

The Despair of Religion

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The theme of religious despair appears several times in Hegel's philosophy. Each meaning differs from the preceding ones, but presupposes them. Gradually a totality of sense unfolds which remains latent in each instance taken singularly. The development is most clearly apparent in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* which presents the various moments of despair as following necessarily from the internal logic of the religious consciousness itself. That schema of development provides a framework for incorporating the descriptions in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* as well as those in the *History of Philosophy*, and, above all, the conclusion of *Faith and Knowledge* in which the famous expression, "God is dead," first appears. One passage does not seem to fit into this logical development. The pessimistic evaluation of the modern age at the end of the 1821 lecture notes on the philosophy of religion does not follow from Christianity's own principles, but rather moves directly against its "truth." Nevertheless, as we shall see, even this deviation may be "justified" as a direct consequence of attitudes provoked by the Christian faith in its struggle with the Enlightenment. Precisely because of this final predicament Hegel presents his philosophy of spirit as a—hopefully temporary—refuge for religion from the outward and inward ravages of the Enlightenment. In the following paper I shall consider the four phases in which the despair of religion appears in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and, by way of conclusion, briefly situate the final section of the 1821 lecture notes.

1. The *unhappy consciousness* which concludes the section on self-consciousness presents a first instance of religion in despair. In it religion, essentially the union of the finite and the infinite, consists in a mere *longing* (*Sehnen*) for absolute unity devoid of any objective content. Hegel most poignantly describes it in the disenchantment of the crusaders who at the end of their long quest found no more than an empty tomb. But the note of despair rings through the entire section. The skeptical consciousness anticipates it in its frivolous play with the unresolved opposition between the finite and the infinite—an attitude which reveals its full meaning only in the decline of ancient religion in the comedy, described in the seventh part of the *Phenomenology*. The unhappy consciousness *longs* for an infinity contained in a single living individual. The object of such a futile quest must remain forever "beyond." It

assumes the infinite to be essentially opposed to the finite and nevertheless expects to find the two magically united in one concrete moment. All efforts to "locate" the infinite definitively must strand upon the insurmountable cliff of death. Jesus died, and since then God can no longer be found in any single place or individual. (In the fourth passage we shall see that *he had to die* if the hypostatic union was to bear universal fruits.) The mention of death in this context is not fortuitous: The entire section stands under the sign of life-and-death. Self-consciousness emerges only through a deliberate challenge of death (by the future "master") in which life loses the *necessity* of its natural immediacy. Life can attain the level of spirit only in a constant dialogue with death. In the confrontation with death the transcendence required for the manifestation of the infinite emerges. Hence the victory over the immediacy of life is the first of the way stations on the painful pilgrimage to the total sacrifice of the finite, a condition for the breakthrough of spirit. Garaudy rightly perceives the shadow of the cross extended over this first encounter of life and death:

Luther's theme of the God who is dead is for Hegel the theological expression of the most profound truth of philosophy: the negative inherent in the Absolute itself, the Infinite that becomes real only in the relentless destruction of the finite, the God who can be God only by becoming man and, like man, by undergoing death.¹

The unsuccessful quest for the earthly Jesus resulted in the awareness that God had truly died and was no longer to be found as an individual in this world. This idea, never absent from orthodox Christology, had receded into the background as medieval piety increasingly tended to reinstate Christ's historical humanity into the setting of its own world.

Of course, Hegel is describing a type of consciousness, not a period of history. Beyond the medieval "longing" he aims at the aspirations for an elusive infinity of his romantic contemporaries. They also continued to expect the encounter in a single experience of magic beauty—only to find that all such experiences must soon decay and die. Assuming the same fundamental opposition between an infinite content and all finite forms, they could only *aspire* at an identity beyond reach. Thus the romantic search inevitably results in despair. "Und das Dort ist niemals hier" (Schiller). Yet its failure is a necessary step on the road to the spiritual consciousness. For in it culminates that subjectivity which was introduced by Christianity and intensified in the modern epoch:

The moment of the unhappy consciousness is the moment of the subject as subject. The particular greatness of the modern age consists in having brought subjectivity to a point where, on the one hand, it becomes infinite in its very finitude and,

1. Roger Garaudy, *Dieu est mort* (Paris: P.U.F., 1962), p. 222.

on the other hand, opposes itself completely to all objectivity.²

Thus Jean Wahl expresses the grandeur as well as the limitation of the romantic vision. It reaches an infinity of subjective intensity, but, remaining opposed to all objective content, that infinity is doomed to remain an empty longing.

