

# Operational Theism

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**I**F Christianity is to serve the present generation, theologians will have to develop a conception of God adequate to the demands of the times. We face brutal actualities, and will probably do so for decades to come. The conception of God presupposed by palliatives dressed up in religious terminology will undoubtedly serve the needs of the tender-minded but not those who must accept responsibility for the maintenance of culture and the retention of at least a semblance of human dignity. The same judgment obtains with reference to the vague ontologies defined in psychological terms of "ultimate concern." And this holds true also for the current attempts to find security in ancient cultures and the literatures they produced. A conception of God adequate to these times must be based upon the actualities as we now understand them. What is required is a religion which stresses human dignity, provides a basis for patient courage and the willingness to do what has to be done to protect humanity from the threats arising in many quarters. If this means a serious reorganization of our Christian thought, it will not be the first time in history this has been necessary.

A conception of God based upon actualities requires the use of a method of thinking capable of dealing with them. For the past five hundred years, western man has been developing such methods. They are varied, and have many different names. We are selecting Operationalism as the least inadequate name for the type of thinking we here propose. There is nothing particularly novel about it since it has been developing over the centuries. In spe-

cific forms, it has been used in all of my previous investigations.

Operationalism is both a theory of meaning and a method of verification. As a theory of meaning, it restricts definitions to the operations required to determine relations and modalities. In the preceding paper in this series, "A Metaphysical Basis for Value Theory and Religion,"<sup>1</sup> we adopted the principle of The Limited Vocabulary which left undefined three concepts—Existence Relation and Modality—and found their meanings in what could be observed or inferred from the categories subsumed under each. This is basic to Operationalism as a theory of meaning. What can be known about existence or existents consists in their relations with one another and how they function as related (Modality). As a theory of meaning, Operationalism defines meanings in terms of relations and modalities.

This is, as William James said concerning Pragmatism, merely "a new name for some old ways of thinking." The meaning attributed to the sun consists in the relations of a given star to other stars and planets, and to the activities of the sun itself as its hydrogen is burned or transformed into helium. According to Field Theory psychology, the self is defined in terms of a network of relationships within the organism and between the organism and its several environments. It is undoubtedly true that the subjective or private experiences of persons are highly valuable. Yet even these become meaningful to the extent that they can be verbalized and communicated. In the case of small children, these self-feelings are expressed readily or per-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Iliff Review* (Spring, 1958). This article will be referred to hereafter as *Metaphysical Basis*.

haps we should say naively. Sophisticated adults are more reticent. Even in the case of the latter, however, some expression of these feelings occurs or the experience itself is subject to question. "You will know them by their fruits" (**Matt. 7, 16**).)

But Operationalism is more than a theory of meaning. It is primarily, from my point of view, a method of investigation. The specific form adopted in my previous work consists in two operations. The first is the clarification of the language used and the formulation of the problem in propositional form as well as a statement of the conditions which must be met if the hypothesis is to be verified, not absolutely, but in part. The second operation is observational and implicatory. Here the role of the fulfillment of predicted outcomes is important. In an early article,<sup>2</sup> I called attention to the fact that the areas in which religious behavior appeared important changed with changes in knowledge and skills. Rather extensive examination of specific historic and contemporary groups of people indicated that this actually occurred. Dr. Charles S. Milligan published the results of his investigation of the Navaho Indians which led to the same results.<sup>3</sup> The conclusions of my own rather extended research are summarized in **A Functional Philosophy of Religion**, 1958, chapters IV-VIII. In this manner one fact concerning religion could be determined, namely, that from an analysis of the levels of knowledge and skills of a given people one can predict the areas within which their interest in religion will be significant.

Operationalism as method may be used to determine certain facts concerning conceptions of God. The hypothesis may be stated as follows: **The relation of God to nature is determined,**

**generally, by one's understanding of and appreciation for nature.** Nature is defined as including all that is actually or theoretically observable and what may be inferred from an examination of this. More precisely, the hypothesis states that where one's understanding of and appreciation for nature is low, his development of the Supernatural (metascopic) will be inclusive. As understanding of and appreciation for nature increases, the interest in immanence increases. An examination of early Greek Atomism and the resulting reaction of Plato and Aristotle will indicate the relevance of this hypothesis. The same is true of the modern world. The materialism which was formulated by Newton found a reaction in the Idealism and Deism of the modern world. The recent return to savagery in the west as exemplified in the two world wars and the continuing cold war accompanied by a resurgence of Transcendence and ontologism is another example of the relevance of this hypothesis. As an extreme example, one should read excerpts of Karl Barth's **Letter to an East German Pastor**, translated by RoseMarie Oswald Barth, in **The Christian Century**, March 25, 1959.

