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D. Emmet: 'THE GROUND OF BEING'¹

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THE phrase 'the Ground of Being' has come to a number of people's attention recently owing to the fact that the Bishop of Woolwich in *Honest to God* has used it as a possible way of speaking of a God who is not 'up there' or 'out there'. 'Ground' in ordinary speech certainly suggests something 'down there', though 'down' is of course as much a spatial metaphor as 'up', and the Bishop is not so naïve as not to know this. But the metaphor also appeals to him as seeming to offer a way of talking about 'Being' in which we are somehow 'grounded' without having to imagine 'a Being' apart from the world. The Bishop quotes Paul Tillich as the philosophical theologian to whom he is indebted for this way of thinking.

What, then, does Tillich mean by 'the Ground of Being'? I must confess that after having struggled with him over a number of years, I still find myself divided over whether it can be made into a helpful and meaningful notion or not. I shall, however, try to say what I think it comes to in Tillich, and then put forward two other suggestions (not his) as to what might be made of it.

Tillich himself stands in a tradition of German mystical and Romantic philosophy, into which has come an admixture of some of the scholastic language of Being and Essence via Heidegger, and of depth psychology via above all Erich Fromm. The inspiration of his way of thinking is not Hegel but Schelling. Tillich tells us that as a young man Schelling was his great illumination (he wrote his thesis on him), and behind Schelling stands the early seventeenth-century German cobbler, Jacob Boehme. Tillich has contributed a preface to a recent book on Boehme by J. J. Stouidt, *Sunrise to Eternity*,² where he says, 'If Protestant theology wants to penetrate the ontological implications of the Christian symbols, it would do well to use the ideas of Boehme more than those of Aristotle. In contrast to the *actus purus* of Aristotle, Boehme tried to describe in metaphysical-psychological symbols the *living* God in whom the roots of every life must be sought.' This is strong testimony.

Boehme was a Jacob master cobbler living in Görlitz in Silesia at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century.

¹ This paper is based on a lecture given to the Oxford Socratic Club on 28 February 1964.

² University of Pennsylvania Press: the title is an adaptation of 'Aurora', the title of one of Boehme's books.

He was a man of intense intellectual energy, self-taught and in addition to Lutheran theology widely read in the alchemistic and Hermetic (rather Jungian) kind of mystical literature following Paracelsus. He was something of a visionary: one would like to think that he was inspired by the experience he is said to have had when he saw light catching a copper bowl, dark against it as a background: at any rate this image symbolizes his way of thought. He struggles with the old question of God and evil, by trying to show how, as he puts it, 'Yes' and 'No' are in all things. It would be easy to dismiss him as a *Schwärmer*—a 'demonosopher' John Wesley called him. Coleridge in the Conclusion to the *Aids to Reflection* speaks of 'Mysticism all taken out of William Law after he had lost his senses, poor man! in brooding over the Visions of a delirious German Cobbler, Jacob Behmen'. But Coleridge's own thinking is not a thousand miles away from Boehme,¹ and the fact that William Law took him very seriously and drew heavily on him is impressive.² Boehme's conviction, then, was that 'Yes and No are in all things'. Behind all created beings, and even behind the first positive determination of being stands something quite indeterminate, a *Nichts*. Berdyaev,³ who also draws on Boehme, calls it 'a dark void which precedes all positive determination of being', and Berdyaev calls this 'meonic freedom': from $\mu\eta\ \delta\nu$ (as distinct from $\sigma\upsilon\kappa\ \delta\nu$) a sort of 'nothingness' which is nevertheless a source of creativity, like, he says, the state of chaos in the mind of an artist (if indeed the mind of an artist is like this). This formless, restless x Boehme calls not the Ground of Being, but the *Ungrund*, a bottomlessness beyond the *Grund*. It is also called an Abyss (and Tillich adopts this, speaking, rather unfortunately, about 'the abysmal God').