Forever unable to see the infinity of its longing *realized* in any concrete form or shape it continually discards them, remaining forever dissatisfied with any and all. Nowhere does this become more evident than in the privileged expression of the romantic imagination—art:

The infinite subjectivity, what we call the absolute of romantic art, is on the contrary not absolute in its presentment; it is rather carried into its own domain, and for this reason retains such external aspect as it possesses not so much *for itself* as for the contemplation of others, as, in short, an exterior premise which is freely offered for this purpose.³

Indeed, the divine itself can be expressed only in the form of a crushed, humiliated humanity, the "Ecce Homo" in sharp contrast to the Greek gods. In its exclusive emphasis upon the quality of subjectivity the romantic mind turns into an essentially negative consciousness. Here again it absolutizes a characteristically Christian position. Christianity's perception of death displays the full intensity of its subjective awareness. The Greeks envisaged death as a mere cessation of activity, an abstract passage to the unknown without terror. But once subjectivity adopts the primary significance which it did in Christianity, death's negativity becomes the negation of subjectivity itself:

. . . it is absolutely fearful, a death of the soul, which is in the position of finding it is thereby as itself now this negative in explicit appearance, excluded forevermore from happiness, absolutely unhappy, delivered over to eternal damnation
. . .⁴

In its theology of Christ's passion and death faith has succeeded in giving its fullest expression to the pain it brought into the world—the death of God, which is also the death of the soul. But in the feeling of infinite loss the Christian soul realizes the depth of its own subjectivity and thus gives birth to a new idea of life beyond death. Only to a soul in despair about death could the promise of immortality appeal. Death, then, in the end, becomes a "negative

2. Jean Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience chez Hegel* (Paris: P.U.F., 1951), p. 67.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, in *Werke*, vol. 10 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1832-40), edited by H. G. Hotho (1835-38), vol. 2, p. 140; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, translated by F. P. B. Osmaston (London: G. Bell, 1920), vol. 2, pp. 299-300.

4. *Aesthetik*, vol. 2, pp. 127-128; *Fine Art*, vol. 2, p. 288.

negativity," a canceling of "natural" existence that lacks subjective depth. Thus the awareness of life's precariousness grants access to a deeper sense of existence. The despair of the unhappy consciousness is, in fact, a sacred sadness unknown to the ancients. The mind unacquainted with it has never sounded the full depth of existence.

2. *Faith* as described in the section of the *Phenomenology* on the alienated spirit (VI, B) is related to the unhappy consciousness insofar as its turn toward the infinite also involves a withdrawal from the finite. Yet in another, more substantial sense, it adopts a contrary position. For the unhappy consciousness the infinite was a content never possessed. Faith lives *within* that infinity but it does so by writing off the entire finite world as insignificant. For that reason it suffers from a deeper "alienation" from the finite world and is, in fact, responsible for its increasing desacralization. Its total opposition between this world and a transcendent infinity has caused nature to lose its divine character. In the Introduction to *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel writes:

It is precisely through its flight from the finite and through its rigidity that subjectivity turns the beautiful into things—the grove into timber, the images into things that have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear.⁵

The faith which Hegel here discusses, all content and no "certainty," is the exact counterpart of the "insight" of the Enlightenment. The latter has all the certainty, the self-consciousness, on its side but no content. In the confrontation with "insight" we learn how vulnerable faith's inability to integrate the finite world of culture leaves it to rationalist attacks. The Enlightenment mentality repudiates faith as "a tissue of superstitious prejudices and errors,"⁶ as "something foreign to self-consciousness, something that is not a bone of its bone, but is surreptitiously foisted on it like a changeling child" (*Phän.*, p. 391; Baillie, p. 569). Indeed, faith's blind trust derives its certitude entirely from its object, none from itself. It has no reply to the charge of believing in a mere projection, "a being that comes from belief's own consciousness." Without its attitude of unconditional obedience, it would possess no certainty of an absolute being at all.