The Implicatory or Corroborative phase of Operational verification includes the support which previously established theories provide for those in process of verification. In the preceding article on Metaphysics, attention was drawn continuously to theories either verified or in process of verification in formulating the various categories. This theory of verification was developed more fully and some of the relevant literature cited in **THE ILIFF REVIEW**, Spring 1956 ("Approximation").

It is generally assumed that Operationalism is a legitimate method for investigating "finite" situations, but its relevance for the study of man and God questioned. Recent studies in Existentialist psychiatry and psychology suggest a more immediate form of knowledge of the self which rejects

<sup>2</sup> "The Significance of The Changing Function of Religion," *The Journal of Religion*, Oct., 1932.

<sup>3</sup> "Navaho Religion — Values Sought and Values Received," *The Iliff Review*, Fall, 1946; Winter, 1947.

or denies the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy. But even here when the therapeutic implications are explored, the operational approach remains.<sup>4</sup> This suggests a distinction which is obvious but often overlooked, namely, that of "facts" from "interpretations." Facts are states of affairs, occurrences, happenings, events or episodes. They are subject to operational investigation. Interpretation consist in (i) the meanings placed upon them, and (ii) the inferences drawn from them.

By way of exemplification, we may distinguish the "evidence" for the theory of organic evolution from the theory itself. The various lines of evidence comprise such facts as the similarity of skeletal remains with contemporary forms; the levels in the ground at which various bits of skeletons are found; the vestigial remains of the past in living forms, and several others. Evolution as a theory is the interpretation which seeks to explain these several forms of evidence. It is an inference drawn from them as well as part of a new intellectual framework, the theory of inherent forces which replaced the theory of Special Creation. The latter theory relies upon what Whitehead named "Law as Imposition." According to this theory of law, nature was considered to be more or less static and incapable of producing what was observed within it. This required the introduction of some extranatural Power capable of imposing upon Nature what we observe. The theory of organic evolution presupposes law as immanent, in Whitehead's language.<sup>5</sup> In this view, life is emergent within a context, and the capabilities for such emergence are credited to the context itself, and not imposed upon it from without. This distinction between facts and interpretation becomes important when one considers the ontologies of Plato, Aristotle and Paul

Tillich. What are the facts which these ontologists seek to interpret? Are these ontologies essential in making these facts meaningful? From an operational approach, interpretations are sought within the context of the facts to be explained rather than in some form of Impositionism.

Is Operationalism an adequate method for investigating the existence and nature of God? If one will but reread the Symbol of Faith adopted by the Council of Trent, Feb. 4, 1546, he will find an answer to this question. The creed reads, in part, as follows:

I believe in one God, the **Father Almighty, Maker** of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . by whom all things were made; . . . and again he will come with glory to judge the living and the dead.<sup>6</sup>

The underlined words in the text quoted are definitely subject to operational definition and verification. "Father" means begetter, and without offspring the term is meaningless. "Maker" denotes manufacture, production and synonymous activities. And the underlined statement concerning Jesus Christ also contains terms with operational meaning and subject to operational verification. "By whom all things were made" implies creative activities, and all-inclusive activities. "And again he will come with glory" is also subject to operational investigation. The first two words quoted, "I believe" are also of the same nature. Belief means readiness to act. And the willingness or readiness to act must eventually express itself or be denied. If the Council of Trent was prepared to state its convictions in terms subject to operational verification, and other groups accepted the conceptions presented in the quotation, then it should not be considered impious for some of us today to attempt the same thing. We turn now to the development of what we believe

<sup>4</sup> *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*, (ed. Rollo May and others), 1958, Part I.

<sup>5</sup> *Adventures of Ideas*, 1933, pp. 142 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (1919), I, 79-b.

may be a possible form of Operational Theism.

The word "God" is the religious name for that in the Existential Medium to which men relate themselves in search of religious values. If we are to take seriously the operational approach, we must relate our conception of God to the metaphysics presented above. With this in mind, we shall examine the three groups of metaphysical categories to determine their possible relevance for this purpose. It is understood that it is not necessary to use all of them, but only those which may appear relevant to religious values as we understand them.

