein, Leben und Tod, Gott und Mensch, das für die geschichtliche Fläche bezeichnend ist, hineingerissen erschiene. (Rb, p.184)

and re-emphasises this point later in his commentary when he claims that 'Gott ist keine "zufällige Geschichtswahrheit" ...' (Rb, p.260).

What happens to the depiction of Christ in this process is reflected most clearly in a juxtaposition of two quotations, one from Harnack and one from Barth. The first is taken from Das Wesen des Christentums:

Aber so, wie er (Jesus) den Vater kennt, hat ihn noch niemand erkannt, und er bringt den andern diese Erkenntnis; er leistet damit 'den vielen' einen unvergleichlichen Dienst. Er führt sie zu Gott, nicht nur durch sein Wort, sondern noch mehr durch das, was er ist und tut, und letztlich durch das, was er leidet ... Nicht wie ein Bestandteil gehört er in das Evangelium hinein, sondern er ist die persönliche Verwirklichung und die Kraft des Evangeliums gewesen und wird noch immer als solche empfunden. Feuer entzündet sich nur an Feuer, persönliches Leben nur an persönlichen Kräften.<sup>45</sup>

and the second from Der Römerbrief:

In Jesus wird Gott wahrhaftig Geheimnis, macht er sich bekannt als der Unbekannte, redet er als der ewig Schweigende. In Jesus erwehrt sich Gott aller zudringlichen Vertraulichkeit, aller religiösen Unverschämtheit. In Jesus offenbart, wird Gott den Juden ein Ärgernis und den Griechen eine Torheit. In Jesus beginnt die Mitteilung Gottes mit einem Zurückstoßen, mit dem Aufreißen eines klaffenden Abgrundes, mit der bewußten Darbietung des kräftigsten Ärgernisses. (Rb, p.73).

From his more optimistic view of history Harnack portrays Jesus as an historical personality, who was able to inspire not only through his words but also through his actions and sufferings. Barth's quite different response to the experience of time and history results in a figure in whom all personal, tangible characteristics are absent and who can only confront man as a paradox.



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32. 2 Corinthians V. 16.
33. Quoted in Zahrnt, Die Sache mit Gott, p.346.
34. Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann. Briefwechsel 1922-1966, edited by B. Jaspert, (Zurich, 1971), pp.63-4 (10 December 1926).
35. Jesus, p.181.
36. p.16.

37. Theology in Conflict (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p.142.
  38. Es begann mit Jesus von Nazareth, p.79.
  39. Theology in Conflict, p.123.
  40. Karl Barth - Rudolf Bultmann. Briefwechsel 1922-1966, p.118 (27 May 1931).
  41. p.102 (5 February 1930).
  42. In Kerygma und Dogma, 5 (1959), pp.218-37 and 259-88 (p.218).
  43. Das Wesen des Christentums, p.176.
  44. See footnote 23.
  45. pp.90-1.
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8. The mediating function of the poetic image.

While Barth's and Bultmann's view of Christ as a paradoxical, intangible mediator between God and man represents a new direction in German theology, it is nevertheless a direction which is foreshadowed in the creative writing of the second decade of this century. The same development from an historical to a 'de-physicalised', from a static to a dynamic understanding of Christ can be traced in a movement towards intangibility and dynamism in the imagery of a number of writers from the Expressionist period. It is, moreover, no coincidence that this development is most noticeable in those writers who tend towards a dualistic religious outlook. In this chapter, therefore, we shall turn again to the writers discussed earlier and examine the way in which their imagery is influenced by their response to the dualistic problem already stated. Although Sorge does not use such imagery as an attempt to overcome the dualism, as Trakl and Rilke do, there are correspondences between his language and that of the dialectical theologians which we have so far only mentioned in passing, and yet are of essential importance for a correct understanding of the changes in the poetic image at this time. In order to define these affinities in language as precisely as possible it is first necessary to assess the conclusions reached by another critic who has examined Sorge's imagery from a theological perspective.

In his essay 'Das expressionistische Verkündigungsdrama' Eberhard Lämmert begins by comparing Sorge's Odysseus with two other plays about the same character by Friedrich Lienhard and Gerhard Hauptmann. He groups the last two together because they both display a 'Beflissenheit, die handlungskolorierenden Einzelmotive des homerischen Textes auszubeuten und weiter anzureichern'.<sup>1</sup> He then moves on to point out the sharp contrast between the colourfulness and historical detail of these works and the nature of Sorge's dramatic portrayal. The rich and complexly structured plot of the former is replaced in the latter by a single symbolic act, and the scenic detail gives way to an imagery lacking in concreteness. For Lämmert, Sorge's description of Odysseus shooting the arrow encapsulates the essence of his style. He explains that 'der Pfeil selbst verliert alle Körperlichkeit', and sees this as the dramatist's deliberate intention: 'Was irgend dieser Tat individuelles

Kolorit geben könnte, wird vom Autor rigorös vertilgt, um dem immateriellen Kern seiner Verkündigung im Bilde möglichst nahe zu bleiben.<sup>2</sup> Lämmert then goes on to describe Sorge's depiction of Odysseus as 'von aller geschichtlichen Bedingtheit entkleidet',<sup>3</sup> and traces Sorge's removal of all physical and historical particularity to the writer's overriding concern with the idea of proclamation: because the characters are faceless they are better able to achieve 'das reine Durchtönen der in ihnen konkretisierten Ideen' and, as a result of this, 'Aus dem abgegrenzten Spielraum wird eine Tribüne der Verkündigung'.<sup>4</sup>

The close resemblance between Lämmert's account of Sorge's imagery and characterisation and the dialectical theologians' representation of Christ is difficult to miss; in both cases the loss of historical detail and the emphasis upon proclamation are prominent. Thus it comes as no surprise when, towards the end of his essay, having provided further examples of the symbolic proclamatory style in Expressionist drama, Lämmert begins to draw theological parallels: 'Es verdient Aufmerksamkeit, daß theologische Strömungen am Rande beider christlicher Konfessionen ... die Disposition zu dieser enthistorisierten Verinnerlichung mit bereitet haben'.<sup>5</sup> Yet these last three words already indicate that Lämmert is not about to turn to a discussion of Barth and Bultmann; the outlines of their Christology did not emerge clearly until the beginning of the following decade and thus they could not in any sense have prepared the way for Expressionism. Instead, he quotes Albert Kalthoff in support of his thesis, a Lutheran pastor (1850-1906) who claimed that Jesus was a mythical and not an historical figure, and who traced the growth of this myth to sociological factors. Kalthoff did not view his ideas as a critique of religion, but believed Christ to be a necessary ideal not only for past but also for modern societies. In the lines cited by Lämmert, Kalthoff explains that 'der neue Christus ... von den besten Kräften des ewig Menschlichen im Mutterschoße der heutigen Gesellschaft gebildet wird'.<sup>6</sup> This is, of course, a far cry from the dialectical theologians' assessment of what lay within the power of humanity and, if it were not for his radical view of Jesus, Kalthoff's outlook would appear to have much more in common with the liberal theologians' tendency to identify the divine with the highest human aspirations. This is certainly true of the other thinkers whom Lämmert selects in illustration

of his argument; Drews, Prezzolini and Funk all play down the historical side of Christianity and instead locate the source of revelation within the experience of the individual.

It seems at first that Lämmert's comparison is mistaken, or at least that he has overlooked the more obvious connection with the loss of 'Körperlichkeit' and historical contingency in the Christology of Barth and Bultmann. Yet this conclusion would be an over-hasty one, as it does not take into consideration the picture of Sorge's development outlined earlier in the fourth chapter. Lämmert's attempts to draw parallels between literature and theology are in fact quite appropriate for a large proportion of Sorge's work, but by no means for all of it, as he is able to account for the characteristic qualities of the early and late dramas, but not so much for those of the middle period. In the first instance, however, we shall look briefly at those aspects of Sorge's drama that support Lämmert's interpretation.

The disregard for physical and historical detail in the interest of proclamation through a symbolic act is not unique to Odysseus, but can be demonstrated in other early dramas as well. The names of his characters - 'der Jüngling', 'der Wanderer', 'der Sänger', 'der Dichter', and so on - already indicate that Sorge is less concerned with individual characterisation than with a symbolic representation; in Antichrist Jesus is referred to simply as 'der Meister' and Judas as 'der Jünger'. At the beginning of Odysseus the stage directions emphasise that historical verisimilitude is not the author's prime concern:

Die Gewandung der Gestalten ist der griechischen verwandt, ohne ihr Zug um Zug nachgeahmt zu sein; sie darf nicht unmittelbar wie die griechische wirken, da es sich hier in nichts um Griechentum handelt. (I, p.242)

and in the same way there is nothing in the stage directions of Antichrist to suggest a geographical location or a particular historical period. The fact that such external details are of secondary importance is underlined by the poet in Der Bettler when he exclaims 'Die Welt des Außen ist erst zum zweiten not ...!' (II, p.32).