This notion goes beyond Boehme again to Meister Eckhart, in the early fourteenth century, though Boehme probably did not know Eckhart's writings, which were not published till the early nineteenth century. Eckhart also speaks of a *Grund* and an *Abgrund* and uses metaphors of darkness, the silent wilderness, 'nothingness'. But in his case I get the impression that he is giving the *via negativa* approach of a mystic rather than, as Boehme, trying to describe a kind of cosmology. Eckhart says that while the 'Godhead' is eternal, 'God' can appear and disappear: 'when all creatures pronounce his name, God comes into

¹ Cf., for instance, *Aids to Reflection*, Answers § 17, 'the obscure and *abysmal* subject of the Divine *A-seity* . . . the Ground of all Being'.

² See Stephen Hobhouse, *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law*, with studies of the influence of Boehme on Law and perhaps on Newton.

³ In *Freedom and the Spirit*. I owe the quotation to Martensen and Hobhouse, *Jacob Boehme*, p. 94, where other similar passages from Berdyaev are collected.

being';¹ here he probably means 'God' with his positive names depends on creatures (an echo here of the Pseudo-Dionysius), whereas the Godhead in itself is beyond the positive names. Tauler (1300–61) also speaks of the 'Divine Abyss' answering to the depth, abyss, in the human soul, and quotes very beautifully Psalm xlii. 7, 'Abyssus abyssum invocat'. It looks therefore as though, whether or not Boehme knew Eckhart, there is a recognizable tradition of German mysticism with which he was familiar. He speaks of an Abyss, an *Ungrund*, which is not just 'nothingness', since it contains a 'will', a craving towards being something, and from it there emerges a *Grund*. 'The unfathomable will has brought itself into a Ground.'

Even were I competent to do so, I do not need for the purposes of this paper to go into the exciting picture of the birth of a world which then ensues (it no doubt owes a great deal to Paracelsus and the alchemists). The relevant point is that the creativity producing the world is a union of the dark force in the *Ungrund* with the ordering formative power in the *Grund*, in which the image of wrath and the image of love both have a place. One problem, probably unanswerable, is whether Boehme sees the *Ungrund* as prior, producing the *Grund*, God as conscious will, in which case we have properly a *theogony* behind his cosmogony. Or are they distinguishable features of one reality, which contains unlimited free potentialities as well as a primordial determination? I do not know how Boehme would answer this question of priority; he certainly speaks of the *Ungrund producing a Grund*. Schelling tried to put this into a more systematic form, and he is a link in the chain to Tillich. I do not know him well enough to say whether he adds anything of importance philosophically. Like Boehme, he sees 'God' emerging from a primordial indeterminacy, which yet contains a craving or 'will' issuing in a free 'dark principle and an ideal 'light' principle. God emerges as actual in and through Nature—a continual dynamic process.² But the finite creatures in nature still have their root in the formless dark urge. This basic freedom leads to self-will and so to evil. Here Schelling claims he parts company with Spinozistic pantheism. (It seems as though to Schelling, if not to Boehme, the 'Prius' of Ground to God is not to be thought of temporarily—the dark formless background and the individual determinations are both necessary aspects of God.)

To turn now to Tillich. He takes all this over in essentials, but puts it into a language of Being and non-Being and of Structures of Being,

¹ Sermon XII. See *Meister Eckhart* by J. M. Clark, pp. 182–4.

² Cf. *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, Werke, vii. 357 ff. (Eng. trans. by J. Guttmann, Chicago, 1936).

influenced by Heidegger and the phenomenologists. Also he is aware of depth psychology. Nevertheless, the upshot is still basically this kind of metaphysical cosmology. He invokes what Heidegger calls the 'ontological shock': Why is there anything and not nothing? and paraphrases this as: What gives being the power of resisting non-being? Here 'non-being' sounds like not mere non-existence, but a sort of disintegration. The difficulty about Tillich's language about being and non-being is that he is continually switching among three senses of 'is' and 'is not':

- (a) the logical copula, making possible assertion and denial when completed by a predicate term;
- (b) the notion of existence contrasted with non-entity, literally nothing;
- (c) 'non-being' as not just non-entity but something formless, chaotic; where 'Being' becomes not only 'what is', but a teleological notion of a formative power 'conquering non-being'.