### I. Categories of Existence

The category of Episodicity does not appear to be relevant in itself. Episodes are identifiable and limited. God in any system may be both. It is possible however, that God is a phase of many or all episodes without being identical with any of them.

The second category of Existence is **Directional Momentum**. In *Metaphysical Basis*, (p. 23) it was stated that "every identifiable phase of the Existential Medium appears to be directional and dynamic." As Bergson identified Duration with God, and Schopenhauer Will with the Demonic, so Directional Momentum may be adopted as the primary category of Existence so far as the conception of God is concerned.

The third is **Modifiability**. We considered this in connection with episodes in terms of external structure and internal nature. At the moment, I see little significance in attributing modifiability to God. There is significance in attributing the **capacity to modify** to God, i.e., the Directional Momentum operative in all episodes may well be responsible for whatever modifications occur. In this sense, God as Directional Momentum is the active factor in creativity and, for that matter, destructiveness.

The fourth category of Existence is

**Stability**. Stability may be either absolute or relative, positive or negative. The Forms in Plato's philosophy were absolutely stable, that is, permanent, perfect and changeless. In recent thought, light may be the only known constant. There may be some significance in attributing constancy to the activity of God, but it would have to be relative rather than absolute. The spontaneity which Charles S. Peirce (1939-1914) found in nature appears to be a fact. Accordingly, relative stability-constancy may be attributed to God, but not absolute. Stability may be negative in that there appears to be that in both nature and man which hampers the powers of Directional Momentum. According to such ancient thinkers as the Platonists, Aristotelians and Stoics, this took the form of the passivity of matter. In modern thought, men like the late Edgar S. Brightman called this hampering factor "the Given" which resisted the purpose and the activities of God. Perhaps we should use constancy rather than stability in this connection. Its etymology suggests that it means fidelity, firmness of purpose, or steadfastness. These are human characteristics which we have agreed not to extend to cover divine activities. However, constancy appears to be characteristic of Directional Momentum, balanced to be sure by spontaneity. We shall consider this again when we discuss the Modal categories of Determinateness and Limitation later.

The fifth of the categories of Existence is **Quality**. We defined it as "the all-pervasive property of episodes to induce or produce modifications in persons or other episodes." (*Metaphysical Basis*, 25). Quality must be an essential property of any reality to which the name God applies. If God as defined lacks the capacity to affect, to make differences, then the objective referent of the name God becomes irrelevant or insignificant.

The quality attributed to God may take the form of a crude metatechnology, the refined perfection of Aristo-

tle's Unmoved Mover, or the ontological "Ground-of-Being" of Paul Tillich. In any case, God must be a factor within the situation capable of inducing, evoking or producing effects or changes.

The following comments on the categories of Existence appear relevant:

In the case of God, as in that of other realities, we do not believe it is possible to discuss the existence of God as *such*. There is no evidence to assert that God is a *Being* possessing the several properties or characteristics just discussed. All that we can assert in Operational terms is that these characteristics appear. What may be required, in terms of presuppositions, to make them possible, was considered in the articles on "The Cognitive Quest for God" which may be considered later if time permits. Here it is sufficient to note that Directional Momentum appears to be the primary category of Existence in the development of Operational Theism.

The religious significance of Directional Momentum will be considered later. God, let us say provisionally, is the religious name for the Directional Momentum operative at all levels of the Existential Medium, including the human.

There is an esthetic phase, expressed most fully in Peirce and somewhat less in the writings of Schopenhauer, which belongs within this context. This will be discussed in the next paper.

## II. Categories of Relation

We noted that the relational categories were based upon and in the fact of otherness. This affirmation of otherness is a denial or rejection of the conception of a "block universe," and the acceptance of a pluralistic approach. The evidence available supports pluralism rather than monism.

The first of the relational categories is **Compresence**. It is defined to mean that nothing ever exists in complete isolation. (Metaphysical Basis, p. 27). If God is the factor of Directional

Momentum present in all episodes, and if episodes are always in some context, then we may speak of the compresence of God meaningfully. God as Directional Momentum is **present with** every episodic entity, event, or more broadly, actuality.