This priority is by no means restricted to Sorge's so-called Nietzschean period but is clearly to be seen in his later plays too, especially in König David. In his notes to the three-

volume edition of Sorge's works H.G. Rötzer compares this play with the biblical treatment of the same theme, and concludes that Sorge's play lacks the narrative complexity of the Old Testament account:

Sorges 'König David' fehlt die Liebe zum Nebensächlich-Spiele-  
rischen, die im AT stellenweise den Hauptfaden der Geschichte  
sogar überlagert ... Er dämmt die Erzählfreude ein. Schillern-  
de Einzeldarstellungen müssen sich dem Gesamttablauf des Schau-  
spiels unterordnen. (III, p.364)

Among the points which Rötzer adduces in support of this con-  
clusion is the absence of psychological motivation and differ-  
entiation in the characters:

Das Schauspiel führt keine abgestuften Charaktere vor. David  
und Jonathan gehören in das Lager der gottergebenen Menschen,  
Saul und Absalom in das der gottfernen. Übergänge gibt es  
nicht. Da die Gestalten beispielhaft stehen, werden sie über-  
zeichnet. (III, p.365)

Here again, then, the resemblance to the clear-cut groupings  
of the earlier dramas is apparent. As further evidence Rötzer  
points out that Sorge, in his attempt to provide the action  
with a timeless universality, omits the geographical references  
upon which the Old Testament chronicler places great importance,  
and all these observations lead him to echo Julius Bab's assess-  
ment of the play in 1923 - 'Nicht Gestalten leben wider einan-  
der - Schatten ziehen vor Gott dahin' (III, p.368). Joachim  
Kröll, in his 1941 dissertation on Sorge, expresses similar  
sentiments, and bases them on a comparison, not with the Old  
Testament sources, but with another play about David written  
by Sebrecht at the beginning of the century.<sup>7</sup> Kröll's juxta-  
position of the two plays produces results very similar to  
those which emerged from Lämmert's comparison of Sorge with  
Lienhard and Hauptmann. The continuity between the early and  
the later work which this implies is stated explicitly by  
Schuhmacher when he describes Sorge's later writing as follows:

Sie bleibt wie seine expressionistische Dichtung reines Zeichen  
persönlicher Selbstüberwindung, weltlos, - für den Ungläubigen  
absolut äußerlich, für den Gläubigen jedoch 'bildlos', da die  
Form vor der Botschaft verschwindet.<sup>8</sup>

Thus , whether we are talking about Der Jüngling and Odysseus or König David, the same absence of historical and geographical detail is apparent.

The de-historicising tendency which can be followed throughout Sorge's work undoubtedly resembles the way in which the dialectical theologians represent not only Christ but also prominent Old Testament characters, such as Adam and Abraham, as intangible and ahistorical figures. Yet on closer examination these similarities turn out to be rather deceptive, for they can divert attention from a crucial area in which the work of dramatist and theologian no longer coincides. In both cases the physical and the historical are played down in order to allow the proclamation to occupy the foreground, but Sorge's conception of the nature of this proclamation is totally dissimilar to that of Barth and Bultmann. Sorge's characters are certain of their poetic or religious calling, and on the basis of their own assurance of a relationship with a spiritual reality they proclaim this relationship as a possibility which is available to all. It is immaterial whether this is expressed in terms of man progressing towards the ideal of Nietzsche's 'höhere Menschen' or in terms of the soul moving into deeper communion with God, for in both cases the feeling of certainty remains. In the theology of Barth and Bultmann, on the other hand, knowledge of God is not a path along which one can progress, but something which, from a human point of view, always remains questionable:

Glaube ist das Wagnis, zu wissen, was Gott weiß und darum - nicht zu wissen, was Gott nicht mehr weiß. Die Möglichkeit dieses Wagnisses liegt darin, daß es als menschliche Möglichkeit überhaupt nicht in Betracht kommt. (Rb, p.182)

This sense of faith as a 'Wagnis' appears neither in König David nor in Sorge's other religious dramas.

Barth also approaches the question of calling or mission from quite a different perspective, and this can best be demonstrated by comparing Sorge's account of David's anointing as king by Samuel with Barth's description of Paul's apostolic calling. In the second scene of the first act in König David the young David recounts the momentous occurrence of the previous day:

Bald alsdann  
Triefte das Öl von meinem Scheitel duftend,  
Die Salbe Jahwes, ich des Herrn Genöß.  
Samuel salbte mich, es rann das Öl  
in meine Strähnen, Gott duftete auf.  
Ich wurde König über Israel,  
Vollzieher Jahwes, Jahwe salbte mich,  
Den Knaben. Und mein Herze ging wie Öl  
In Demut, tropfte Dank, duftete Heil. (III, p.77)

There is no trace of doubt or ambiguity in these lines; through the medium of the oil of anointment God and David become as one, a unity denoted by the repetition of the verb 'duften', first with God and then with David's heart as its subject. As a consequence of this unity David can even refer to himself as God's companion ('Genöß'). This sense of familiarity with God would be totally out of place in Barth's exposition of the beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans:

Mag Paulus sein wer und was er will, der Inhalt seiner Sendung ist letzten Grundes nicht in ihm, sondern in unüberwindlicher Fremdheit, in unerreichbarer Ferne über ihm. Er kann sich seines Apostelberufs nicht als eines Momentes seiner eigenen Lebensentwicklung bewußt werden. 'Der Apostelberuf ist ein paradoxes Faktum, das im ersten und letzten Augenblick seines Lebens außerhalb seiner persönlichen Identität mit ihm selbst steht' (Kierkegaard) ... (Rb, p.3)

Barth emphasises the distance between man and God even in the moment of Paul's calling and as a result his 'Sendung' is described as something ambiguous; because it lies outside the range of human comprehension it can only be expressed as a paradox.

It is clear from these differences that the tendency towards intangible and non-historical imagery is not by itself sufficient to establish a parallel between Sorge and dialectical theology, and to this extent Lämmert's theological comparisons seem to be well-founded. Lämmert, however, restricts himself to an analysis of Odysseus, and although his interpretation can be applied equally well to Sorge's later plays it cannot adequately account for his middle period. This is not just because a dualism between God and man enters Sorge's work at this time, nor is it solely due to the fact that his imagery is now made to work in the reverse direction. These factors are of course extremely important, because, as has been shown in earlier chapters, they show that Sorge is now much closer to the outlook of the dialectical theologians. Yet if we continue the



analysis of Sorge's imagery from the point of view of Lämmert's categories of intangibility and loss of physicality, we soon become aware that an additional quality, not mentioned by Lämmert, enters his language, albeit briefly, in this middle period, not replacing those traits already present but supplementing them. In Der Bettler the characters and symbols carry no more historical substance than those in the earlier works, but in the last section of this play a new sense of elusiveness appears in Sorge's imagery which was previously absent. This was mentioned in our earlier analysis of Der Bettler only in passing, but now, as it is a concept which will serve to clarify major distinctions between alternative religious outlooks of the time, the nature and function of this elusive imagery need to be considered in greater detail.

In his second long monologue in the last act of Der Bettler 'der Dichter' struggles to find words that can adequately convey the experience which has just cast doubt upon the possibility of continuing his poetic mission. He chooses the image of the shooting star and his treatment of this image is interesting enough to be worth quoting at length:

Ein Mädchen -- irgendwo im Wald rasten ein Mädchen und Jüngling. Irgendwie kamen sie sich auf der Wanderschaft entgegen. Nun ist es Nacht; es fällt ein Stern ... und das Mädchen - nein, so nicht - es taumelt irgendwo ein Blatt vom Baum, das Mädchen blickt auf und indem sie aufblickt, trifft ihr Blick einen fallenden Stern am Himmel, glänzend fällt er. Und dieser Stern setzt sie so in Verwirrung, Erstaunen, Entzücken, ihre inneren Wesen recken sich unter ihm auf, sie tut einen leisen Schrei. Da hebt der Jüngling den Kopf und sieht sie an. In ihren Augen zittert jetzt all ihr Innentum, alles, was durch den Stern wachend wurde, und dieses zitternde Zeichen ihrer Mädchentiefe fährt in den Jüngling als Strahl und Verhängnis. Er wird diesen Blick nicht vergessen, der hat sich mit allen Tiefen in des Jünglings Tiefen gesenkt. ...  
Aber wäre das Blatt nicht gefallen, hätte das Mädchen nicht emporgeblickt, wäre der Stern nicht gerade bei ihrem Aufschauen gestürzt, so wäre nichts geschehen. Nach kurzer Zeit wären sie auseinander gegangen und es wäre nichts geschehen. Wer kann es darstellen?  
(II, p.87)

In this passage Sorge does not give prominence to the idea of the star as a symbol of light and thus of spiritual illumination, but to the elusiveness of the entire occurrence. Because of its speed and because it is only of a moment's duration, the move-

ment of the star eludes the perception of the boy and almost escapes the attention of the girl. In this way Sorge uses it to represent the impossibility of pinning down or explaining the source of their common experience, and he supplements the image firstly by a careful choice of vocabulary and secondly by deliberately interrupting his own description. The insertion of 'irgendwo' and 'irgendwie' emphasises the improbability of the chain of events that led to the moment of awareness. By breaking in with the words 'nein, so nicht' he rejects his first attempt as being too direct and proceeds to place the shooting star at one further remove from the boy, thus lending still more weight to the element of improbability. The motion of the star, therefore, which was in the first place so fleeting as to be almost imperceptible, can only be transmitted to the boy by a complex and seemingly coincidental chain of relationships which it would be impossible to reconstruct.