Of course, the Enlightenment's own agnosticism "that knows nothing but finitude, taking this moreover to be the truth" leads to a diminished sense of reality, circumscribed by utility and contingency. Faith is headed for a more spacious realm. But it continues to live in a broken world, incapable of reassembling the pieces. It has rightly opted for an absolute being, but it has

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, *Jenaer kritische Schriften* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968), p. 317 (hereafter cited as 'GW'); G. W. F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, translated by Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 58 (hereafter cited as 'FK').

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, edited by Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), p. 385 (hereafter cited as '*Phän.*'); G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated by J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967 [1910, 1931]), p. 561 (hereafter cited as 'Baillie').

done so by ignoring the finite universe of reason. Its real possession of the *essential* remains immediate, open to the charge of being a mere ideology, that is, a *false* consciousness. It holds the middle between the mere longing of the unhappy consciousness and a full spiritual awareness of the absolute union of the finite and the infinite.

Enlightenment easily gains the upper hand in this uneven struggle between a readily available "insight" and a trust in the unknown. Not only does it win the argument but, what is worse, it forces faith to justify itself in a rationalist theology which betrays its own deeper truth. Here begins the tragic "deviation" that has determined much of the theology of the present and that led to the melancholy conclusion of the 1821 lectures. What happened here to the religious consciousness need not have happened and Hegel is determined to redress the course in Christianity's original direction. The Enlightenment has left in its wake "the corpse of reason and faith that has as little of reason as of faith" (GW, p. 315; FK, p. 55). The separation between a rationalist philosophy and a blind faith has its origins in the same prejudice of rationalism itself. The Enlightenment, itself a child of misguided religious principles, betrayed the most fundamental discovery of modern thought—the Christian principle of subjectivity as radicalized by the Reformation. It has reduced that principle to a simple empirical datum. "The poetry of Protestant grief that scorns all reconciliation with empirical existence is transformed into the prose of satisfaction with the finite and of good conscience about it" (GW, p. 319; FK, p. 61).

This shallowness has not been overcome by the idealist reaction. The great philosophies of Kant and Fichte remain tributary to the main prejudice of the Enlightenment—the irreconcilable opposition between the finite and the infinite. They have, in fact, strengthened it by transforming a *de facto* opposition into one of principle. Kant's transcendental ego and Fichte's *Ich* have rendered the opposition absolute: they sacralized a finitude in a movement that was not the true "hallowing" which "should nullify the finite" (GW, p. 323; FK, p. 65). The religious conclusions that follow from these theories were most consistently expressed by Jacobi whose "faith" left no room for the *knowledge* of the transcendent at all. Hegel wants to replace this religion of despair with the real Good Friday in which the finite dies *within the infinite*, even as Christ's individual humanity vanished to make room for the universal community. This theological death of the finite is also a despair, but a healthy one that chases religion from its last refuge of finitude into true infinity.

3. The third phase of despair occurs at the end of the ancient world: in the comedy as the final stage of the religion of beauty and in the Roman condition of law (*Rechtszustand*). The significance of this phase lies not in the fact that it marks the decline of a particular religion. Religions died before: The demise of the religions of nature, the gods of the nether world being replaced by the Olympians—those are earlier instances, described by Hegel, of vanishing religions. But what dies with the Greek gods is the immediate experience of the sacred which dominated the entire ancient culture and culminated in the religion of beauty. Here the *Anschauung* (aesthetic intuition) completely determined the *Vorstellung* (religious representation). The last remnant of "natural" religion collapses in comedy. How much Hegel considered this a definitive turning point appears in the expression, here for the first time in the

Phänomenology, "God Himself is dead"—but also in the sense of eager anticipation conveyed by the dying religions— assembled one last time to witness "the birth of the spirit."