The second of the relational categories listed was **Emergence**. Emergence refers to the fact that episodes continue to appear within some context of other episodes and that they were in some sense novel and unpredictable. Does this apply to God? As Directional Momentum, God is implicated in emergents at all levels. The emergence of the new out of a context of existing episodes depends upon the organization of energy productive of the new or novel. In fact, the appearance of the repetitive as well as the novel requires that energy be reorganized from the old to produce the emergent or the resultant, to use C. Lloyd Morgan's language. Emergence is thus one way the creativity of Directional Momentum manifests itself. Is God as Directional Momentum also an emergent? If this were the case, we should have something emergent from nothing, an untenable position. Nor can we state that Directional Momentum is growing although there is under way a continuous reorganization of the ways in which energy is structured. The universe in so far as spontaneity prevails must be one in which new possibilities emerge. Growth of emergent structures may be factual. Whether or not this constitutes growth in God as Directional Momentum appears questionable.

The third relational category is **Multiplicity**. The metaphysics developed is pluralistic rather than monistic. Does this apply to God? A distinction must be made between generic and numerical otherness. "Generic" is derived from "genus" or "general." It is the antithesis of specific or particular. By way of illustration, diamond (generic) is a natural form of carbon "highly valued as a precious stone when

transparent and of crystalline form." Diamond *qua* diamond refers to its generic meaning. When we define or denote diamond in this sense we refer to its general or generic nature. When, however, this form of carbon is actually observed, it is always in some limited quantity. In this case, when we say "this is a diamond" we are distinguishing this piece of it from others numerically. Yet despite this numerical otherness, diamond *qua* diamond is the same wherever found.

If we accept Directional Momentum as the basic category of Existence for Deity, we may conceive of God as one generically. At the experimental level, however, God as Directional Momentum is found in various episodes, and therefore must be viewed as numerically plural. Perhaps this is the significance of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. God is always generically God, yet when actually experienced, Deity functions as Father (Creator), Son (Savior), and Holy Spirit (inspirer operative within the human spirit). Trinitarianism is a generic monotheism combined with an experiential polytheism.

The next relational category is **Selectivity or Non-neutrality**. These terms indicate involvement, engagement and participation. They also indicate avoidance, rejection or repulsion (Metaphysical Basis, p. 28). This is the key category for the conception of God at the relational level. Non-neutrality or Selectivity is implied in the conception of Directional Momentum. It is Directional Momentum which is responsible for the changes experienced or observed within ourselves, within society and in the universe as a composite of episodes.

Momentum as such may not be particularly significant religiously. But Directional Momentum means that activity as directional has character, that the way one episode impinges upon another is selective and not random, that effects are only partially predictable or determinable especially when

spontaneity is involved. In the discussion of the metaphysics of Episodic Durationality, we observed the Existential Medium appeared to be a "functional whole." We meant by this that every part appeared to be "sensitized" to other parts; that modifications in one episode or within some part of an episode meant further modifications, a fact we shall consider later under **transeunce**.

God as Directional Momentum is non-neutral or selective, involved, implicated, engaged and participating, whatever that word may mean. We may combine this with the relational category of compresence and conclude that God is actively compresent, selectively or non-neutrally in and with all episodes which comprise the Existential Medium.

The last of the relational categories is **Transeunce**. We defined it in terms of the effects of episodes upon one another as a result of the interaction presumably occurring among them. (Metaphysical Basis, p. 29). There appears to be interaction among episodes. Some forms of interaction are direct, such as the effect of sunshine upon snow. Other forms are more indirect. During the Ice Ages, more snow fell at the poles than could melt in the intervening summers. The result was a continued accumulation of snow and ice. Gradually, this increasing weight of snow and ice forced some of it southward and the glacial ages were under way. From this there followed certain indirect or corollary effects. The advancing glaciers dug deep holes along the northern boundaries of the present United States. Lakes formed in these depressions, and a vigorous and populous civilization developed along their borders. Quality is the term we are using to indicate the direct effects of the glacial action, transeunce to denote the indirect effects or consequences. Transeunce is the name for the indirect or long-range consequences of episodic activity. In traditional theological language, immortality, in its several forms,

is the term used to denote or designate both the fact that something survives the death of an individual and also that which survives. In more neutral language, transeunce is the name for the carry-over from one episode to succeeding and contemporaneous episodes. It may also denote that which remains within or among these succeeding or compresent episodes. God is implicated in this inasmuch as it is the activity called Directional Momentum which makes this possible.

### III. Categories of Modality

We did not define modality, but stated that the categories subsumed under it specified "how episodes functioned as related." We shall examine the five Modal categories to determine what, if any, relevance they may have for an Operational Theism.