The use of imagery to denote the difficulty of capturing the quality of an experience is unique to this phase of Sorge's output. The shooting star does, it is true, appear in Odysseus, but the fact that there Sorge can use it in the plural - 'es fallen Sterne' - indicates that this is a sight which is there for all to see. The two 'Gegensprecher' both notice it and respond to the movement of the stars with a cry of fear - 'Wehe!' (I, p.267). In the later play Metaneoite the contrast with the imagery of Der Bettler emerges even more clearly. In the first scene Maria and Elisabeth are contemplating the clear night sky and in the light of the stars Maria perceives a spiritual radiance:

O wie sehr  
Ist dieses schön! Doch schöner ist darüber  
Der weiße Kern von Licht, der, länglich, heftig  
Das Silberne auswirft, das dann stets zurückwallt  
Ins Silberne und immer wallend bleibt!  
Dies ist das Fließende von Engels Lippe;  
Denn drinnen steht, der selig zu mir redet,  
Der Weiße mit dem weißen Blick. Der Engel,  
Der mir verkündete ... (III, p.24)

In place of the rapidity of the shooting star Sorge now describes a gentle undulating movement; it is not a brief, elusive occurrence which immediately disappears, for its constancy is denoted by words such as 'stets', 'immer' and 'bleibt'. Because of its

permanence Maria can perceive it without difficulty, and the stage directions which follow these lines reveal not only that she has the ability to comprehend the experience, but that she has the source of this spiritual revelation at her disposal - 'Sie kniet und saugt das Himmlische in sich'. When Elisabeth looks at her she sees her bathed in a heavenly light, which is, as she says, 'so sichtbar, daß ich meine, schöpfen / Darf ich es mit der Hand und davon trinken.' The essence of the contrast, therefore, can be located in the distinction between the static and the dynamic image, the image that is clearly to be seen and grasped and that which is so fleeting that it eludes all attempts to capture it in words.

This elusiveness is not only related to Barth's comparison of theologians' endeavours to express the activity of God with the attempt to draw the movement of a bird in flight, but also bears a close resemblance to the dialectical theologians' representation of Jesus as the paradoxical, dynamic content of the Christian proclamation. This is not to say that the characteristics pointed out by Lämmert - the loss of 'Körperlichkeit', historicity and concreteness - are of no significance; these qualities are present throughout every phase of Sorge's work, just as they permeate the conception of Christ presented by Barth and Bultmann. Yet as long as the atmosphere of elusiveness, of an indefinable dynamic motion, is absent, the comparison with liberal theology lies closer to hand. The ideas of Kalthoff and Drews, after all, demonstrate that it is only a short step from basing Christian theology on the facts of human experience to denying the necessity of an historical founder of the Christian faith. In contrast to these men, the dialectical theologians did not neglect the historical existence of Jesus in order to lend more weight to the inwardness or to the psychological necessity of the Christian experience, but in order to emphasise the 'Otherness' of God.

In the same way, when Sorge introduces the image of the shooting star his work takes on quite a different complexion, for now he too is seeking to represent the activity of a radically transcendent God. Like Barth, he is concerned with a disturbing encounter with God, one which does not stem from an assured, permanent and readily available communion with a spiritual sphere but which takes place in the fleetingness of the moment. Barth describes this as 'der Augenblick', which can be located in 'keinem zeitlichen, ursächlichen, logischen Zusammenhang' (Rb, p.86). To move briefly to another language

and another time, it is what T.S. Eliot was later to refer to, combining Barth's discursive language and Sorge's poetic imagery, as 'the moment in and out of time ... The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning'.<sup>9</sup> For Sorge, however, such language plays an important role for only a brief period. The awareness of the inexpressibility of the 'Other' is still present in Gericht über Zarathustra:

Denn mein arm Menschliches ist von der Zeit,  
Und meine Worte sind von der Erde geboren! (II, p.121)

and its indescribable dynamism again emerges on occasions in Guntwar:

da bricht herein ein Fremdes,  
Bricht ungeheure Ahnung ...  
Nur Ahnung, Ahnung, Mutter, nichts Gewisses! (II, p.168)  
Ich sah, ich sah das Kreuz einfältig in Dreifaltigkeit  
Durch Weltenräume in unfaßbarer Bewegung sich beugen.  
(II, p.183)

Yet soon these images of unfathomability make way for a different kind of 'Symbole der Ewigkeit', which, instead of suggesting the infinity of God by means of 'hints and guesses', reflect the possession of faith.

In Trakl's poetry the combination of intangible and elusive language occupies a position which is both more central and more permanent. It is not difficult to find examples of this type of imagery in his writing, for, apart from in the poem 'Dämmerung' discussed in the third chapter, it is also unmistakably present in lines such as these from 'Melancholie des Abends':

Ein kalter Glanz huscht über Straßen ...  
Am Himmel ahnet man Bewegung, ... (I, p.19)

Here the two verbs provide the same sense of fleetingness and uncertainty as that which is present in Sorge's description of the falling star. The preponderance of verbs like 'huschen', 'sauen', 'fliehen', 'zerstreuen' and 'schwinden' in Trakl's work suggests that this elusive dynamism is a permanent characteristic of his poetic style. In 'Vorstadt im Föhn' the confusion of movement which is conveyed by verbs of this kind is enhanced by Trakl's choice of adjectives and nouns:

Geduckte Hütten, Pfade wirr zerstreut,  
In Gärten Durcheinander und Bewegung,  
Bisweilen schwillt Geheul aus dumpfer Regung,  
In einer Kinderschar fliegt rot ein Kleid. (I, p.51)

Whereas Sorge relies upon this type of imagery for only a brief period, it retains its central role throughout Trakl's work. Sorge soon moves away from this attempt to provide poetic glimpses into that which cannot be communicated by normal language and moves towards the certainty of a firm religious conviction. Trakl, on the other hand, dwells longer upon the vagueness and uncertainty of his imagery, and begins to see in it the possibility of overcoming the dualism underlying his work. In its very fleetingness and elusiveness he discovers a movement which is able to assume a mediating role between the world with which he is familiar and that other sphere to which his perceptions constantly point.

The fact that he is not only giving expression to a dualistic outlook in his poems but is also seeking forms of mediation becomes clearer when this elusiveness is seen in conjunction with the related aspect of Trakl's use of ambivalence. This can best be described by comparing him with a seventeenth-century poet who was also convinced of a radical separation between human and spiritual values. In 'Menschliches Elende' Andreas Gryphius deals with themes that would not be out of place in Trakl's verse - the illusoriness of man's hopes and the suffering and transience of human existence:

Was sind wir Menschen doch? Ein Wohnhaus grimmer Schmerzen,  
ein Ball des falschen Glücks, ein Irrlicht dieser Zeit,  
ein Schauplatz herber Angst, besetzt mit scharfem Leid,  
ein bald verschmelzter Schnee und abgebrannte Kerzen.  
Dies Leben fleucht davon wie ein Geschwätz und Scherzen.  
Die vor uns abgelegt des schwachen Leibes Kleid  
und in das Totenbuch der großen Sterblichkeit  
längst eingeschrieben sind, sind uns aus Sinn und Herzen.  
Gleich wie ein eitel Traum leicht aus der Acht hinfällt  
und wie ein Strom verscheußt, den keine Macht aufhält,  
so muß auch unser Nam, Lob, Ehr und Ruhm verschwinden.  
Was itzund Atem holt, muß mit der Luft entfliehn,  
was nach uns kommen wird, wird uns ins Grab nachziehn.  
Was sag ich? Wir vergehn wie Rauch von starken Winden!<sup>10</sup>

Yet although there are certain resemblances in choice of subject between the Baroque and the modern poet, there are far-reaching differences in their treatment of these themes and in their mode of expression. Gryphius' terminology is very sharply de-

lineated, and the conciseness of phrases such as 'grimmer Schmerzen' and 'herber Angst' leaves one in no doubt as to the poet's thoroughly negative evaluation of life. The force of his jeremiad is not weakened by any unnecessary lingering upon life's fleeting pleasures: 'Dies Leben fleucht davon wie ein Geschwätz und Scherzen'. At the same time his rhetorical style conveys a tone of authority and absolute finality - 'Was sage ich? Wir vergehn wie Rauch von starken Winden!'.

Each of these characteristics finds its direct antithesis in Trakl's own poem 'Menschliches Elend':

Die Uhr, die vor der Sonne fünf schlägt -  
Einsame Menschen packt ein dunkles Grausen,  
Im Abendgarten kahle Bäume sausen.  
Des Toten Antlitz sich am Fenster regt.

Vielleicht, daß diese Stunde stille steht.  
Vor trüben Augen blaue Bilder gaukeln  
Im Takt der Schiffe, die am Flusse schaukeln.  
Am Kai ein Schwesternzug vorüberweht.

Im Hasel spielen Mädchen blaß und blind,  
Wie Liebende, die sich im Schlaf umschlingen.  
Vielleicht, daß um ein Aas dort Fliegen singen,  
Vielleicht auch weint im Mutterschoß ein Kind.

...

Es scheint, man hört auch gräßliches Geschrei;  
Gebeine durch verfallne Mauern schimmern.  
Ein böses Herz lacht laut in schönen Zimmern;  
An einem Träumer läuft ein Hund vorbei ... (I, p.62)

Here the triple repetition of 'vielleicht' and the insertion of 'es scheint' before the words 'man hört auch gräßliches Geschrei' make it impossible to read the poem as an unequivocal statement of the valuelessness of existence. The absence of an authoritative tone is further underlined by Trakl's characteristic neglect of conventional syntax. In place of Gryphius' crisp, rhetorical question and answer Trakl begins with a sentence which, because it lacks a main clause, is left suspended, and thus produces a sense of uncertainty in the mind of the reader. The equivocal quality of these lines is reinforced by Trakl's use of imagery in this poem. At first it seems possible to equate his 'dunkles Grausen' and 'Gebeine' with Gryphius' 'herber Angst' and his references to death and the grave, but on closer analysis it becomes apparent that Trakl's perspective is more complex. His images of ugliness

and despair are frequently modified by verbs which contain elements of beauty, as in the line 'Gebeine durch verfallne Mauern schimmern', and this once more indicates that he is unable to engage in a total negation of human reality. He repeatedly gives preference to words which combine positive and negative connotations, and which bring together beauty and decay. Another example of this is his description of the lovers with the verb 'sich umschlingen', with its double connotation of 'embrace' and 'tightly enclose'. Equally important in this context is Trakl's use of the evening setting. The reference in the third line to 'Abendgarten' is an instance of his predilection for evening scenes, which stems from their ability to suggest both the consummation of the day and the imminent arrival of darkness.