I get strongly tempted at this point to call down on his head the curses of the ancient Parmenides against people who try to talk as though non-being were a kind of being. Tillich's first line of defence against this is to distinguish sharply between Being and Existence. Existence he confines rather peremptorily to individuals limited by being this and not that, under conditions of Space and Time, and he cannot accept the notion of an existent not so limited. Hence, he insists, God cannot *exist*, and cannot indeed be *a* Being since this is to think of him on the analogy of finite existents, only greater and grander, and this is idolatrous as well as absurd. There is certainly a difficulty here with which contemporary philosophers of religion are only too familiar. If one tries to say 'There is *a* God', and to think of him as an individual existent on analogy with particular finite existents, one runs up against the perfectionist and absolutist elements in the notion of God, which seem incompatible with such particularity. And if one concentrates on the absolutist elements, the difference between God and finite existents, we are up against 'verificationist' difficulties about what would count as evidence for his existence, since our criteria for deciding whether or not something exists are modelled on the ways we think about particular things in space and time. However, Tillich does not go into these problems as raised by contemporary philosophers, even if he reads them (as he may not). The tradition in which he is writing had already predisposed him to deny that God can be *a* being, or *an* existent. He claims support for this in the scholastic distinction: God is not *ens* but *esse*. (I am not at all sure that he understands this distinction as St. Thomas would have done; I speak with hesitation here, and will come back to it later.)



When Tillich says that God is not *a* being (*ens*), but Being-itself (*ipsum esse*) he claims that this is the one thing which can be said literally about God; everything else including the term 'Ground' is 'symbolic'. This makes it all the more disturbing that it is so difficult to see what he means by 'Being-itself'. He says we cannot *deny* being. Some things are, though they might not have been; this is a familiar gambit for the cosmological argument. But he does not pursue this along the lines of the traditional cosmological argument to 'a necessary Being' apart from the world as 'world ground'. Indeed it is well to get this association of 'ground' out of our minds (nor do all forms of the cosmological argument use this term). Still less should we think of the common meaning of 'ground' as a *reason* for asserting some proposition which leads to the suggestion that there can be a reason for the existence of things in some idea or proposition, which can imply existence (leading us into Ontological Argument territory).

Tillich's notion of 'Ground of Being' needs to be separated from these associations, and linked up with the sources from which he got it, viz. Boehme via Schelling. His God is not only the Ground but the Ground-of-Being-related-to-'Non-Being' (the *Ungrund*), the infinite potentialities, 'meonic freedom', beyond what is ordered and ordering. This bottomless aspect of God he sometimes (like Eckhart) calls 'God-head' when he wants a more abstract term for the 'mystery' or the 'abyss' behind the determinate power of God as Ground of Being. Everything that exists then, he says, participates in being and non-being. The use of the Platonic word 'participation' along with a strong anti-nominalist strain in him, leads him to talk of the universal form 'Being' as a reality and not only as a way of saying that something is (and similarly with 'non-Being').¹ This is an old puzzle of course; Tillich does not go into its logical difficulties, but uses a general and unanalysed notion of 'participation'. He writes, for instance;²

The concept of participation has many functions. A symbol participates in the reality it symbolises; the knower participates in the known; the lover participates in the beloved; the existent participates in the essences which make it what it is, under the condition of existence; the individual participates in the destiny of separation and guilt; the Christian participates in the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus the Christ. In polarity with individualisation, participation underlies the category of relation as a basic ontological element. Without individualisation nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality. Every relation includes a kind of participation. This is true even of indifference or hostility. Nothing can make one

¹ Cf., for instance, *Systematic Theology*, i, p. 208, 'Unless man participates in non-being, no negative judgements are possible'.
² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

hostile in which one does not somehow participate, perhaps in the form of being excluded from it. And nothing can produce the attitude of indifference whose existence has not made some difference to one. The element of participation guarantees the unity of a disrupted world and makes a universal system of relations possible.

