Religion and Culture by Paul Tillich: Lecture XXXIII

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The last statement about the problem of religion and education referred to a phenomenon which one could also observe especially in the twenties of this century, the phenomenon that the younger generation didn't want only technical education, as it was given in the public schools, and not only humanistic education, as it was given in the higher schools, but that they wanted something which made it possible for them to commit themselves unconditionally to a cause. Since the power of the churches—for instance in Germany—was very limited at that time and was not a matter of ultimate concern or commitment, they accepted the different *totalitarian* claims to unconditional validity and therefore unconditional subjection. This is very important for the understanding of that element in education which I called "Whereto? Whither? Where do we go to?" You know the word "education" is derived from *e-ducere*, "leading out," namely leading-out of the state of roughness, lack of shape, of formlessness, of chaos. And this, all education tries to do, and about that they know. But if you lead something *out* of something, the question arises, "Into *what* do you lead him?" And here the situation of the twenties in Europe, in all countries (but I observed it best in Germany, of course), the situation was that the two methods of education—the method of mediating technical skills and the method of developing all human potentialities in terms of a humanistic education—didn't fulfill the hidden and more and more open desire of the younger generation. And so they were looking for something which was for them—or could become, as they believed, for them—
|a matter of ultimate concern. And those movements which fulfill this demand were the [419]
totalitarian movements, both Nazism and Communism. These movements realized this very early. Their main power of strength was just this, that they felt the younger generation wants to have something of unconditional character, and they *gave* it to them, with great strictness and severity, and the younger generation, many of them, [submitted] to it. And they became later on the storm troopers of Fascism, Nazism and Communism.

At the same time, and especially after the breakdown of these movements (or of two of them) in Western Europe, many people turned to another sphere of ultimate concern, of complete commitment, namely the Roman Church. And we had a wave of conversions from humanism and Protestantism to the Roman Church for the same reason, because there was a "Whereto?" that answered.

Now let me see how the situation is here, in this country. Perhaps everything comes here (according to historical destiny) a little bit later than in Europe, in terms of the

decisive spiritual movements. There still was the acceptance of a religious, political and cultural conformism, when I came to this country 20 years ago. But it was already shaken on some points. It was shaken by the great crisis in the thirties. It was shaken by the results of the First World War, which surely and almost visibly led to the Second World War. It was shaken by the outcome of the Second World War, which produced a third so-called "Cold War." And it was shaken by the inner emptiness of the beliefs of the twenties into the identity of technical progress with a program towards a fulfillment of human existence. | [420]

So there are indications of a similar situation as we found it in the early twenties in Europe. But now, where to turn, if you are asked the question—and I am asked this question very often—"Which answer can be given?" Let me go into two answers, the one which is actually given and the other which *should* be given. The answer which is actually given is given by the masters of public communication, by those who through movie, radio, television, newspapers and other forms of public communication, influence [us] day and night—because the air is filled day and night with the waves produced by these masters. They influence, if not the conscious life, if some people keep away from it (certainly *in*directly, by language, by ideas, by plays, by best sellers and many other ways) the climate in which we all are living. So we can say the question "Whereto? To what shall we go?" is answered by the adjustment to a universal climate which is produced by the anonymous leaders of public communication. It is introduction into something, certainly, but it is introduction into a climate. Not something definite, but not something vague either. It is what, in my analysis of the situation, I called patternization, and adjustment to a pattern which of course is not absolutely fixed, it changes a little every year, but which generally speaking is given. So we can say: the answer to the question of the younger generation, which is similar to the question in the early twenties in Europe—*where to*? *into what*?—is given continuously, day and night, by those who create the universal climate in which we are living.

But this leads to a state of mind in which those who are educated are not able any longer to say No! to save their spontaneity and their freedom of protest. And if this is taken away, |then of course the education *is not better*, although much smoother and [421] softer than the education to a totalitarian ideal. It is in both cases the education to the impossibility to say No!

This form of education to adjustment is always going on, and expresses itself in all the little symbols which appear in movie and television, in music, in slogans, in little changes of the language, in little symbols produced by the arts which are communicated. And everybody is influenced by them, and it is hard to say No to it.

But now, there is perhaps another form, another answer possible—an answer in which introduction is given—the third type of education beyond technical schools and humanistic development of potentialities—which I called the introductory type; namely introducing into a group which by its very nature unites concrete symbols with the necessity of protest. For me this is the meaning of a Protestant education, which does not necessarily have to be done by the Protestant churches, although it *should* be done by them, but it can be done also by other agents—home, schools, universities, etc. It is the introduction into something which is in itself possible only if the spirit of protest is preserved, and that's what we call Protestantism ...