In short, therefore, Trakl modifies the bleakness of his descriptions by the introduction of words such as 'vielleicht' as well as by an ambiguity in his imagery and syntax, and he does so in order to linger upon the ambivalence of human experience. In another poem, 'Heiterer Frühling' (I, p.50), this ambivalence emerges even more distinctly: here the line 'Wie scheint doch alles Werdende so krank', which seems to indicate the poet's tendency to equate everything transitory with corruptibility and decay, is contradicted only two stanzas later by 'So schmerzlich gut und wahrhaft ist, was lebt'. Thus, while Gryphius draws a clear and unequivocal dividing line in his work between the transience of human life and the permanence of spiritual values, Trakl's dualism is sometimes mitigated by the appearance of ambivalent features in his work. By using words and structures which simultaneously indicate beauty and decay, he is able to represent an area in which the opposite poles of his dualism coincide. As such, his techniques of ambivalence fulfil the same function as his use of elusive imagery, for there too he was concerned to establish a connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar, by describing the movement between the two realms. If we look now at some further examples of Trakl's ambivalence, it will be possible to define the mediating nature of his language more precisely.

In the first place his fondness for evening as an image which combines two opposites is paralleled in many poems by the equally ambiguous image of autumn, with its suggestion of the fulfilment of summer and its simultaneous function as the pre-

cursor of winter, and by the preponderance in his descriptions of the colour purple, which is balanced between conflicting overtones of rich beauty and over-ripeness. This balance of opposites not only determines Trakl's choice of individual images but often plays an important role in the overall structure of his poems. The earlier analysis of 'Dämmerung' demonstrated how the interplay of contrasting colours and movements reflects the opposing extremes of Trakl's dualistic perspective.<sup>11</sup> Yet at the same time it is this typically Traklean counterpoint which provides the poem with an aesthetic structure, in that it establishes a regular, alternating pattern in the midst of what would otherwise be a series of disconnected perceptions. In other words, by moulding his perceptions into a specific poetic form he is able to a certain extent to move beyond a merely negative expression of his dualism. Trakl's tendency to bring his poems to a rounded conclusion by means of a concise formulation of his balance of opposites suggests, moreover, that the structure of his verse is the result of a conscious poetic activity. 'Melancholie des Abends', for example, ends with a line which crystallises the pattern of the preceding stanzas into an harmonious undulating motion of rising and falling - 'Es steigt und sinkt des Rohres Regung' (I, p.19). The same feature can be noted in the last stanza of 'Abendmuse':

Von Lüften trunken sinken balde ein die Lider  
Und öffnen leise sich zu fremden Sternenzeichen.  
Endymion taucht aus dem Dunkel alter Eichen  
Und beugt sich über trauervolle Wasser nieder. (I, p.28)

where the opening and closing of the eyelids is paralleled by the movements of Endymion in the final sentence. In a similar way the closing lines of 'Die Bauern' -

Und klirrend schwingen ein und aus  
Die Sensen geisterhaft in Takt. (I, p.33)

imply that the alternation between images of hope and despair in the previous stanzas not only reflect the opposite poles of a dualism but also provide the poem with a rhythmical uniformity.

One further way in which Trakl's ambivalence is manifested is in the manner in which he frequently depicts a strangely transparent world in which man and nature are merged. In 'An



den Knaben Elis', for instance, the physical features of Elis are superimposed upon the natural landscape:

Ein Dornenbusch tönt,  
Wo deine mondenen Augen sind.  
O, wie lange bist, Elis, du verstorben.  
Dein Leib ist eine Hyazinthe,  
In die ein Mönch die wächsernen Finger taucht. (I, p.26)

An earlier poem, 'Die junge Magd', conveys a similar impression, for here the fate of the young girl is mitigated by a reconciliation with nature in the final verse:

Traumhaft klingt in braunem Weiler  
Nach ein Klang von Tanz und Geigen,  
Schwebt ihr Antlitz durch den Weiler,  
Weht ihr Haar in kahlen Zweigen. (I, p.15)

Each of these poems evokes a curiously spectral world, which is both ambiguous and elusive, as it hovers between an affirmation and a negation of material reality. The vitalistic overtones of 'Tanz und Geigen' would seem to indicate the former, and yet the music and dancing are only half-heard, for by using 'nachklingen' the poet communicates an echoing quality which would be absent in the unmodified form of the verb. The ghost-like appearance of Elis and 'die junge Magd' is in fact a recurrent phenomenon in Trakl's poetry and is shown by his avoidance of words such as 'Gesicht', 'Körper' and 'Kopf' in his descriptions of human figures in favour of nouns such as 'Antlitz', 'Gestalt', 'Schatten' and 'Haupt', in which all tangible characteristics are absent.<sup>12</sup>

These intangible figures, which hover uncertainly between a physical and a spiritual world, eluding location in either, combine with the ambivalence of Trakl's imagery, syntax and poetic structure to provide evidence of his search for possibilities of resolving the separation between soul and world. He endeavours through his own creative activity to establish a connection between these otherwise antithetical poles, for his poetry not only depicts a fallen and decaying reality, but can at the same time evoke a realm of beauty by means of its ambiguities. In other words, as well as exercising a mimetic function in its description of the external world, it can serve to reflect the inward realm of the soul. Thus, by favouring techniques which in each case hold two opposing spheres in

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balance, he is able to use his own creativity as a mediating force in itself, as a reconciliation between 'Gewaltiges Sterben und die singende Flamme im Herzen' (I, p.141).

Trakl's faith in poetry as the only possible means of communication with the soul, while motivating many of the poems he wrote between 1910 and 1912 (the period from which most of the above examples are taken), comes to the surface more often in the last three years of his life. From late 1912 onwards the relationship between poetry and the soul becomes increasingly apparent, although he always refers to his own creativity in musical terminology. There is a marked growth in the use of 'tönen', and the nouns 'Wohllaut' and 'Gesang' enter the poet's vocabulary for the first time.<sup>13</sup> The connection in the poet's mind between music and his own writing is indicated by the fact that three of his later poems bear descriptive titles which contain the word 'Gesang',<sup>14</sup> and also by lines such as that which concludes 'Frühling der Seele' - 'Der sanfte Gesang des Bruders am Abendhügel' (I, p.142) - which acts as a commentary upon the whole poem by crystallising into one image everything that has gone before. Finally, in 'Unterwegs', Trakl draws an explicit connection between music and the soul. The latter is seen as the source of music, the survival of which is constantly threatened by forces of darkness:

O, wie dunkel ist diese Nacht. Eine purpurne Flamme  
Erlosch an meinem Mund. In der Stille  
Erstirbt der banger Seele einsame Saitenspiel. (I, p.82)

In the prose poem 'Traum und Umnachtung' the soul is again identified as the source of song: 'O, die Seele, die leise das Lied des vergilbten Rohrs sang ...' (I, p.147).

Poetic creativity, therefore, like music, draws its strength from the resources of the soul, and takes its subject matter from the decaying external world, and in this way mediates between the two. Trakl's main symbol for this mediation is that of the sister. 'An die Schwester' is the first instance in his work of a reference to the sister being linked with the theme of musicality:

Wo du gehst wird Herbst und Abend,  
Blaues Wild, das unter Bäumen tönt,  
Einsamer Weiher am Abend.

Leise der Flug der Vögel tönt,  
Die Schwermut über deinen Augenbogen.  
Dein schmales Lächeln tönt.

Gott hat deine Lider verbogen.  
Sterne suchen nachts, Karfreitagskind,  
Deinen Stirnenbogen. (I, p.57)

Here the threefold repetition of the verb 'tönen' conveys the impression that the sister is radiating harmony. She is particularly receptive to the resonance of the soul as her vision is re-directed towards the inward realm - 'Gott hat deine Lider verbogen'. Yet at the same time the nouns 'Schwermut' and 'Karfreitagskind' denote her participation in human suffering. This is why Trakl can identify her with his favourite ambiguous images of 'Herbst' and 'Abend' in the first line, for, like these, she is able to combine two opposite poles of human experience. In other poems, too, she is brought into close proximity to antithetical images in order to provide a reconciliation between them. In the last stanza of 'Die Schwermut' she fulfils this function in the figure of 'die Mönchin':

Herbstesnacht so kühle kommt,  
Erglänzt mit Sternen  
Über zerbrochenem Männergebein  
Die stille Mönchin. (I, p.161)

By reflecting the light of the stars while contemplating a scene symbolic of human despair she provides a point of reference to which both extremes can be related.

The balance achieved in these poems is always a very delicate one, and in the last two years of his life a development becomes apparent in Trakl's work which threatens to move too far in the direction of a purely inward, 'soul-evoking' vision at the expense of external reality. While in 'Dämmerung', in spite of its blurred contours, it was still possible to locate the presence of a poetic observer who was attempting to transmit fleeting glimpses of the perceived world, in poems such as 'Passion', written in early 1914, this is no longer possible.

Es rauscht die Klage das herbstliche Rohr,  
Der blaue Teich,  
Hinsterbend unter grünenden Bäumen  
Und folgend dem Schatten der Schwester. (I, p.125)

Here the syntactical relationship of nouns, participles, and verbs is highly uncertain, and the various parts of the sentence, like the fragments of the landscape, have no visible order or centre of gravity. All these elements, coupled with the use of vague substantives in the rest of the poem, such as 'Ruhendes' and 'Äugendes', the preponderance of abstract phrases like 'Dunkle Liebe / Eines wilden Geschlechts', and the appearance of the sister as a poetic symbol rather than a visual perception, combine to communicate an impression of a realm far removed from a recognisable material reality, evoked more from within the poet himself than from the external world.