'Participate' is here used indeed with many 'functions', and no attempt is made to distinguish and explain them. In some of these instances, it seems to be used to stand for an 'internal relation'. By 'internal relation' I am here meaning a relation between two terms where the meaning of one term can only be given by reference to the other, and vice versa, e.g. husband and wife. There cannot be a husband without a wife. It may also be taken to stand for relations which we are told 'enter into the nature of their terms' so that they are different from what they would be apart from the relation, and this not merely in the trivial sense in which the proposition that I am now sitting at this table would not be true of me were I not sitting at this table. If A were not the husband of B, not only would the proposition that A is the husband of B not be true, but he might not be the sort of person he is. Thus internal relations can obtain where there is reciprocal causal efficacy between the terms related. (This is not, of course, the only meaning of internal relations, but it seems to be the one which is relevant here.)

Tillich wants, I think, to use the notion of 'participation' to say that universals are efficacious in making things what they are ('making', not just defining what they are: see *Systematic Theology*, i, p. 197, on 'Dynamics and Form'). I do not think he would want to say with the Absolute Idealists that Reality is a single system of internally related terms. He wants to say that Being is a general form efficacious in everything that is. He proclaims himself a realist against nominalists (p. 197). Not indeed, he says, in believing in a 'second reality behind empirical reality' (presumably, one consisting of abstract entities), but in holding that universals are the 'realities' in which things *participate*. One longs here for a discussion of 'participate' at least as sophisticated as Plato's difficulties over *μέθεξις* in the early part of the *Parmenides*. Do white things participate in whiteness as if it were something of which each had a portion; or is it like a sail under which particulars, like a bunch of shipwrecked mariners, get in out of the rain, each under a bit of it (*Parmenides*, 131)? Socrates owns that these crude interpretations will not do, and is left with an unsolved puzzle. Tillich does not even show that he sees there is a puzzle, and just goes on to say that individual special forms are united with general forms, and this unity makes things what they are. He tends to dismiss those who express worry over questions like this as 'nominalists', if not 'logical positivists', and says that

such cannot be expected to understand him. But there surely *is* a worry here: what does it mean to say the form of a tree is something in which all trees 'participate' and which makes them trees (*ibid.*, p. 197)?

One way of dealing with this tangle is by a device of the Polish logician Lesniewski, as interpreted by my colleague Czeslaw Lejewski.¹ We start from a meaning of 'is' applicable to the individuals which are the referents of first level propositions; say, 'Tom, Dick and Harry are men'. Then we have a second order sense of 'is' where it appears in a proposition with verb-like expressions; say, 'To be a man is to be a rational animal'. Then in ordinary language there is a temptation to turn this second level proposition with verb-like arguments into a proposition with an abstract noun, thus pulling it down to the semantical type of the first order propositions. Hence the difficulties about 'abstract entities', and even extra ones which come from saying things like 'Man is a rational animal', where we have a logical solecism since *man* is not a rational animal, men are rational animals. (We might, however, say 'Man is a species'.) But if we see that the subject terms in the second order propositions are more like verbs than like nouns, and that these propositions say what it is to do or to be something, some of the difficulties over abstract entities can be avoided.

Now what about this general universal 'Being-itself', in which according to Tillich we all participate, thereby having the 'power to be'? God is this 'power of being' (he says 'power' can be used synonymously with 'ground') 'overcoming non-being'. 'Being' in this sense is not to be thought of as *a* being, i.e. an existent which could be the referent of a first order proposition, and Tillich here claims support in the medieval language which speaks of God as not *ens* but *esse ipsum*.

Here we seem to have all the problems of real universals making things what they are, with some additional ones which come from the difficulty of saying just how 'Being' is a universal. It is clearly not a property universal, which defines a kind. As Aristotle puts it, 'There is no such kind of things as *things that there are*'.² There might be a purely extensional class of everything that there is. But this obviously would not do for Tillich. Is there any clue in *esse*, the verbal form? Following Lejewski's two semantical orders, we could say that on the lower order we have individuals, a, b, c, &c., as beings. On the second order we can use the verb form of the infinitive, and say 'To be is . . .' What? The difficulty here is that unlike 'To be a man', we have just the uncharacterized 'To be', and can we form any propositions with this,

¹ For a summary of this, see C. Lejewski, 'Proper Names', in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume xxxi, pp. 244 ff.