In comedy actual self-consciousness is presented as the fate of the gods (*Phän.*, p. 518; Baillie, p. 745). Demasking the gods, it reveals behind the divine impersonation the self-conscious actor—an individual not essentially different from any member of the audience and representing *their* state of mind rather than that of the gods. Putting the mask on and off the actor exposes the gods and heroes as individualized abstractions, mere projections of himself. "Since the contingent character and superficial individuality which imagination lent to the divine Beings, vanish, they are left, as regards their natural aspect, with merely the nakedness of their immediate existence, they are [Aristophanes'] *Clouds*, a passing vapor, like those imaginative ideas" (*Phän.* p. 519; Baillie, p. 747).

Here the process of self-consciousness which was initiated when the human form emerged from the religion of nature reaches its destructive completion. In its certainty of being *this self* the individual consciousness loses, at least temporarily, the power of idealization. With it the backbone of the culture itself collapses in a general, nihilistic destruction:

It is consciousness of the loss of everything of significance in that certainty of itself, and of the loss even of this knowledge or certainty of self—the loss of substance as well as of self; it is the bitter pain which finds expression in the cruel words, "God is dead" . . . The "unhappy consciousness," the soul of despair, is just the knowledge of all this loss. It has lost both the worth and dignity it attached to its personality as well as that attaching to its personality when reflected in the medium of thought. (*Phän.* p. 523; Baillie, pp. 752-753.)

A wholly new inwardizing of the external forms of spirit is needed, a "recollection" which only the spirit conscious of itself *as spirit* can achieve. Such a self-consciousness is the opposite of that the Enlightenment which, accomplished in the name of reason, remained within the finite consciousness. Here no confident assertion of a finite self but of the yearning agony of the unhappy, despairing self-consciousness announces the birth of spirit.

The recurring use of the term "unhappy consciousness" indicates the continuity of the process of spiritualization, from the beginnings of self-consciousness to the final breakthrough of the spirit's awareness of itself as spirit. At the same time the tragic tone of Hegel's description suggests that the total loss of religion displayed in the ancient comedy, in some way, persists into our own time. Not, of course, the death of the Greek gods, but the religious loss of a self-consciousness unable to raise itself up to the level of spirit. This modern atheism Hegel named at the end of the 1821 lectures. Yet in the passage of the *lectures* that corresponds to the current description none of the emotional paths expressed in the *Phänomenology* survives. As the classical mirage receded more and more into the background (manifest in the gradual separation between objective and absolute spirit) Hegel became less inclined to seek the roots of the religious crisis of modernity in the ancient culture. He in-

creasingly emphasized the role of the Enlightenment—as a course that carried its own interpretation.

4. The final phase of religious despair in the *Phenomenology* occurs in the Christian religion. I use the term 'religion' deliberately, because Hegel here is not discussing pious longing or blind faith, but that mature synthesis of the finite and the infinite which only a fully understood Christianity achieves. The reason why despair appears at this culmination of the religious consciousness is that that synthesis, the essence of spirit, is the opposite of the natural. At the very beginning of his lecture notes on "The Concept of Religion," Hegel warns his auditors:

"The Christian religion is not as sanguine [as the pagan one]. It provokes itself the need, begins with pain, awakens it, tears the natural unity of spirit, the unity of man with nature, disturbs the natural peace. Original sin appears from the start, man is conceived as evil in his origin (*Von Haus aus*), that is, as in his core a negative with himself."⁷

To attain the Christian reconciliation, then, the mind has to pass through death and despair. This is unambiguously asserted in the course of Christ's own life and death. Nothing is further removed from it than an *immediate* union of the divine and the human. To participate in this life the Christian likewise must abandon all hope of achieving a "natural" union with God in finite existence:

. . . the pinnacle of finitude is not actual life in its temporal course [*das wirkliche Leben so im Zeitlichen*], but rather death, the anguish of death; death is the pinnacle of negation, the most abstract and indeed natural negation, the limit, finitude in its highest extreme. The temporal and complete existence of the divine Idea in the present is perceived only in Christ's death. The highest divestment of the divine Idea—"God has died, God himself is dead"—is a monstrous, frightening image, which brings before the imagination the deepest abyss of estrangement.⁸