This tendency finds its culmination in some poems Trakl wrote between May and August 1914. Here the mimetic is now almost totally replaced by an elegiac style, the poet no longer attempting to reproduce but to evoke, and hence the repeated use of 'ihr', 'du' and 'O':

Ihr grauen Türme  
Überfließend von höllischen Fratzen,  
Feurigem Getier,  
Rauhen Farnen, Fichten,  
Kristallinen Blumen. (I, p.160)

This sequence of short phrases conveys a reality stemming largely from the poet's imagination and thus independent of causal connections. In these poems the diminishing importance of phenomena pertaining to the world of decay is still more noticeable. This is more apparent in the disappearance of that which exemplifies its rottenness most vividly, man himself. All traces of human involvement are now erased and make way for an uninhabited mountain landscape:

Menschenleeres Gebirge,  
Des Herbstes goldner Odem,  
Abendwolke -  
Reinheit! (I, p.162)

It seems as if this purity can only be achieved when the presence of man is removed, preparing the way for the soul to reveal itself in its untarnished beauty. Instead of overcoming the dualism between soul and world in these poems, therefore, Trakl actually succeeds in re-establishing their separation. This is exemplified in 'Der Abend', another poem from the same period:

So bläulich erstrahlt es  
Gegen die Stadt hin,  
Wo kalt und böse  
Ein verwesend Geschlecht wohnt, ... (I, p.159)

By means of the preposition 'gegen', the colour blue, employed by Trakl to signify spiritual values, is set in clear opposition to the world inhabited by man.

This phase of Trakl's writing could perhaps be compared to the inward spirituality of Sorge's later work, but whereas Sorge - in spite of his experiences of trench warfare in 1914 - increasingly devotes himself to a purely spiritual realm, in Trakl's case the impact of the war brings about a certain reversal of direction in his poetry. Instead of continuing the inward tendencies of his more elegiac phase, in his last few poems he turns his attention back to a more recognisable world, dominated by the suffering of the war, and at the same time implicitly re-asserts his belief in poetry as a mediating factor.

In 'Grodek', the last poem Trakl wrote before his death, it seems at first that a dualism is once more firmly established, but this time with hopelessness and decay as the dominant factors:

Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder  
Von tödlichen Waffen, die goldnen Ebenen  
Und blauen Seen, darüber die Sonne  
Düstrer hinrollt; umfängt die Nacht  
Sterbende Krieger, die wilde Klage  
Ihrer zerbrochenen Münder. (I, p.167)

These lines skilfully compress the tensions between hope and despair noted in earlier poems, but in this case Trakl divides his lines in such a way as to accentuate their opposition even more forcefully. The autumnal beauty of the opening arouses expectations which are immediately shattered by the reference to 'tödlichen Waffen'. After this the original mood is resumed, conveyed by images of sun and sea, only to be dashed again by 'düstrer hinrollt', and the same pattern continues in the following lines. It is true that these oppositions are softened to a certain extent by the presence of some of the ambivalent features which are so typical of Trakl's verse- by the inclusion of both 'Abend' and 'herbstlich' in the opening line, and by the way in which the musicality of 'tönen' binds together the contrasting phrases 'die herbstlichen Wälder' and 'von tödlichen

Waffen' - but by the middle of the poem the extreme of despair appears to be victorious. Trakl sees no escape from its omnipresence - 'Alle Straßen münden in schwarze Verwesung'.

It is at this point in the poem, however, that the figure of the sister appears, and the reconciliation she is about to bring is heralded by the elegance of the poet's alliteration:

Unter goldnem Gezweig der Nacht und Sternen  
Es schwankt der Schwester Schatten durch den schweigenden  
Hain,  
Zu grüßen die Geister der Helden, die blutenden Häupter.

Her mediating role consists in the fact that she alone can relate to both the beauty of 'das goldene Gezweig' and the suffering of the soldiers. Here Trakl's line division is again important, as it reflects the function of the sister: the description of her movement in the middle line acts as the fulcrum of the longer sentence, holding together the extremes of the lines which come before and after. The sister, moreover, does not assume a straightforwardly physical form but appears as a shadow; in this respect she is reminiscent of figures such as Elis, for she too participates in both the physical realm as well as in the intangibility of a spiritual dimension.

By once more giving prominence to the themes of human conflict and suffering and by re-emphasising the mediation of the sister Trakl thus reiterates the role of art which emerged from many of his pre-1914 poems. After a short phase in which his poetry served only to express the inward purity of the soul, he again regards it as a conciliatory force which unites two extremes. In the end, therefore, Trakl reaffirms a view of the poetic image which ascribes to it far greater possibilities than Sorge could have accepted. For Sorge the presence of elusive imagery serves to reflect the poet's impotence to describe the object of his experience, and consequently it gives way more and more to the language of revelation. Trakl, on the other hand, unable to accept the framework of Christian belief upon which this revelation is based, turns to a different kind of mediation in the activity of writing itself. Instead of viewing the elusive image as a symptom of defeat he extends and exploits it in every way possible. All of his techniques of ambiguity hover between two dimensions, just as his use of verbs like 'huschen' and

'ahnen' conveys the impression of something half-seen and half-understood, and thus by the same token indicates an area which transcends perception and comprehension. It is the very movement between the seemingly irreconcilable realms of the comprehensible and the incomprehensible which Trakl grasps as the possibility of mediation, and he brings this to its most crystallised form in the image of the sister.

He is under no illusion, however, that his poetic mediation can provide a lasting way of overcoming the dualism of his outlook. The immediate consequence of the sister's appearance in 'Grodek' is a musical resonance that suggests the triumph of artistic creativity over suffering and death - 'Und leise tönen im Rohr die dunklen Flöten des Herbstes ...' - and yet the harmony of the flutes is described here as 'dunkel'. The poem concludes, not with the gentleness of their music, but with a stark juxtaposition of the inner and outer worlds:

Die heiße Flamme des Geistes nährt heute ein gewaltiger  
Schmerz,  
Die ungeborenen Enkel.

In the closing phrase Trakl seems to imply that this dualism will continue to plague those that come after him. The fact that Trakl was himself aware of the limitations of his poetic mediation is reflected in an aphorism that was written at about the same time as 'Grodek':

Gefühl in den Augenblicken totenähnlichen Seins: Alle Menschen sind der Liebe wert. Erwachend fühlst du die Bitternis der Welt; darin ist alle deine ungelöste Schuld; dein Gedicht eine unvollkommene Sühne. (I, p.463)

In these lines he describes poetry as a mediation between love, the emotion which characterises his periods of an intense, inward, death-like state of consciousness set apart from the living world, and the bitter despair he experiences on re-awakening to reality. The reconciliation that poetry affords, however, is seen to be only imperfect.

It was probably Trakl's high estimation of the inherent possibilities of the poetic image that attracted Rilke to his work. Rilke's comment of 1917 - 'In der Geschichte des Gedichts sind die Bücher Trakls wichtige Beiträge zur Befreiung der dichter-



Here again the same contrasts come to the surface - on the one hand the serenity of the forest pond, expressed particularly in the phrase 'in sich eingekehrter', reminiscent of the circular, self-enclosed perfection of many of the subjects treated in the Neue Gedichte, and on the other the elemental forces of wind and ocean. In the third section of the poem Rilke portrays his own dilemma as one who is aware of both:

Dann: im teilnahmslosen Zimmer sein,  
einer sein, der beides weiß ...  
Soll ich mich des Sturmmeers jetzt entsinnen  
oder Bild des Teichs in mir behüten  
oder, weil mir beide gleich entrinnen,  
Blüten denken -, jenes Garten Blüten -? (II, p.80)

While conscious of their existence he is unable to do justice to either side, as both elude his poetic grasp - 'weil mir beide gleich entrinnen'. His inability to achieve a satisfactory depiction even of the forest pond is an indication of the fact that by now he has fully recognised the inadequacy of his earlier aesthetic. Instead of an harmonious unity he is now faced with what he refers to later in the poem as 'die unvereinlichsten Kontraste', and yet his desire for such a unity still remains:

Daß mich Eines ganz ergreifen möge.  
Schauernd barg ich meine Stirn,  
denn ich weiß: die Liebe überwöge. (II, p.80)

The concept of love, however, remains undefined in this poem, and thus tends to reflect Rilke's hope for a possible mediation between the irreconcilable contrasts rather than his actual discovery of such a solution.

The tension described in 'Waldteich ...' is also that which confronts Rilke in the Duineser Elegien and which forms the backcloth against which any development in these poems has to be seen. The fact that he begins the First Elegy by expressing once more the intensity of this problem demonstrates the significance he attaches to it. This time, however, he approaches it by introducing the image of the angel:

Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel  
Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme  
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem  
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terischen Figur'<sup>15</sup> - is an indication of his belief that they were both pursuing similar aims in their work. Although it is evident from his letters that Rilke's appreciation of Trakl was a lasting one, his comments on his contemporary are few and are always couched in language which centres upon his own poetic concerns rather than a detailed discussion of Trakl's work. Yet, when the two poets are compared, it emerges that Rilke's instinctive sense of affinity is perhaps more firmly grounded than even he surmised, for in his later work he follows a poetic direction which is related to that taken by Trakl in a variety of ways.