The first is **Spatiality**. By Spatiality we mean one phase of the area-interval character of episodes. An "area-interval is a limited and identifiable field" (Metaphysical Basis, p. 30). If God is the religious name for the Directional Momentum operative or present in all episodes, area does not appear applicable in any specific sense. Perhaps the most that can be said is that God functions within and among areas. (Even "among" may be too inclusive). This statement contains both a denial and an affirmation. It denies the presence of Directional Momentum outside of episodes. Transcendence of one episode (numerical pluralism) may be affirmed, but transcendence of all episodes must be denied. What is affirmed is that God as Directional Momentum is absolutely, operationally immanent in every identifiable and theoretically identifiable episode.

If we wished to take seriously what was suggested concerning Durationality, i.e., that the great galactic systems apparently emerged from some more basic field of energy which we called Durationality, in Bergsonian terms, this would provide a more or less inferred context within which all that is known

and knowable appeared. And since the emergence of the new means the organization or reorganization of energy and whatever else may be involved, it may be asserted that both direction and momentum were present in Durationality in some form or degree. This would provide an inferred "Ground-of-Being" so popular in some contemporary theology. It is difficult to justify this operationally, and its necessity may be questioned. Assuming for the moment that this was and is the case, then God as Directional Momentum would be immanent within Durationality also. I do not believe this extension is either essential or necessary for an Operational Theism as here projected.

The second Modal category is **Temporality**. Temporality was defined in terms of intervals, Time in terms of times. In what sense can temporality be attributed to God as Directional Momentum?

E. S. Brightman defended the thesis that God must be temporal in an article in *The Journal of Religion* in 1932. It also appeared in his posthumous *Person and Reality* in 1958. He contended that whatever was real was active, and that action by its very nature was temporal, confined to intervals. God as Cosmic Experiment, so Brightman, must be viewed as "omni-temporal rather than nontemporal."<sup>7</sup>

In the discussion of the metaphysical basis of value and religion, we concluded that "To be is to be temporal." It would appear necessary to say the same concerning God as here defined. When we identify God with the Directional Momentum present in episodes, we must accept the consequent conclusion that Directional Momentum is present within limited area-intervals. To affirm that it is not bound by that within which it is would be nonsense. In so far as God is operationally verifiable within episodes and not outside or independent of them, with the possible

<sup>7</sup> *Person and Reality*, p. 331.

exception of what future use we may make of Durationality as the matrix out of which episodes emerge, we must assert that God is operative distributively. And this means that the temporal limitations which apply to episodes also applies to what is present or operative within them.

It may be well to relate what has just been written with the analysis of the conception of God in the papers on "The Cognitive Quest for God." We noted that the first problem was that of deducing the category for Deity. Two such categories are found in the literature of religion. The first is the Agathonic and the second the Dynamic. The first emphasized God as Good or source of Good; the second emphasized the power (quality in our present language), i.e., the momentum and directionality of God, to use the language we are now employing. The second level was the conceptual. Concepts were defined "as general terms, less inclusive than categories whose function is that of denoting, designating, presenting or making explicit the meaning or meanings derived from the investigation and interpretation of the data prescribed by categories."<sup>8</sup> The third level was the individual-Particular, "the level of psychosomatic prehension of God by the individual worshipper under the impulse of his particular religious need."<sup>9</sup> We refer here to specific persons in situations where some reorganization of values and goals is required by the fact that they are threatened by stabilities or contravening activities. The demand is not for an intellectually satisfying conception of the God of the University; it is for God as involved in and appropriate to this specific situation or condition. If God is to be experienced at all, it is within a specific episode in the life of the individual person. Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethesamene is an example of the experience of God

at the Individual-Particular level. To this extent, then, the availability of God requires spatio-temporality so far as God's activities are concerned.

The third category is **Limitation**. We may combine **Determinateness**, the fourth category, with Limitation in the interest of economy of space. If reality consists in episodes, then all that is consists in or within the limitations inherent in the nature of episodes. And if God is defined fundamentally in terms of Directional Momentum, this Directional Momentum expresses itself within episodes, i.e., is limited operationally to episodes and their interrelations. But limitation in this sense does not tell the whole story. Determinateness enters the picture in that Directional Momentum is selective in the realization of ends, goals or culminations. This may be exemplified at the stellar level in that the great suns may be charted in terms of their place in the predetermined culminations of the consumption of their hydrogen. That stars live by transforming their hydrogen into helium appears to be a fact, and is the fate of stars as such. There are directionalities operative at other levels. This is not denied by what may be called the "random" factor at work at some levels. R. S. Lillie has developed this at some length. "Randomness is a negative concept, meaning simply the **absence** of directiveness; random events occur without any guidance of control uniting them into a larger unity; they are haphazard or casual. Hence random events tend toward no definitely integrated conclusion or final state."<sup>10</sup> He noted however that long continued random agitation of a "freely mobile collection of objects leads to their uniform or equally spaced distribution."<sup>11</sup> This fact must be considered, I suggest, within the framework of directionality. Predictability may be absolute, or it may be