But that means not only to participate in pious feeling and moral resignation in Christ's passion and death. It means losing Christ Himself. The soul that remains attached to the individual humanity of Jesus' person will end up at the empty tomb, as the crusaders did. As long as the Incarnation exists only as an "event," realized in "an actual human being" (*Phän.*, p. 527, Baillie, p. 757),

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 4 pts. in 2 vols., edited by Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 1925), vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 23.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Christian Religion*, edited and translated by Peter C. Hodgson, American Academy of Religion Texts and Translations, No. 2 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 201-202; *Vorlesungen* (Lasson), vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 157-158.

no universal spiritual consciousness can arise and no "redemption" can take place. Precisely in order to prevent such a narrow focusing of the Christian mind upon the historical Jesus, Christ had to vanish from this world. Only after his death, fully accepted by his followers, could the religious consciousness of the infinite become genuinely *spiritual*, that is, *self-conscious infinity*. The objective fact of Jesus' death merely provided the condition. Each believer must die himself or herself to the immediate attachment to the Christ-consciousness in *another* individual. With classical precision Hegel has expressed that spiritual goal in the *Encyclopedia*:

God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God.⁹

This leads to a despair of faith, the night of the Christian soul, in which religious representation transcends itself in the painful process of being transferred from an outward reality to the very heart of the self. The *object* of belief ceases to exist as object as its particular *Fürsichsein* is converted into the self-consciousness of the community. That community recognizes infinity henceforth in its own life. The death of the mediator thereby becomes in fact the death of the infinite *as beyond*:

The death of the mediator is death not merely of his *natural* aspect, of his particular self-existence: what dies is not merely the outer encasement, which, being stripped of essential Being, is *eo ipso* dead, but also the abstraction of Divine Being. (*Phän.*, p. 546; Baillie, p. 781.)

The death of God as Hegel describes it here is a *theological* event, not a final consequence of Enlightenment secularism. What dies is *not* the religious consciousness itself, but the death of the last obstacle to the reconciliation of finite and infinite, namely the particular appearance of the infinite itself.

Consequently, it takes place *within* the religious representation, not *after* it, as Kojève, Garaudy and others have presented it. It is the moment of definitive atonement. Yet *phenomenologically*, that is, for him who experiences it (in contrast to the philosopher who *thinks* it) it means the "death" of the entire religious representation.

That death is the bitterness of feeling of the "unhappy consciousness" when it feels that God himself is dead. This harsh utterance is the expression of the inmost self-knowledge which has simply self for its content; it is the return of consciousness into the depth of darkness where Ego is nothing but base identity with Ego, a darkness distinguishing and knowing nothing more outside it. (*Phän.*, p. 546; Baillie, p. 782.)

9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, § 564; translated by William Wallace and A. V. Miller in G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 298.

Again Hegel resumes the category of self-consciousness. But he also refers to that later form of self-consciousness, comedy, where he first mentioned the death of God. We may generalize this conclusion to mean that any transition to self-consciousness produces a crisis in the consciousness of the infinite.

It is on the basis of a text such as this that Kojève's conclusion becomes intelligible:

Nous savons que dans le Christianisme la religion se supprime elle-même en tant que religion. . . . L'athéisme du sage ne peut s'établir à la suite d'une théologie quelconque: il naît de la théologie chrétienne et ne peut naître que d'elle.¹⁰

The problem here is that Kojève, paradoxically, remains on the level of religious representation. The picture looks very different from the point of view of the Idea.

A word also about the allusion to the Fichtean principle of the absolute subject, *Ich* = *Ich*, ego = ego: Quite clearly this principle here is presented as a phenomenological stage of religious representation — hence a one-sided phase that does *not* express the full reality of the self-consciousness of spirit in the community. Indeed Fichte's transcendental *Ich* is the ultimate principle of self-consciousness but not of *spiritual* self-consciousness, since it remains opposed to the finite objectivity of the non-ego type. Hence to return to the ego is represented as a *fall*, or a regression to a lower level.