In our analysis of some of the Neue Gedichte and of Malte we saw how the writer was caught in a tension between that which he could express and that which burst the bounds of poetic language, between what he himself refers to as 'das Greifbare' and 'das Unfaßliche'. The latter pole emerged with the greatest intensity in Malte and thus enabled us to discuss its characteristics in more detail, as well as its correspondence to Otto's conception of the 'Other'. If we now follow Rilke's development through the second decade of this century, the period in which he was struggling with the creation of his Duineser Elegien, we shall see that the same tension remains at the centre of his work and that the Elegien, as well as Die Sonette an Orpheus and the late poems, are conceived as a response to it. To attempt a systematic analysis of Rilke's late work would, of course, be too ambitious a project in the present context, as any account which wished to improve upon those of Steiner, Fülleborn, Allemann and others would need to devote much more space to the subject than is possible here.<sup>16</sup> Instead, the following argument will restrict itself to those themes and motifs which are most pertinent to the subject under discussion.

The Duineser Elegien were written over a period of ten years, between 1912 and 1922, and the length of time Rilke took to complete them itself bears witness to the difficulties of the problem which confronted him, a problem which he recapitulates in a poem from the beginning of this period:

Waldteich, weicher, in sich eingekehrter -,  
draußen ringt das ganze Meer und braust,  
aufgeregte Fernen drücken Schwerter  
jedem Sturmstoß in die Faust -,  
während du aus dunkler unversehrter  
Tiefe Spiele der Libellen schaust. (II, pp.79-80)

Here again the same contrasts come to the surface - on the one hand the serenity of the forest pond, expressed particularly in the phrase 'in sich eingekehrter', reminiscent of the circular, self-enclosed perfection of many of the subjects treated in the Neue Gedichte, and on the other the elemental forces of wind and ocean. In the third section of the poem Rilke portrays his own dilemma as one who is aware of both:

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als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen,  
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen verschmäh't,  
uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.  
(I, p.685)

By associating the angel with 'das Schreckliche' Rilke is able to compress into one image many of the factors that had thrown into question his earlier aesthetic. In Malte the experience of death, of the complexity of the self, and of an uncanny, invisible realm had each generated a fear which Malte gradually began to recognise as a reflection of an indescribable 'Otherness' - 'wir entsetzen uns vor seiner äußersten Großheit' (VI, p.862). The sources of this fear reappear in the Elegien: in his references to 'die Frühentrückten', for example, Rilke returns to the problem of death, through the images of the doll and the dancer he takes up the question of the unity of the self, and he develops the theme of invisibility into the motif of the absent lover. In these poems Rilke brings each of these themes to a focus in the figure of the angel. The angel, for instance, possesses a consciousness in which contrasts such as life and death, or presence and absence, become reunited:

Aber Lebendige machen  
alle den Fehler, daß sie zu stark unterscheiden.  
Engel (sagt man) wüßten oft nicht, ob sie unter  
Lebenden gehn oder Toten. (I, p.688)

While this is a condition to which the poet himself aspires, it is in fact so far beyond his reach that in the First Elegy he is repelled by its awesomeness and thus still perceives it as something disturbing.

Having outlined the disparity between himself and the angel in the opening lines of the First Elegy, Rilke immediately moves on to the opposite side of his dilemma - his relationship to his everyday environment:

Es bleibt uns vielleicht  
irgend ein Baum an dem Abhang, daß wir ihn täglich  
wiedersähen; es bleibt uns die Straße von gestern  
und das verzogene Treusein einer Gewohnheit ... (I, p.685)

His choice of the adjective 'verzogen' expresses the idea that even man's perception of objects close to him can be distorted by their very familiarity. Between Rilke's description of his

exclusion from the realm of the angels and his alienation from the world around him comes his pessimistic assessment of man's uneasy state of suspension:

Ach, wen vermögen  
wir denn zu brauchen? Engel nicht, Menschen nicht,  
und die findigen Tiere merken es schon,  
daß wir nicht sehr verlässlich zu Haus sind  
in der gedeuteten Welt. (I, p.685)

He is, in other words, caught between the inexpressible and the over-familiar and is unable to come to terms with either.

In the face of a similar separation of two spheres of perception, Trakl had begun to feel his way towards a resolution by transforming the negative manifestation of this opposition into a relationship in which the ambiguity of his language and structures played a mediating role. The path which Rilke follows bears a close resemblance to this, for he too endeavours to harness the dynamism of what at first are perceived to be opposing forces and to change it into a mediating paradox. In the first instance this can be illustrated by examining a development in Rilke's use of imagery connected with the motifs of earth and water. It is already apparent in the First Elegy that Rilke, in response to the complexity of his theme, resorts to both discursive language ('die gedeutete Welt') and poetic imagery ('Engel', 'Lockruf') in order to express his ideas with the utmost possible lucidity. This is characteristic of the Elegien as a whole, and one of the clearest examples of the fusion of these two modes of expression appears at the end of the Second Elegy:

Fänden auch wir ein reines, verhaltenes, schmales  
Menschliches, einen unseren Streifen Fruchtlands  
zwischen Strom und Gestein. Denn das eigene Herz  
übersteigt uns  
noch immer wie jene. Und wir können ihm nicht mehr  
nachschaun in Bilder, die es besänftigen, noch in  
göttliche Körper, in denen es größer sich mäßigt.  
(I, p.692)

Here the word 'denn' in the third line connects the two different uses of language, and at the same time justifies an interpretation of the imagery of the first three lines in terms of the tension conveyed by the last three. Just as in 'Waldteich ...' the poet had cried out for a resolving unity - 'Daß mich Eines ganz er-

greifen möge' - here too he uses the subjunctive to communicate his overwhelming desire for a point of balance which can hold together the antitheses of 'Strom' and 'Gestein'. At the moment he is only able to find an approximation of what he considers this balance to be, and he does so by means of the compound 'Fruchtland', which denotes the firmness of the earth as well as the water to which it owes its fertility.

If we now move forward ten years - from the Second Elegy, written in 1912, to the last of Die Sonette an Orpheus, written in early 1922 - we are able to see Rilke still employing the same type of imagery, but now his reconciliation of opposites is quite different:

Und wenn dich das Irdische vergaß,  
zu der stillen Erde sag: Ich rinne.  
Zu dem raschen Wasser sprich: Ich bin. (I, p.771)

What has happened within these ten years is that the poet has moved away from a static towards a more dynamic type of mediation between two opposites. While the 'Fruchtland' of the Second Elegy is able to bind together the contrasts of earth and water, it still denotes firm, solid land which is there to be possessed. In the sonnet, on the other hand, Rilke's unification of opposites consists in an intangible, invisible motion between them, which, by virtue of its double direction, paradoxically holds them together. The transition from stability to movement in his use of these images is perhaps Rilke's most striking illustration of his much-quoted comment in a letter to Ilse Jahr: 'Das Faßliche entgeht, verwandelt sich, statt des Besitzes erlernt man den Bezug'.<sup>17</sup> It is by no means the only example, however, for the same type of paradoxical mediation occurs in the very last lines of the Tenth Elegy, also written in 1922:

Und wir, die an steigendes Glück  
denken, empfänden die Rührung,  
die uns beinah bestürzt,  
wenn ein Glückliches fällt. (I, p.726)

Here Rilke presents the paradox in terms of an almost abstract figure, combining the motions of rising and falling in a manner reminiscent of Trakl's 'Es steigt und sinkt des Rohres Regung'.

When Rilke's lines are considered within the context of the Tenth Elegy as a whole, it becomes clear that he is not just



the abstract interplay of movement with which the poem ends are connected by two similes:

Aber erweckten sie uns, die unendlich Toten, ein Gleichnis,  
siehe, sie zeigten vielleicht auf die Kätzchen der leeren  
Hasel, die hängenden, oder  
meinten den Regen, der fällt auf dunkles Erdreich im  
Frühjahr. - (I, p.726)

By comparing those who die young with the catkins and the rain, Rilke wishes to point out the identity of 'descent', in spite of its otherwise negative associations, with beauty and fertility respectively.

Thus the sense of the omnipresence of death which in Malte had disrupted the discipline and routine of everyday life has now become assimilated into Rilke's thinking by virtue of a paradoxical affirmation. It is this that he tries to explain in his well-known letter to his Polish translator in 1925:

In den 'Elegien' wird ... das Leben wieder möglich, ja es erfährt hier diejenige endgültige Bejahung, zu der es der junge Malte noch nicht führen konnte. Lebens- und Todesbejahung erweist sich als Eines ...<sup>18</sup>

The same type of affirmation could be traced in other themes that appear in the Elegien, in Rilke's treatment of self-identity and absence, but in this context it is more important to follow a similar development that takes place in his attitude to poetry itself.

Rather than concede the inevitability of silence as the only appropriate response to the incomprehensibility of the 'Other', Rilke had, in 'Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens', attempted by the technique of analogy to extend the area which poetic language is able to encompass. By the Ninth Elegy, however, Rilke has reached the point where he is prepared to admit the futility of such endeavours, and can write:

Preise dem Engel die Welt, nicht die unsägliche, ihm  
kannst du nicht großtun mit herrlich Erfühltem;  
im Weltall,  
wo er fühlender fühlt, bist du ein Neuling. Drum zeig  
ihm das Einfache, das, von Geschlecht zu Geschlechtern  
gestaltet,  
als ein Unsriges lebt, neben der Hand und im Blick.  
Sag ihm die Dinge ... (I, p.719)



Thus he calls upon the poet to concentrate his attention upon the objects of his own world instead of aspiring towards that which transcends his comprehension. This advice, especially when read in conjunction with the lines 'oh zu sagen so, wie selber die Dinge niemals / innig meinten zu sein' (I, p.718), seems at first to constitute a return to the aesthetic of the Neue Gedichte and thus to represent no progress beyond the tension outlined in the First Elegy. Such a conclusion would be unfounded, however, because the previous tension, in which angel, man and world were depicted in isolation from each other, has now been superseded by an interrelationship in which each plays a vital role. All three are included in the command 'Preise dem Engel die Welt', for here Rilke advocates a description by man of familiar objects in the light of the angel's existence. He believes that only in this way can these objects be released from the restrictions imposed upon them by human perception, and declares to the angel '... in deinem Anschauen / steh es gerettet zuletzt ...' (I, p.712).