<sup>8</sup> *The Iliff Review*, Spring, 1952, p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> *Biology and the Philosophy of Organism*, 1945, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



statistical. In the first, there is no element of randomness or even of spontaneity; in the second, whereas predictability becomes impossible for any individual unit, it is possible for the group. In this case, directionality applies to the many specifically, but not to any given unit within it.

This factor of randomness, in so far as it is true of actualities rather than symptomatic of the inadequacies of our present means of investigation, appears to be present primarily at the microscopic and submicroscopic levels. At the macroscopic levels, there is more regularity or determinateness. The question of spontaneity will be reserved for later consideration. We assert then, provisionally, that "there is a tide in the affairs of men" and in galaxies which may be described as determinate, and that randomness belongs within this context. When men spoke of "The Will of God" this may be translated into terms of Limitation and Determinateness.

This becomes more meaningful when we consider the last of the modal categories, namely, **Culmination**. As noted in the preceding papers in this series, episodes tend to realize or achieve a point of maximal extension, intensity, quality potential, etc. This more or less indefinite point may be considered a culmination, the satisfaction of the conditions presupposed in episode activity. This may be considered the creative side of divine activity. The fact of limitation temporally, noted in connection with value theory in that every value situation tends to disappear or be replaced, will be considered later. We may satisfy our purposes at this point by noting that we are in the midst of a process in which culminations are constantly occurring, that we can predict many of them, and that they constitute the value phase of the Existential Medium. We can be relatively certain that this continuous flow of culminations will occur, but must admit that the forms they may take and the quality potential they may

have are matters beyond our present understanding. It may be true that in terms of the Hoyle or Gamow conceptions of the cosmos, we can predict what may occur at the cosmic level. In this case, however, we must remember that one of these men may be wrong, and perhaps both. At the human level, the factors are too numerous and complex to justify more than limited prediction.

We may summarize this attempt to base a conception of God upon the metaphysics developed in terms of the three undefined terms of our Limited Vocabulary. (i). As to Existence, God is the religious name for the Directional momentum immanent in the episodes which together comprise the Existential Medium including man. God's activities—the retention of the stable and the modification of existing episodes—are discoverable within episodes at all levels. (ii). In terms of Relation, God may be considered compresent, engaged with and implicated in all that occurs, the repetitive as well as the creative and/or destructive, directly in terms of quality and indirectly in terms of transeunce. From this point of view, God is generically One but operationally many. (iii). God's operations or activities function within episodes with directionality dominant over randomness. The outcomes of these activities appear in a persistent succession of culminations which are more or less temporary. These three statements are made in metaphysical language. It now remains to determine whether or not they can be translated into more familiar religious language. We shall examine three forms of Christian thought in order to see whether or not this metaphysical language is in any significant sense functionally equivalent to their languages.

The traditional conception of God was organized about such terms as Creator, Savior, Lawgiver and Holy Spirit. The trinitarian formula included God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father as creator provided men

with confidence in the power responsible for all. This constituted a "humanizing of nature" in Freud's terms.<sup>12</sup> Fear of nature, or of Fate, threatened man's self-esteem; the "eternally remote" provided small basis for comfort or consolation. When traditionalism transformed the "eternally remote" into an image of the Father, nature and its forces became meaningful. Furthermore, the conception of Father provided men with a whole pattern of behavior whereby they could confront what they could not control with some hope of help. Whether one accepts Freud's analysis of the religious humanizing of nature or not, the fact remains that traditional theology subordinated the cosmos as understood to the powers of God as defined.

This continues in more recent developments of orthodoxy. Here the emphasis is placed upon myth, and that of Adam and Eve is a good example of the "humanizing" process. The key to the relations between God as creator and man as created was obedience. As the symbol of this relationship, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden to Adam and Eve. The story has been developed further in terms of the effects eating the forbidden fruit had upon man, transforming him into a rational being, God-like, which constituted his sin.<sup>13</sup> Men like Carnell and Wieman also continue this "humanizing process" but do so at different levels.