² *An. Post.* 92^b 13-14, quoted Geach, *Three Philosophers*, p. 21.

except the tautologous 'To be is to be'? And similarly if the infinitive *esse* gets turned into an abstract noun, and we try and say something about Being-itself, or *esse ipsum*, what can be said? Those who think that nevertheless there may be a future in this as a theistic notion will no doubt quote Exodus, 'I AM' as the name of God. Hebraists say that 'I am that I am' is the literal translation of a play on the words *Yahwe* and *Ehye*, meaning that Yahwe gives as his name 'I am the one who exists'. But this will not do for Tillich, since he dismisses the notion of 'an existent one'. If we try to make it just 'I am' (without further qualification) then I recall a reported saying of the late J. L. Austin when told God said 'I am': that the proper retort would be 'You are—*what?*'

In other words, can we attach meaning just to *Being* unless it can be characterized somehow? If we say 'To be is . . .' we need to complete the proposition with some characterizing term. An advantage in the medieval distinction, 'not *ens* but *esse*' is that it offers us this verb-like form. But what can we understand by an abstract noun *esse ipsum* then made out of it? Peter Geach¹ in discussing St. Thomas Aquinas says that *esse* means that by which (*id quo*) a thing is in being. But that by which a thing is in being must surely be related to keeping it whatever it is (*id quod*). (Is this one possible meaning of the notion that in God essence and existence are one?) We then still need to supplement the notion of *esse* by some characterizing predicate of what a thing is. (This need to be able to *characterize* in order to talk about what it is to be, is not necessarily to *define* being, which may well be impossible.) So on the most general level, we cannot just say 'To be a being . . .' but must try to say 'To be . . .', or 'To be a being', 'is to ϕ '. There can be various candidates for ϕ . An unpalatable one is Berkeley's *esse is percipi*. A more palatable one would be Quine's 'To be is to be the value of a variable'. I myself am attracted by Plato's suggestion in the *Sophist* (247e) that to be is to be able to act and be acted upon. This distinguishes a strong sense of 'to be' from the weak sense 'There is a . . ., $\exists x \phi x$ (for instance, 'There is an x such that x is a prime number between 6 and 8'). It would help if we could just translate this weak sense as 'For some x , ϕx ,' or 'Something ϕ 's', and keep 'Being' for a notion of present actuality in the strong sense. The strong sense calls for some categorizing of what it is to be, and Tillich indeed does this. 'Being', he says, 'is inseparable from . . . the structure that makes it what it is'. This 'structure' is described as 'the power of being conquering non-being', so taking us back to the *Grund* and the *Ungrund*. It looks as though Being here must be

¹ *Three Philosophers*, p. 88.

interpreted in a teleological, if not a normative way. It is an ordering power correlated with indeterminate (or undetermined?) potentialities of non-being, which again stands not just for non-entity, but for free potentialities on the one hand, and for the possibility of disintegration on the other. And he is saying that both these aspects, the 'power of being' and the free potentialities, must be taken into account in speaking of what it is for anything to be.

But if our higher-order statement is that 'To be is to have this kind of structure', then the having of the structure need not itself be a special universal entity. It describes what it is like to be in the case of everything that is. And this, I believe, is the best sense we can make of Tillich's 'ground' or 'power' of being. The ground of being is a property or power in everything that can be said to be of producing order out of infinite potentialities and maintaining itself against disintegration. (Whitehead has an analogous saying that to be an actual entity is to 'achieve definiteness'.)

It does, however, seem that if God is defined as the 'ground' or 'power' of being but not himself an individual being, then he must be this power in particular things: one thinks of Spinoza's *conatus in suo esse perseverandi* in everything that is. So this looks like an immanent kind of God. Indeed when Tillich speaks of God's transcendence he refers to the other aspect, the 'non-being'—the *Ungrund* or meonic freedom, which is infinite and potential. This seems to be what he is referring to in *The Courage to Be* (pp. 186–90) when he speaks of the God beyond the God of theism.