Rilke had already glimpsed the possibility of this type of reconciliation when he wrote in 1915: 'Diese, nicht mehr von Menschen aus, sondern im Engel geschaute Welt, ist vielleicht meine wirkliche Aufgabe'.<sup>19</sup> With these words he implies that the angel, previously a threat to his creativity, now becomes the precondition for his further development as a poet, and thus in this area also the paradoxical nature of his solution is evident. In his mediating function between the world and the angel, moreover, the poet has to be constantly aware of the dynamic character of his work, for he is trying to reproduce the rotation between the two poles upon which it depends. It is these two aspects of his changing attitude to the role of poetry which underlie the paradoxical dynamism that concludes the Elegien as well as Rilke's emphasis upon the concept of 'Bezug' at this time, for he realises that harmony can only be achieved when the static poles of a contrast can be dissolved into a motion that binds them together.

It is for this reason that Beda Allemann, in Zeit und Figur beim späten Rilke, suggests that it is more helpful to speak of movements ('Bewegungen') rather than symbols when discussing Rilke's late work.<sup>20</sup> Rilke's problem in some of the Elegien, however, as Allemann himself goes on to point out,

is that as a result of his own consciousness of the poet's function as the focal point of these movements their dynamic quality can become impeded. In the Seventh Elegy Rilke writes 'Nirgends, Geliebte, wird Welt sein, als Innen' (I, p.711), and in the Ninth Elegy:

Wollen, wir sollen sie ganz im unsichtbarn Herzen  
verwandeln  
in - o unendlich - in uns! Wer wir am Ende auch seien.  
Erde, ist es nicht dies, was du willst: unsichtbar  
in uns erstehn? (I, pp.719-20)

Through this repeated emphasis upon his own inwardness he tends to confine and restrict his reconciliation to a personal, introspective sphere and thus reintroduces not only a static element into his work but also a different manifestation of his earlier tension, this time in terms of an antithesis between an inner and an external reality.

In Die Sonette an Orpheus, however, this particular danger is no longer apparent, and this is perhaps due to a transference of emphasis from a self-conscious concern with the role of the poet to a less intense manner of writing revolving around the theme of musicality. Music occupies a prominent position in Rilke's later work as a result of his growing conviction that it represents a more perfect form of expression than the written word. This already emerges in 1918 in the poem 'An die Musik', where he addresses music as 'Du Sprache wo Sprachen / enden'. In the course of the same poem he goes on to explain his fascination for this particular artistic form:

Du Fremde: Musik. Du uns entwachsener  
Herzraum. Innigstes unser,  
das, uns übersteigend, hinausdrängt, -  
heiliger Abschied:  
da uns das Innre umsteht  
als geübteste Ferne ... (II, p.111)

In spite of the fact that it is composed by man, it possesses the ability to confront him as something strange; in other words it can permeate both an inward and an outward reality and thus establish a unity between them. The first of Die Sonette an Orpheus merely reproduces the ideas of 'An die Musik' in a slightly different form, even repeating the same verb 'übersteigen' to describe the power of music:

Da stieg ein Baum. O reine Übersteigung!  
O Orpheus singt! O hoher Baum im Ohr! (I, p.731)

In the personified form of Orpheus music fulfils the same function of unification. These two lines begin with the visible, physical presence of the tree and conclude with its penetration into the inward realm, but in the middle comes the figure of Orpheus, whose song mediates between the two dimensions, encompassing both. The phrase 'reine Übersteigung' reinforces the dynamic nature of this activity. It is not difficult to find examples from other sonnets where Orpheus is described in a similar way:

Ist er ein Hiesiger? Nein, aus beiden  
Reichen erwuchs seine weite Natur. (I, p.734)

Apart from revealing his participation in two worlds, these lines also remind us that Orpheus fulfils the same function as Elis and the sister in Trakl's poetry, both of whom mediated between an inner and outer reality as well as being closely associated with the theme of music.

Both Rilke and Trakl, therefore, attempt to discover in their poetry a means of overcoming the dualisms and tensions which are also present in their work. Rilke, like Trakl, is unable to accept Sorge's adoption of religious imagery as a viable solution, and thus he too explores the possibility of a dynamic mediation by means of poetic images and structures. Although it is more helpful when discussing Rilke's work to speak of paradoxical imagery, whereas in Trakl's case the term ambivalence springs more readily to mind, in the final analysis the function of paradox and ambivalence is identical. In each case the poet is seeking to overcome the disturbing elusiveness of the 'Other' by indicating the intimate correlation between its - from a human perspective - positive and negative manifestations. Ambivalence and paradox are used in order to reflect the fact that this is not just a force which threatens or questions the writer's creativity, but also one which, in Trakl's poetry, can be seen as its source, and in Rilke's work, as its validation.

In this respect, the poet's employment of such techniques resembles the intention behind the dialectical theologians' use of the term krisis, for here too the same double movement of

breaking down and building up was apparent. It is because the theologians considered this krisis to be concentrated in the figure of Christ, moreover, that there are such close similarities between their representation of him and the poets' search for mediation. In the theology of Barth and Bultmann, Christ emerges not only as an intangible figure, but also as one in whom the paradoxical, dialectical movement between God and man becomes focussed - 'verbindend hier was gewohnheitsmäßig auseinanderstrebt ... scheidend dort, was gewohnheitsmäßig ineinanderfließen will ...' (Rb, p.88). Neither poet nor theologian, therefore, is ultimately interested in the fixed and static points of an opposition, whether this is expressed in terms of God and man, past and present, soul and world, angel and poet, or even in the images 'Strom' and 'Gestein', but is concerned in each case to explore the possibility of a dynamic mediation between the two, in which all antitheses are dissolved.

When this comparison is pursued one stage further it becomes apparent that both the theological and the literary forms of mediation are rooted in a similar problem. In the case of Barth and Bultmann we were able to show that their Christology was a response to an increased sense of the relativising processes of history, and that by describing Christ in terms of an intangible paradox they had rendered belief in him immune from the destructive power of time. The poets, too, can be considered against this background. Trakl touches upon the theme of time only indirectly by means of the recurrent motifs of 'Verfall' and 'Verwesung', but in Rilke's work it receives much more explicit treatment and becomes one of his predominant concerns in the Duineser Elegien. In the Second Elegy, for example, he introduces the subject of the transience of human emotions:

Denn wir, wo wir fühlen, verflüchtigen; ach wir  
atmen uns aus und dahin; von Holzglut zu Holzglut  
geben wir schwächern Geruch. Da sagt uns wohl einer:  
ja, du gehst mir ins Blut, dieses Zimmer, der Frühling  
füllt sich mit dir ... Was hilfts, er kann uns nicht halten,  
wir schwinden in ihm und um ihn. (I, pp.689-90)

By his use of 'schwinden', a verb which appears again in later Elegies, rather than, for example, 'vergehen', Rilke lends an added intensity to the oppressive awareness of the passing of time. It is not only the emotions which are subject to this process, however, but also the objects which surround the poet -

'Unser / Leben geht hin mit Verwandlung. Und immer geringer / schwindet das Außen ...' (I, p.711). Rilke explains this aspect of the Elegien in his letter to Hulewicz, in which he claims that the changes in man's environment have been greatly accelerated by the influx of manufactured 'Scheindinge', which, he maintains, are gradually replacing the more durable objects man had previously possessed.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Rilke moves beyond a purely negative conception of time, and in the Seventh Elegy suggests an alternative perspective:

Denn eine Stunde war jeder, vielleicht nicht  
ganz eine Stunde, ein mit den Maßen der Zeit kaum  
Meßliches zwischen zwei Weilen -, ... (I, p.711)

Here he speaks of an experience which takes place within time and nevertheless is not measurable in terms of time. As such it holds out the hope of a redemption from the transitoriness of everything human. Yet because it is something which occurs within temporality Rilke does not want it to be understood as a flight out of time, but rather as its culmination and fulfilment: 'Die Vergänglichkeit stürzt überall in ein tiefes Sein'.<sup>22</sup> This comment, again taken from the letter of 1925, had already been expressed in poetic form in a fragment written in 1914-15:

Du nur, einzig du bist.  
Wir aber gehn hin, bis einmal  
unsres Vergehens so viel ist,  
daß du entstehst: Augenblick, ... (II, p.431)

The second line of this verse emphasises that the new awareness of time, the 'Augenblick', only comes into being when transience has been experienced to its full intensity. Like death, absence and silence, it has to be affirmed before it can turn round to reveal its opposite aspect.

What these examples demonstrate, therefore, is that Rilke is drawing on two different concepts of time. As Allemann says, it is essential in Rilke's later poetry to distinguish:

... grob gesprochen zwischen dem negativen, der sich aus der Erfahrung der schlechten Vergänglichkeit ergibt, und einem fundamentalen anderen, 'positiven' Zeitbegriff, der die Fülle der Zeit, die höhere Gleichzeitigkeit meint.<sup>23</sup>

Here again his work reveals close parallels to the theology of Barth and Bultmann, for they too, in their respective concepts of 'Urgeschichte' and 'Geschichtlichkeit', felt it necessary to draw a distinction between the normal course of history and a different plane of time which is rooted in a spiritual dimension. Rilke's similarity to Barth in this respect sometimes extends even to the details of the language he uses to clarify this division. This can be seen not only in his reference to the 'Augenblick' in the poem already quoted, but more strikingly in the poem 'An die Musik':

Du Zeit,  
die senkrecht steht auf der Richtung  
vergehender Herzen. (II, p.111)

where he almost exactly reproduces Barth's notion of the 'moment' touching the horizontal plane of human existence vertically from above.