Now here we come to a point which needs a little more discussion of what I would understand when I use the word "Protestantism." If you take "Protestantism" as another religion beside the Catholic religions and beside the non-Christian religions, in which

there are special liturgies, special sum of doctrines, a special form of ethics, and a social structure called a church, which is not the Roman church but another church—then of course Protestantism |would fall under the same problem as the Roman church and the [422] totalitarian movements. It would not allow *in itself* the protest *against* itself. But this is just what makes Protestantism Protestant, that it permits, by its very nature—and therefore *asks* for, by its very nature, within itself—the *protest* against itself.

How is this possible? This is possible only because Protestantism in its origin was in the tradition of the Roman church, it still has preserved a lot of the Catholicsubstance—in traditions, in doctrines, in cult, in ethics—but at the same time, it has exploded and disrupted the authoritarian and, spiritually speaking, totalitarian structure of the Roman church. It has produced churches which tried to continue the original Christian tradition, especially the biblical one, and the early one, but which did not subject [i.e. submit] to any infallibility, either of the Pope or of the Protestant theologians, in interpreting the Bible. Now this was decisive. And this made it possible for Protestantism to get a quite different relationship to culture. I once wrote the sentence—and I quote it since that time, sometimes—that Protestantism has a *pathos* for the secular, a passion for the secular. Why? Because it belongs to the Protestant principle to see God related to the secular as much as to the sacred—we discussed that in the beginning of the lectures last semester when I spoke of the presence of the ultimate concern in every cultural action. This was a Protestantism statement, a consequence of the Protestant principle. Therefore Protestantism is able to subject itself to the criticism which comes from the secular culture—in science, the arts, ethics, and all other forms of man's spiritual creativity. At the same time, |it can point, *in* all these realms, to the ultimacy of meaning, to the [423] depth-dimension.

On this basis, education, to Protestantism, is a profoundly dialectical thing—"dialectical" meaning Yes and No, united. It belongs to the introductory form of education, but at the same time, it can use the technical education, and has used it very much, especially [in] the Protestant countries which introduced the universal obligation to go to the public school for every child. And it can use, at the same time, the humanistic education.

Now this was done mostly in the higher education, and very thoroughly—I told you last time what humanistic education in Germany meant; it meant really living in the humanities for the decisive educational years of your life, from nine to eighteen.

Out of this, many problems arise. And we *should* actually concentrate on these problems when we speak about religion and education. Here they are concentrated in one living dialectic, between three types, and perhaps between something which is *beyond* them. In order to discuss this, let me first go back to a question which lies a little before the question "Whereto?"—namely "Where from?" The one answer is given: roughness, chaos, etc. But this is only the actual *state* of the child. The other question is: is every individual a *tabula rasa*?—meaning an empty blackboard on which education has to write something. Or is every human being gifted with potentialities which belong essentially to his being? In the first case, everything must be given to him; he must be introduced into something which is completely new, for instance the surrounding world, including the religious message in it. The other way is the development of |potentialities, which [424] are already in the child. Now if we look in this light to the Greek and the Christian education, then we must say: the Greek—or as Kierkegaard has emphasized, the Socratic education, which he also called the Religion "A"—presupposes that every human being has potentialities which only must be developed; in mythological terms Plato called this the historical memory, which we find in every human being. The example he gives in the

dialogue *Menon* is the slave who is entirely uneducated but who can understand, in a very short time, the Pythagorean proposition if it is shown to him; he has insight into it because, in mythological terms, he remembers the mathematical structures and their inner evidence, from his participation in the eternal Ideas. If we take the word "memory" as a mythological *[sic]* away from this, then we can speak, instead of that, in terms of man's essential nature, and can speak of the classical concept of natural law, which means essential rational structure, which is always and essentially in him and which only needs to be developed. Whatever you give him, *he has it already*. You know that this meant, in Socratic metaphorism, the maieutic art, the art of the midwifery, of bringing out that which is in the student, and not necessarily in the teacher, by helping him to bring to light what he already has. This is the fundamental principle of all Socratic and, I can add now, of the humanisticform of education.