The reasons for this were indicated above. In Freudian terms, man is dominated by the pleasure principle. He assumes that everything exists for him and for his interests, pleasures or values. A non-humanized world would make this assumption questionable. If the force or forces operative above and within the universe are human or humanized, a basic Hedonism is believ-

able. In this context, one may say that **only the pleasurable is real.**

We must now ask what traditional theology sought to do for those who developed it and their believers. Several possible values may be suggested. The first is that it sought to provide some defense against the immensities and impartialities of the universe. Certainly, early man found himself pitted against forces beyond his comprehension, and largely beyond his control. He could not ignore them, so was forced to adopt some attitude toward them. At some levels, as the Totemic, the Existential Medium was thought of in tribal terms. The several divisions of the tribe provided categories in whose terms everything could be understood. What was more relevant, the environment could be treated **as though it were in fact a Tribe.** Then the ways of relating oneself to the tribe were adopted as techniques, ways of relating persons and groups to the more inclusive reality tribalized, i.e., transformed into a tribe. Much later, in many if not all of man's religion, this transformation process continued in more refined terms.

This "humanizing" process had several values. It transformed the "eternally remote" into human terms. Granted that the personal or social qualities attributed to God were normally the highest experienced, or even extrapolations of the highest, there was still a basis for the well-known personal and social relations with God as understood and interpreted. Second, it provided a basis for significance and meaning. If the deepest power in all reality was personal or social, then no matter how puny the individual or group may have been, both found significance in that, as it was stated, man was "made in the image of God." His interests and concerns were related to those of the divine Being in control of all. Meaning was found in that the relations which obtained in the society would be said to obtain in the human-divine relationship. Thirdly, prior to

<sup>12</sup> *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927, and other works.

<sup>13</sup> H. Gunkel, *Die Urgeschichte und die Patriarchen, in Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, 1921, Part I, Vol. 1, p. 66 ff.

the rise of the conception of natural law, men found basis for dependability in their sacred scriptures. The Will of God, as expressed in medieval theology was a primary source of the modern conceptions of nature and natural law.<sup>14</sup>

The second Christian system to be considered briefly is Existentialism. As presented by Kierkegaard and Jaspers, two of the more noted Christian Existentialists, it represents a vigorous attempt to "humanize" the Existential Medium, or to reduce the non-human to insignificance or irrelevance. The movement is characterized by Walter Kauffmann as opposed to system. In Kierkegaard's case, it was the dominant Hegelianism which constituted the "system" to be fought. This opposition to system has meant the "presentation" of many points of view rather than the development of a consistent, well-integrated school.

The significant emphases in the several presentations for our purposes are two, subjectivity and authenticity. Subjectivity is important in that it defines the primary data admissible for the understanding of God and man. "The deepest and most real things in life are experienced by the **individual in his inner** decisions, which depend on their own kind of clarifying thinking."<sup>15</sup> More recently, the word "authenticity" has been emphasized. It must be coupled with subjectivity to be understood. Whatever can be made an object, i.e., objectified, and investigated by operational methods, constitutes "nature," and is inauthentic. The authentic is the realm of the subject, the sphere of inner decisions, where the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy does not obtain.<sup>16</sup> The inauthentic may be stated in one form in terms of the surrender by the individual of his power of deci-

sion by merging himself in some crowd, and permitting it to make his decisions for him.

It is this emphasis upon the individual and his innermost being which makes possible the denial of an operational approach and the affirmation of the primacy of "subjectivity" in understanding the self and God. It would appear that this is an highly refined attempt to place man at the very center of the Existential Medium, and to that extent to humanize reality. Jaspers hinted at this in the statement from Kaufmann's selections of his writings "Man is reduced to a condition of perplexity by confusing the knowledge that he can prove with the convictions by which he lives."<sup>17</sup> "The knowledge which he can prove" is of course that derived from scientific studies and common-sense experience. "The convictions by which he lives" are, presumably, born out of his inner experiences. The rejection of the "subject-object" realm means, I suggest, a rejection of the relevancy of all operational knowledge for the understanding of man as Existent, and of God. This is either a humanizing of the world, to the extent that they discuss the Existential Medium, or it is a relegation of the cosmos to a condition of irrelevancy in man's religious quests. In these terms, man's significance as the only authentic form of existence below the divine is assured. "The eternally remote" in Freud's language, ceases to be a factor as man confronts "his fate." From this point on, Existentialism provides many of the values considered in connection with traditionalism.