It is easy to see therefore why Tillich's critics can say that if you press his thinking, it is really atheistic.¹ He certainly repudiates 'the transcendent Being' form of theism. Whether you call the outcome theism or atheism is, I think, largely a matter of emphasis and definition. I find his view most intelligible as an immanentist kind of theism. It is not pantheism; he says, as Schelling does, that though God is the 'ground' or 'power' of being in things, things so far as they are turning their freedom into self-centred activities are not only individualized but can be out of harmony with their ground. (Christ, he says, shows the 'New Being' in which self-will and 'ground' are completely in harmony.) So it is possible to make propositions about things in the world which cannot be translated into statements about God: thus 'God' and 'the world' are not different terms for the same thing (as *Deus sive Natura*). Perhaps his view might be described as what Laird called 'mitigated distributive pantheism',² i.e. there is something divine in everything

¹ Cf. Sidney Hook, 'The Atheism of Paul Tillich', in *Religious Experience and Truth* (New York University, 1961). ² J. Laird, *Mind and Deity*, p. 269.

(distributively not collectively), in this case in the power which keeps it in being. Tillich certainly speaks of this in religious language, and indeed in the Biblical language of the 'living God'; and in the case of his sermons impressively. Whether the natural theology behind his use of this language is strong enough to sustain it is a question that can perhaps be raised about most natural theologies. That it is neither unequivocally atheistic or theistic may not be altogether an objection to it. At any rate, it is hard to say that all is well with the 'a transcendent Being' type of classical theism, and it is good to find anyone prepared to think we must look for new categories, beyond theism and atheism as generally understood, if we are to recover philosophical theology, and also prepared to explore immanentist categories as well as transcendent ones. (Nearly all the criticisms of natural theology of recent years, as well as the theologies themselves, have concentrated on the language of transcendence, on arguments to 'a being' apart from the world, if not one who is 'Wholly Other', so that we have ceased to struggle with the language of immanence, for instance with phrases like 'In Him we live and move and have our being'.)

My trouble with Tillich is not so much that he can be called atheist or theist according to how these words are defined, but that he makes it so difficult for us to discover just what his notion of 'ground' or 'power' of being really does come to. It is tempting to say that it is a cosmic teleology, a type of *Naturphilosophie*, where it would be more accurate to say 'in us He lives and moves and has His being', since this God is the power of being in everything that is, but does not himself exist as a being. No, says Tillich, he does not; but he is Being-itself. It may well be that the difficulties I have found in this as the reification of an abstraction simply display the invincible ignorance of a modern nominalist. Tillich himself would undoubtedly say so. But my difficulties may serve as an invitation to someone who sees the realist light to help us to understand this notion of 'participation in Being itself'.

Tillich's own impatience with modern logic, and his tendency to dismiss anyone who tries to press him to say what one of his expressions means as a 'logical positivist', makes it impossible to pin him down. He is disconcertingly hospitable to all sorts of suggestions as to what he might mean. We need not attack him for seeking to be metaphysical: there is no need to apologize for this. But he is metaphysical in a way which shows no sign of having struggled with the standards of clarity in the use of language which have been set by the logical-linguistic effort of the last thirty years. So it is a metaphysics which side-tracks these questions, and not one which has come out on the other side of them.



I am afraid this has to be said in spite of his brave words (against Barth) about the philosopher's obligation to seek 'semantic rationality'.

I think there is no doubt whatever that Tillich himself intends his account of 'Being and non-Being', of Ground and Abyss, to be descriptive of metaphysical truth, even of a theogony and cosmogony. There are, however, other possible ways of taking it.