There are two groups which do not accept this. The one are the empiricists, or positivists, who say that man is*tabula rasa*, and that experience mediated largely by the teacher, by the history books, by the traditions, must be given to man from outside. Therefore you can form |him in any way you want. Whatever you give him as experiential [425]
material, that will shape him. And in the cynical extremes, this positivisticeducation is the education in *Brave New World*, to which I have already referred, where you can make of every human being whatever you want, if you are on the top and can decide which material of experience should be given to everybody.

Now this education, of course, is *exactly* a pre-condition of the totalitarian education, because it presupposes *that there is no power of resistance*. Where should that power of resistance come from? A positivistic education, with the presupposition that man is an empty blackboard, does not find anything out of which resistance can come. Now if you say, perhaps in defending this method, "But he can later have experiences himself, and out of this his resistance may come," then the question is, "How are independent experiences possible?" They are possible only because they are structures and categories under which experiences are made, i.e., there is natural law, there is essential humanity in man, otherwise you can*not* make even experiences out of which resistance against the contingently positive, which is given to you, can follow. If you are in this culture, you cannot do anything which is not in it. If you get this amount of positive contents, you cannot resist them because they determine the way in which you experience the world. But if your experience of possibility is *determined*, then it cannot be a possibility of resistance.

So this anti-humanistic, empirical, positivistic form of education is the pre-condition for the dictators (in principle), or for patternization (in principle)—the resistance is impossible. But in the same line of anti-humanistic, or at least *non*-humanistic, is another form: the religious. |Here religion and positivism agree, namely if religion has become [426]
positivistic—and that, it did, during the whole 19th century. The answer here is: the decisive contents are not in man, they are given from outside, they are given by revelation, and you cannot develop them in the child and out of the child. Socratic midwifery doesn't help at all, because this is not in man the paradox of the appearance of the Christ under the conditions of existence. Therefore here, only *message* can help, something which comes from outside and which is not *in* man because that is *given* to man and *said* to man, and is not in him. Now that is the religiousform of positivism which corresponds clearly, in time and content, to the positivistic form of positivism, the empirical-scientific form of positivism. And the two go very well hand in hand. England is an example for this. The British empiricists were never in a real conflict with the traditional conflict, with the

traditional Anglican religion. Why not? Because for them the positivistic contents given by empirical experience didn't interfere with the positive contents given by revelation. Positivism and revelation *seem* to be enemies; in reality they are wonderful allies: they complete each other. Both are without the humanistic criterion. And that makes them so well-working together. Kierkegaard, in discussing Socrates and Christ, has called this Religion "B", the second type, the Christian type of religion, namely the type in which nothing is developed in man but the content, the paradox of Christian message, is *given* to man.

This also can lead to totalitarian forms, at least in the spiritual world, very similar to Rome, although more difficult, namely into Fundamentalistic and orthodox traditions which claim the same kind of absolute validity as the Roman and the totalitarians. And they also are so powerful |today, and were especially in the years after the War because [427] they give another form of security which *calls* itself Protestant but which is not Protestant, because they subdue the element of protest!

Now I see that this seems to be rather difficult, so let me repeat the main points again. It is extremely important for the whole problem of religious education, which is not primarily a problem of pedagogical method—which is important but not too important—but it is a method of principles involved in education.

Let us make this distinction again. The one: man has a given structure by creation, called his essential, human nature, which expresses itself in the fundamental principles of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful—to use these half-obsolete words. That is the one way. Out of this, all other human potentialities are developed, and we are in the realm of the humanistic education. It is the Socratic education which believes that everything important is already in man; the educator doesn't give it, but he helps *to get it out* of the spiritual womb of every man.

Now the second is: *nothing* is in man; he is a blackboard on which nothing is written. So we must write on it.—And here I say: this positivistic form of answering the question has two wings, an empiricistic wing, as developed especially in the empiricistic philosophy of Locke and Hume and all his innumerable followers in England, the Continent, and here.

And the other: the religious form of positivism appearing in Schleiermacher, in Kierkegaard, in the Ritschlian school (I spoke now in abbreviations for some who have studied the history of theology in the 19th century). It is the predominant attitude of theology in the 19th century. In both cases, there is content, but there is no possibility of resisting the content which is given. |This means the humanistic element is lacking in both. This [428] alliance of non-religious and religious positivism characterizes much of our religious education and of education generally. And here we must come to a solution. Both positivistic forms cannot educate to say No! And since they cannot educate to the *protest against* the positive contents which are given, they cannot develop full humanity. It is a mutilated humanity which we find in the faces of all totalitarian followers, if they are convinced followers. We find a mutilated humanity in many *religious* groups, in whom the possibility of saying No is taken away. This mutilated humanity expresses itself often in fanaticism because these people feel their mutilation and react passionately and violently, if what they don't have is shown them from outside—then they repress elements in them, wake up, and may destroy their safety repression—which they have done.