Another important trend in Christian thought is based upon the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. He faced two difficult problems. The first was posed by Hume's rejection of the classical conception of causality upon which the whole Aristotelian tradition rested. Hume noted that this tradition pre-

<sup>14</sup> Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 1925, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Werner Brock, *Contemporary German Philosophy*, Cambridge: At the University Press, 1935, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*, 1958, pp. 118 f.

<sup>17</sup> W. Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, 1956, p. 144.

supposed some unobservable realm to support the necessity presumed to obtain in causal relations. This took the form of the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle, Being in Aquinas, and similar concepts in others. This heteroscopic Reality provided the element or factor of necessity which transformed observed contiguity and priority into causality. Hume argued that only the observed existed and that the necessity found in causal relations was based upon habit.

Kant accepted the Humean criticism of classical causality while insisting that necessity and universality in relations were essential if man was to retain his confidence in the nature of things. If as Hume insisted, they could not be found in the world of phenomena, perhaps they could be found in the sensorium and understanding of man. Kant then grounded necessity and universality in the structures of humanity rather than in the nature of things. The second problem which he faced was that of finding a basis for necessity and universality in man's moral judgments. The situation in Germany reflected the aftermath of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Some two thirds of the population disappeared, and the remainder lived in poverty. Under these conditions, the moral life disintegrated. Living, as Martin Schutze pointed out, in small villages, the mentality of the villagers was limited by what could be seen from the spire of the village church. "The mean ethics of a cowed poverty, browbeaten by an absolutistic and far from incorruptible officialdom, shut off from every avenue of escape to opportunity, prevailed like a fatal plague the civic life."<sup>18</sup>

This "Kleinbuerger mentality" remained when Kant appeared on the scene. One of the tasks which he set for himself was that of replacing this ethic of mean expediency by a more

majestic one. Dominated by the Humean view that neither universality nor necessity could be inferred from what was observed, he sought for them within man rather than in the examination of human behavior. As a result of his investigations, he concluded that there was no middle ground between absolute loyalty to the non-empirical moral law and "mean expediency." Despite his lack of concern for practical consequences in moral action, Kant believed it necessary to affirm that one's duties are in fact divine commands. God as the Moral Governor of the universe was the ground and guarantor of the universality and necessity of the Moral Law.<sup>19</sup>

Kantianism constitutes an ambitious attempt to keep the human at the center of things. The "laws" governing the phenomenal world were derived from man's sensorium and understanding; those governing his moral life were derived from his moral will. This may not constitute a "humanizing of nature" based upon the pleasure principle of Freud, but it was in fact a way of subordinating the world of fact to human needs. And it gives some point to the remarks of two men of widely different temperaments. Freud asserted, provisionally, that the humanization of nature tended to restrict man's interest's in the immense world about him. "Think of the distressing contrast between the radiant intelligence of a healthy child and the feeble mentality of the average adult. Is it so utterly impossible that it is just religious upbringing which is largely to blame for this relative degeneration?"<sup>20</sup> And F.S.C. Northrop of Yale, who cannot be called a foe of religion in any context, stated some years ago (post World War II) that the moral and religious forces were in no position to control the powers unleashed by scientific de-

<sup>18</sup> Schutze, "The Cultural Environment of the Philosophy of Kant," in *Immanuel Kant*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1925, pp. 48 f.

<sup>19</sup> *Immanuel Kant: Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. L. W. Beck), New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956, p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 84.

velopments because both had adopted stances which prevented them from forming a creative synthesis with the sciences. Roman Catholicism had allied itself with an outmoded science, a modified Aristotelianism, and Protestantism had cut itself off from alliances with any science.<sup>21</sup> The preceding analysis of traditionalism, Existentialism and Kantianism supports Northrop's judgment at this point.

In looking back at the question posed above, i.e., whether it is possible to translate Operational Theism into more

traditional terms, the conclusion is that this is possible only to the extent that the humanizing of nature, or the centrality of human values can be surrendered. The Operational Theism sketched above does not provide for either in any significant sense. If it is adopted, it becomes necessary for humanity to accept a much more modest place in the nature of things, and to find values in more inclusive structures of existence. Theology will be based upon "the reality principle," or, perhaps we should say, assume a new Calvinistic form. This will be considered in the next and concluding paper in this series.

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<sup>21</sup> *The Logic of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 1947, p. 365.

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