One would be an epistemological approach: the talk of Non-Being behind Being could be a way of calling for an Apophatic Theology, a *via negativa* which fastens on every positive statement about God, and says this must also be denied. And if you can only be apophatic enough and go on with this process, your theology will point to a bottomlessness in which every positive statement gets denied *ad infinitum*. This is one of the mystical approaches, Eastern perhaps rather than Western. But even in Eastern mysticism (except perhaps in Zen Buddhism) is this extreme apophaticism the whole of the story? If there is any sense in which you are advancing in anything that can be called knowledge, there must surely be something positive that can be said too, otherwise how do you know you are advancing? So, for instance, the pseudo-Dionysius in his negative way of giving and taking away the names of God does not question that the unknown Godhead is a *cause*. Others who want to be apophatic about cause may be prepared to say God is 'being'; if they then want to say he is also 'non-being' they give their 'non-being' a positive aspect such as peace in Nirvana, or meonic freedom, or pure creativity. The apophatic approach may be a way of saying that you cannot stop at any positive assertion as final and sufficient; it is a way of pointing to a bottomlessness in the mystery of what might be meant by Godhead. This *via negativa* is certainly a strong strain in German mystical thinking, and this, as we have seen, is part of the tradition in which Tillich stands. In *The Courage to Be* (pp. 186–90) in speaking of the God behind the God of theism, who remains when the latter has disappeared, he comes nearest to these German mystics. But he parts company with the mystics since he holds they 'devalue concrete things'—he says 'the God behind God' is their potential restitution as the source of the free creativity they individuate. However, he expressly tells us that he is not concerned with the problem of what we can say about God, but with the fact of negativity as well as positivity in the Godhead itself. So though it may be tempting to look on this dialectic of Being and Non-Being as an apophatic approach, this is not what he himself intends.

Another way of taking it is as a metaphysical extension of depth psychology. This fits much in Tillich, since he is no mean psychologist. Such a psychological view suggests that the depths of the human psyche

are crude, formless energies: in Freud, the restless impulses of the *Id* and its *libido*. In Jung there is also a creative shaping power. I do not think Tillich is as Jungian as might be thought.¹ His affinities are more with Fromm, a deviant Freudian, who allows a person more positive powers than Freud does, not only to accept and understand himself, but also to love and create freely through this acceptance. Tillich's 'courage to be' is close to this. And Tillich can be illuminating when he cashes what he has to say about the 'power of being' in terms of courage overcoming anxiety and the basic fears of meaninglessness which haunt people (again, note the normative significance he puts on the notions of being and non-being).² If we start with a fund of restless energy (*libido*) plus something we can crudely call 'will to live', the question then might be whether this is the final truth about human life, leading to cruelty and destructiveness, unless we can somehow tame the will to live (Schopenhauer) or keep up some civilized dykes through the restraints of reason (Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*). Or is there also creative power in what the old mystics call the *fundus* of the human soul even below the conscious mind which can transform the will to live into a will to love? Tillich speaks of the Ground of Being as power mastering formless 'non-being'. The crucial question may be whether the *conatus* which gives hope and courage is a positive, creative will to love, and whether this, rather than the darker Schopenhauerian or Freudian view is the truer picture of the deep resources of the psyche. And if this can be used as a point where we know about nature from the inside, can it also be used as an analogy to say something about nature in a more general way? (This extrapolation of an analogy from a form of experience is, I believe, how some metaphysical theories get launched, and this may well be how it worked with Boehme, when he was constructing his cosmogony.)

Whether or not there is this power in the psyche is something not entirely outside the scope of empirical inquiry. Whether it is possible to launch out from it into a metaphysical theology of Being and Non-Being, the Ground of Being conquering the Abyss of Non-Being is

¹ As by Professor Albright quoted by Gustav Weigel in *Religion and Culture, Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich* (New York, 1959), p. 125: 'Tillich has grafted C. J. Jung on to Schelling's pantheism.'

² It is important to see there is this normative sense of meaninglessness and also of anxiety before unknown possibilities in the notion of non-being. Otherwise some of the things Tillich says about anxiety concerning non-being might suggest that he looks on *death* not only as the last enemy, but as the worst enemy—an impossible view, surely, for any Christian. This links with his notion of God as 'ultimate concern'—if this were a concern just for living might one not *propter vitam vitae perdere causas*?



another story. I am not prepared to say it is a completely impossible one. But I would say at least that those readers of the Bishop of Woolwich who get the impression that Tillich has worked it all out should realize that the Bishop has managed to get himself in some rather queer company. It may not be bad company; but there is certainly more thinking to be done before we can use the phrase 'the Ground of Being' with confidence of attaching meaning to it. If it is not 'a Being' apart from the world, it looks as though it were a basic drive-cum-structure in all particular beings.