Now this is the danger in which we are. This danger is not less by the fact that we are *not* in a totalitarian system and only partly in a Fundamentalistic form of spiritual totalitarianism or authoritarianism. But what I said about the public communications,

[they] may be the American way of killing the power of saying No!

Now I said introduction into the Protestant churches is in itself not the way out because they can go the same way into totalitarianism, or in terms of official authorities, or, which is much more dangerous, it is in terms of conventional attitudes, in suburbia, which have the power [just like] the strictest papal authorities on the individuals who live there, especially if they live as business executives in the competitive life in which they have to adapt themselves *to* the forms of competition, to which religion in *some* way, a diminished |way, may be one of the necessities of behavior. This is certainly not [429] Protestantism, and this certainly does not produce the power of saying No.

Now what I want to say now, as the only way I can find, has, let's say, three steps. The first is: All education is education *into something* and must have the introductory character into a given culture, nation and church, or other groups of cultural cohesion and symbolism. Second: It must have at the same time the humanistic balance *against* the introduction—the structure of man who is able to be creative by himself and therefore has the power of saying No. And with the humanistic, then, can go the introduction into the skills. They balance each other, the introductory and the humanistic—the introductory based on the idea that everything is given, and the humanistic on the basis that the fundamental principles are in man himself by nature.

But this balance is an uneasy one. Continuously the one is swallowed by the other. And here I can speak about the experiences of the German humanistic Gymnasium, which is high school with an additional two years of college and ends ordinarily with 18 or 19 years of age. This form of education was very interesting: everything was subjected to the humanities. But there was *also*, in the school itself, a kind of religious instruction, at least. And there was in home and church the reality of religion, at least for many people—certainly not for all because the secularization of Europe was much more advanced than it is in this country. This produced a tremendous conflict in those who were sensitive to *both* forms of contents, as you can imagine. I myself am an example for it—the conflict between humanism, with its intensive |treatment, and the autonomous ideal of creativity [430] out of human freedom, and following the rational structure of thought and the aesthetic structure and the ethical structures; and on the other hand the religious traditions, which were partly very much *outside* this situation.

And to this moment, today, I believe there is only one possibility, namely a possibility which I will call (and ask for your permission) by the old, beautiful and (as [with] all these words) deteriorized name: initiation—from the Latin, "going-into" something, namely into what?: into the mysteries, in the mystery cults, into the esoteric inner knowledge. I take this as a metaphor. I don't want to establish a new mystery religion, with this *[some laughter]*—for this you better go to California! *[laughter]*—but what I want to say is that beyond the humanistic development of man's potentialities, beyond the public education to skills and beyond the introduction into the religious groups and their symbols and rites, there is something higher than all of them, namely the mysteries of life itself, the answer to the question of the meaning of our existence. And initiation would mean: to show in all these three forms of education the point in which they cease to be sufficient—and that's what Protestantism can do, even with itself as [an example]: it can and must show its own insufficiency. There is in the mystery of life something which transcends the Christian answer, if the Christian answer is taken in terms of church doctrines and church rituals and church morals. This ultimate transcends every concrete situation, but expresses itself secularly as well as religiously in the symbols of secularism as well as in the symbols of religion, but is not bound to any of them ...

So I would say: in education it succeeds not only to use the humanistic counterbalance |against introducing into nation or church, but also something which transcends both [431]
humanism *and* the symbols of nation and church; then we have a point out of which it is possible to say No, out of which the prophetic protest against every form of fulfillment, even the religious form, *asultimate*, can come.

Now it is of course my belief as a Protestant that in the cross of Christ, this protest against the church is expressed, that this is its main symbolic power: *the protest against the church*. This is the paradox, that in the cross of Christ the protest against the church, which gives the *message* of the cross, is implied, is involved. But this is the point I want to make now. From this follows that Protestantism, if it *recognizes* this, *can* move beyond the different forms of education which I have mentioned. And negatively, I want to state that I don't believe that *any* education which is not ultimately *initiation* into—into the mystery of human existence—falls short of what it should do. And nothing is more revealing for this fact than the latest European history! *[Applause]*