The well known text at the conclusion of *Faith and Knowledge* must be given a similar theological interpretation. Hegel refers to infinity as "the abyss of nothingness in which all being is engulfed" (GW, p. 413; FK, p. 190). But he distinguishes this from the "infinite grief" that previously existed only historically in the formative process of culture. "The religion of more recent times rests upon the feeling that 'God Himself is dead'" (*Ibid.*). The expression "more recent times" makes it clear that this is not the religious collapse of late antiquity, but a new attitude that developed *within* Christianity. The quote from Pascal's *Pensées*, "la nature est telle qu'elle *marque* partout un Dieu *perdu*", confirms this. What Hegel describes here appears to be the loss of the direct experience of the divine, both in nature and in the soul, that follows in the wake of the modern turn to the subject. The words of the Lutheran hymn thereby acquire a timely connotation: They poignantly express the spiritual distress of the age in which they were written. None of this is discussed in the *Phenomenology*, but all of it is assumed in the discussion of faith as well as in that of spirit in the community.

Most importantly, Hegel insists that the feeling of infinite grief must lose its absolute character and become integrated as a moment of the supreme Idea. The "historic Good Friday" of the modern experience must give way to the speculative one. This philosophical sublation, however, by no means eases the pain of the modern spirit. It rather demands a full confrontation with that pain. "Good Friday must be speculatively re-established in the whole truth and

10. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*—2nd ed.—(Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 300.

harshness of its God-forsakenness" (GW, p. 414; FK, p. 191). The absence of God is not an idle feeling from which some acquaintance with philosophy will liberate our contemporaries. It is the fate of subjectivity itself and, as such, an incurable disease.

Here then Hegel justifies implicitly the inevitable secularization of the modern age, while resisting the deliberately chosen attitude of secularism. The absorption of the finite into the infinite and the integration of the infinite with the finite was a task which Christian culture had set itself from the beginning. It became a tragic destiny only after the subject was discovered to be not simply a *phase* of the Absolute, but its determining factor. That spirit is *essentially* self-consciousness, is, despite its Christian origins, a modern discovery. The respective failures of the recent philosophies of the subject (especially Kant's and Fichte's) show how difficult it was, *within the modern context*, to achieve the Christian synthesis of the finite and the infinite. Yet this synthesis was precisely the task which Hegel set himself from the beginning. His awareness of the historical nature of the problem explains both the secular *and* the religious quality of his thought. Because of the loss of God in modern subjectivity the absorption of the finite reality within the infinite idea has come to be a Good Friday—which it clearly was *not* for Jesus' disciples after his Ascension. For them God had merely changed his position from the earth to the realm above the earth. For us God has withdrawn from this world altogether.

5. The secularism of the Enlightenment provides an easy response to that disappearance by allowing the finite to be itself and relegating the infinite to the realm of the unknown. Theology itself, according to Hegel, has followed this easy path, when it started accepting the premises of rationalist (and, hence, finite) philosophy. The modern situation, described at the end of the 1821 lectures, obviously implies a departure from the Christian principles. As such it is, religiously speaking, a wrong to be corrected. Yet its remote cause lies in the principle which Christianity itself had brought into the world and constituted a response to an unprecedented, difficult challenge. Hegel condemns it as a "deviation" but his own philosophy "justifies" it and, in understanding it, offers a temporary refuge to a harassed religion.

However we judge the success of Hegel's enterprise, we cannot deny it a certain affinity with an established Christian tradition which begins its spiritual ascent with a deliberate recognition and acceptance of the darkness of God's absence. Hegel was a serious thinker, not given to frivolous language. We would do him less than justice by taking the religious metaphors centering around Good Friday as part of an evasive strategy to hide the unqualifiedly secular character of his philosophy. What he attempted was daring, perhaps presumptuous; his achievement may be religiously unacceptable; but his far-seeing, religious concern about the modern condition is undeniable. In that awareness, more than in his retranslation of the Christian doctrine, lies his chief merit for the understanding of modern faith.