Rilke, like his theological contemporaries, is concerned to secure an area of existence which is free from the threat of transitoriness, and, in his later work, he frequently implies that this unassailable 'fulness of time' can be attained in the process of creativity. He believes that the ephemeral quality of external reality can be redeemed through the activity of 'rühmen', and that is primarily the role of the poet:

Und diese, von Hingang  
lebenden Dinge verstehn, daß du sie rühmst,  
vergänglich,  
traun sie ein Rettendes aus, den Vergänglichsten, zu.  
(I, p.719)

In elevating these objects on to an invisible plane, no longer subject to the passing of time, the poet, in the sonnets, then becomes identified with the figure of Orpheus, whose song also transcends the human dimensions of space and time:

Über dem Wandel und Gang,  
weiter und freier,  
währt noch dein Vor-Gesang,  
Gott mit der Leier. (I, p.743)

Thus, while the theologians find the ultimate manifestation of the 'moment' or of 'Geschichtlichkeit' in Christ - 'Eben das ist aber der Sinn des kritischen Augenblicks (der Auferstehung

oder des Glaubens), daß ... er die Zweiheit in der vermeinten Einheit des Menschen offenbar macht, nicht nur Scheidung, sondern mit der Scheidung Ent-Scheidung zwischen den Gegenständen herbei(führt)' (Rb, p.143) - Rilke, on the other hand, believes it can be realised in the poetic work itself. His poem addressed to 'der Augenblick', which was quoted earlier, continues:

daß du entstehst: Augenblick,  
schöner, plötzlicher,  
in der Liebe entstehst oder,  
entzückt, in des Werkes Verkürzung. (II, p.431)

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### Conclusion

The preceding discussion has restricted itself to a small number of writers and theologians in the interest of a more detailed investigation of the role of dualism and mediation in their work than would have been conceivable in a general survey. By limiting the scope of the analysis in this way it has been possible firstly to indicate the complex interplay of factors that helped give rise to the tendency towards a Gnostic dualism in this period, and secondly to show how this tendency influences not only the surface content, but also the very images and structures of the works in question. The points which have emerged, however, do have broader applications, and these can be located in at least two areas.

In the case of Sorge, Trakl and Rilke a close connection was apparent between a view of God or the soul as separate from the world and a preference for a poetic language best characterised by terms such as intangibility, elusiveness or dynamism. These same categories can also be applied to other writers of the period, and can help to clarify a distinction between different religious attitudes that has often been overlooked in previous critical analyses. A brief comparison of the imagery used by Kurt Heynicke and Hugo Ball, for example, is in itself sufficient to demonstrate the contrasting nature of their religious views. Heynicke's poem 'Gesang' begins with a series of abstract concepts, unaccompanied by any perceptual or tangible vocabulary, except for the adjective 'blau':

In mir ist blauer Himmel;  
ich trage die Erde,  
trage die Liebe,  
mich  
und die Freude.<sup>1</sup>

Yet although words such as 'Himmel', 'Liebe' and 'Freude' remain disembodied concepts, they in no way share the elusive intangibility expressed by the other writers considered so far. They possess, in contrast, a certain static quality, which is enhanced by the simplicity of verbs such as 'sein' and 'tragen'. Even the verb 'fließen' in the following stanza evokes an impression of a restful, gentle movement:



Sonne kniet vor mir,  
aufsteigt das Korn,  
ewiger Born fließt über die Lenden der Erde.

Just as the abstractions 'love' and 'joy' in the first stanza are fully contained within the poet's consciousness - 'In mir ist blauer Himmel' - here too the beauty of the more concrete nouns 'Sonne' and 'Korn' is easily encompassed within his field of vision.

In Hugo Ball's poem 'Entrückt und nah', on the other hand, a different picture emerges:

Entrückt und nah, belebend und doch Schein,  
So seh ich, Liebste, dich vor mir errichtet.  
Ein Umriß, der vor meinen Blicken flüchtet  
Und dem es doch bestimmt ist, Bild zu sein.  
Die Hände haben längst darauf verzichtet  
Zu fassen nach Gestalt von Fleisch und Bein ...<sup>2</sup>

The last two lines quoted make it clear that Ball too is dealing with a disembodied image in which all physical characteristics are absent, and yet his use of the verbs 'flüchten' and 'entrücken' in the first stanza supplements this intangibility by providing it with an atmosphere of dynamism which Heynicke's poem lacks. Unlike Heynicke, he is not able to assert his control over his perceptions and thus his imagery hovers uncertainly between a condition of presence and absence, nearness and distance.

In neither of these poems do the authors deal explicitly with religious themes, and yet the nature of their poetic language already provides a clear indication of their contrasting viewpoints. In the case of Heynicke and Ball this can be substantiated by considering their more direct treatment of religious questions in other poems. In 'Lieder an Gott', for example, Heynicke expresses his belief in the essential unity and identity of man and God:

Dein Willen will mich an mich binden,  
gottüberströmt will ich den Ursprung finden,  
Herr, ich bin wie Du! ...  
Du hast mich hoch gebaut.  
Du gibst mein Haupt in Deinen Schoß,  
tief meine Glieder in den Staub der Erde.<sup>3</sup>

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Herr, ich bin wie Du! ...  
Du hast mich hoch gebaut.  
Du gibst mein Haupt in Deinen Schoß,  
tief meine Glieder in den Staub der Erde.<sup>3</sup>

Here man acts as the mediator between God and the world, participating freely in both realms. Ball's understanding of man's relationship to God forms a stark contrast to Heynicke's description of the harmony between the two. In 'Threnodie' he writes:

Mit deinen Toten  
Wie soll ich gehen?  
Mit deinen Lebenden  
Wie bestehen?  
In diesen Grüften,  
Wie muß ich rufen?  
Ach, nur ein Echo  
Trifft deine Stufen.  
  
In das Entsetzliche  
Bin ich verschlungen.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of nearness and familiarity he sees distance and separation, and this is accompanied, as in Rilke and Trakl, by a strong sense of disturbance at the awesomeness of the divine.

While Heynicke's static intangible imagery reflects his belief in a God who can be seen as an extension of the human aspirations of love and joy, Ball, working from a less optimistic assessment of man's situation, points to the existence of a spiritual world which eludes all human attempts to comprehend it, and in so doing denies all possible points of contact between the two spheres. This leads on to the second area in which the points emerging from the previous chapters can be more broadly applied. The writers and theologians who are concerned in their work to indicate the 'Otherness' of the spiritual dimension, in contrast to writers like Heynicke, attempt systematically to remove the traces of any possible foundations in human consciousness or experience which could blur this clear distinction between the human and the spiritual. The consequence of these endeavours is a tendency towards impersonality in their work, a concept relevant not only to several writers of the Expressionist period in Germany, but also one which has been used to describe certain trends in European 'Modernism' as a whole.

In reaction to a strong sense of the relativising forces of history the writers and theologians considered so far each posit the existence of a spiritual realm which, insofar as it possesses no point of contact with human reality, is immune from all temporality and decay. Trakl, in a letter of 1911, expresses

his desire to eradicate all personal traces from his poetry, and this clearly stems from his intention to evoke the impersonal beauty of 'die Seele' (I, p.485). In Rilke a similar aspiration is described in the Fifth Elegy by means of a poetic image:

Engell: Es wäre ein Platz, den wir nicht wissen, und dorten,  
auf unsäglichen Teppich, zeigten die Liebenden, die's hier  
bis zum Können nie bringen, ihre kühnen  
hohen Figuren des Herzschwungs,  
ihre Türme aus Lust, ihre  
längst, wo Boden nie war, nur an einander  
lehrenden Leitern, bebend, ... (I, p.705)

This 'place' is free from the inadequacy that characterises all human endeavour, for it is suspended in space with no point of connection to the world of time. Rilke's image finds its theological parallel in Barth's view of faith, which he describes in Der Römerbrief as 'der Stand in der Luft, außerhalb aller uns bekannten Standmöglichkeit', and again as 'kein Boden, auf den man sich stellen ... kann' (Rb, pp.68, 84-5).

In each of these examples, however, the tendency towards a greater impersonality at the same time reflects the fragility of the resolution being explored. In their attempts to describe a realm free from the fleetingness of human experience, neither poet nor theologian succeeds in overcoming the basic dualism of his outlook, but in reinforcing the separation between the 'Augenblick' on the one hand and a tangible historical reality on the other. This is the danger that was apparent in Sorge's later work, in Trakl's elegiac poems of 1914, in the excessive inwardness of some of the Duineser Elegien, and in the theologians' notion of faith in Christ as transpiring in an inward or spiritual realm with no empirical point of reference. The existence of this danger often prevents a successful realisation of the aims which are shared by the writers and theologians considered in this study, and these aims can, in conclusion, best be summarised by quoting some lines from T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Dry Salvages':

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is  
Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered and reconciled ...<sup>5</sup>

Whether this 'Incarnation' is sought in terms of the poetic image or through the mediation of Christ, it has to combine two otherwise antithetical 'spheres of existence'; but when an inclination towards timelessness and impersonality is emphasised to the neglect of man's historical experience, the possibility of such a reconciliation recedes.

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