The notion of a 'Ground of Being' may at first sound a comfortable doctrine, as suggesting something firm, a rock on which to stand. It is less comfortable (and perhaps none the worse for that) when we note that, in the tradition in which Tillich stands, behind the *Grund* there is the bottomless *Ungrund*. Tillich's conception of God encompasses both these aspects, as does the microcosm of the human psyche. His positive faith is put better by the term 'power' rather than 'ground of being'. If there can indeed be said to be this formative power ingredient in whatever is, then it would not need to be a reification of the universal idea of Being, but it could be something actual, even if not 'a particular', which could be a matter of first order reference. The issue then would be not just a logical one, but a metaphysical one, and the use of such a power concept could be an important question for a religious philosophy. But it would, I think, have to be interpreted in a more immanent way than the Bishop of Woolwich, or perhaps Tillich himself, would want to interpret it. However, we have to concern ourselves with what can be made of what they say. If we are not prepared to stop here, with a notion of an immanent 'Ground of Being', there seems no way out of having to find some meaning in speaking of God as 'existing' in a sense of 'exist' less circumscribed than the one Tillich gives the word. And this, though I do not believe it is impossible, is not easy.

DOROTHY EMMET

NOTES AND STUDIES

A NOTE ON THE ROOTS ריע, ריע, AND רעע IN HEBREW

IN an article entitled 'Additional notes on the root ריע in Hebrew'¹ Professor D. W. Thomas, noting that in Isa. xv. 4

על-כן חִלְצֵי מוֹאֵב יִרְעוּ וְנִפְשׁוּ יִרְעָה לוֹ

the LXX translated יִרְעָה by *γνώσεται* (= יִרְעָה), suggested that the meaning of the phrase is 'his soul shall be quiet, subdued, unto him'. Interesting though this suggestion is, it is open to objection on two grounds: first the Massoretic Text as it stands yields a satisfactory sense; and secondly the change of יִרְעָה to יִרְעָה would destroy the paronomastic assonance between יִרְעוּ and יִרְעָה, a literary device which can hardly be due to a scribal error.²

To begin with, the true meaning of יִרְעוּ here must be established. Hebrew lexicons are not on sure ground in dealing with the roots ריע, ריע, and רעע, and some attempt must be made to introduce order where confusion reigns. In the passage under discussion BDB translates יִרְעוּ 'cry out in distress', and the LXX, Vulgate, Targum, and Peshitta³ all agree that this is the meaning. However, Gray⁴ more than fifty years ago pointed out that there is no evidence (apart from Mic. iv. 9, which he mistakenly thought was corrupt) that הִרְעִי, which elsewhere is used of shouting in triumph, could be used of crying in distress. Despite the voice of antiquity it cannot be denied that Gray was right in throwing doubt on the meaning universally ascribed to the verb. Duhm and Budde, cited in BDB, tried to cut the knot by reading יִרְעוּ, to which they assigned the meaning 'trembled'; but the Massoretic Text is perfectly correct. יִרְעוּ is not the Hiphil of רוע 'shouted', but the Qal imperfect of ריע, which is cognate with the Arabic رَاعَ (ي and و) and means 'he was afraid'. יִרְעָה, paralleled by Arabic يَرَعَ and وَرَعَ ('was faint-hearted'),⁵ immediately falls into place in parallelism and sense, and the meaning of the verse is:

¹ *J.T.S.*, N.S. xv (1964), pp. 54 ff.

² Another example occurs in Prov. xiii. 20 discussed below.

³ Their renderings are set out in G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 282.

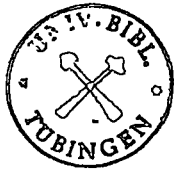
⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁵ The meaning 'quivered' adopted by BDB and most commentators lacks authority and would seem to be based on no more than an inference.

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