

*LEGÉNDY Kristóf*¹:

Theological Reflections on Hans-Georg Gadamer's Aesthetics

Abstract.

In my thesis, my ambition is to put Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics at the service of theological thinking; however, not for the sake of a theological argumentation as an end in itself since Gadamer's aesthetic conception seems to be extremely suitable for correcting the atheistic idea. Gadamer's aesthetic hermeneutics provides a specific and flexible philosophical framework within which we can move freely, not only for the sake of art but also for the sake of Christian philosophy. My objective, naturally, is to criticize the validity of the atheist idea. I know that our finite and limited concepts are not always sufficient to get to the root of the subject's particular belief (in this case, atheism), especially since I discuss the reality of aesthetic experience and theological experience, which are by their very nature inexhaustible and infinite intrasubjective aspects as opposed to the quantum structure of concepts. Although the experience of God and the experience of art always avoid theoretical confinement, language enjoys priority in critical thinking and thus has a principled right to be a tool of rational description. Language will not only be the medium but also the goal of my

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reasoning, which I will define in the triangle of picture–image–language. This will likely point out the inherent flaws and weaknesses of atheist ideas. To quote Gadamer: “Indeed, language often seems ill suited to express what we feel. In the face of the overwhelming presence of works of art, the task of expressing in words what they say to us seems like an infinite and hopeless undertaking.”²

Keywords: hermeneutics, aesthetics, Gadamer, apologetics, atheism

*Kant's fundamental definition of aesthetic pleasure as disinterested pleasure has not only the negative implication that the pleasurable object cannot be employed as something useful or desired as something good but also the positive one that the “really existing” can add nothing to the aesthetic content of pleasure, to the “sheer sight” of a thing, because aesthetic being is, precisely, self-presentation.*³

Introduction

One acquires a lot of inner experiences and does not doubt their reality. I call that personally experienced reality an inner experience that has no objectively given existence but that reveals itself to the individual. No human being has ever experienced through their sense organs, for example, the objective existence of patriotism, given to everyone in a “material” way, yet we accept that patriotism is real. We also know that patriotism and similar inner experiences *do not exist somewhere else*, outside of man.⁴ Unlike God, because according to Christianity, God is not *Onyx* real because of the subject's judgement, and therefore is not only an inner experience but a reality independent of the individual's consciousness. How can there be an objective reality, independent of the mind, which manifests itself only in relation to man? The answer is

² GADAMER, Hans-Georg (2004): *Truth and Method*. London, Continuum Publishing Group. 402. Main sections used for my thesis: 130–157, 340–468.

³ GADAMER 2004, 281.

⁴ I make this statement based on general human experience, not as a proposal to solve the problem of universality.

simple: the subject of man is also revealed only to the subject of another man as an individual substance, i.e. as an individual essence. Similarly, God is real to the subject, but like the subject of the other person, the reality of God is not only present in the knower. The big difference is that in the case of the other person, there is a bodily experience, a physicality that carries a subject, which is sensorially perceptible and directly accessible to other people too. But in the case of God, there is no objective, collectively given external, sensory experience.

The main reason for atheism is not the lack of the concept of God and not even the often cumbersome explanation, sometimes seemingly confusing derivation or multiple interpretations of this concept. The validity of atheism is based on the absence of the image of God; at least, the lack of an objectively perceivable image for the collective. Behind our ideas about God (which, not coincidentally, are mostly characterized by an offensive anthropomorphism), the lack of a true image of God is a constant background experience. We know that all ideas about God come from imagination and are not based on an external event that can be verified by experience. The root of atheism is the fact that we do not get to know God as we get to know other people or objects. We experience things in the world and other subjects through our senses, and although we know that our perception of them is far from perfect, we do not usually doubt their existence⁵ since sensory experience can be rationally verified. We remember our experiences, relate to them, are affected by them or suffer from them, no matter whether they are connected to mundane everyday objects or prominent figures in our lives. However, the image of God does not come from sensory experience, so it is through inner experience that we form the image we think is right. This approach is not only characteristic of Feuerbach's atheism⁶ (perhaps his one is the most striking) but is the experience behind all atheistic ideas: The image of God is not outside of us but originates from within us. Briefly put, God is thus created in us as a fantasy being who is not really different from other fantasy beings.

⁵ Philosophically, one may not doubt the existing, only reality. Existence can be proved, reality can be believed.

⁶ FEUERBACH, Ludwig (1881), *The Essence of Christianity*. London, Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill. 41: "The absolute to man is his own nature."; 49: "Consciousness of God is self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge."

Of course, the atheist interpretation of the above reasoning is wrong. The fallacy obviously stems from rejecting the reality of God's experience, calling it a subjective delusion. Certainly, the conclusion of atheism is understandable but wrong. What is the reason behind it? In my opinion, it is a misconception of the picture of God and the image of God, i.e. the confusion of these two.

Picture

God is literally unimaginable, though in a human, fragmented, incomplete way, conceivable, of course. For example, goodness, love, forgiveness, etc. can all be more or less linked to some external form. This connection is obviously subjective and thus lacks exactly the same kind of objective quality as the images of objects existing around us. If I show my brother a photo of our mother, he will recognize her instantly by her features. But humanity has no objective picture of the attributes of God.⁷ Or do they? To answer this question, we first need to clarify the concept of picture.⁸

The existence of the picture is in the showing. What else could be the purpose of a picture (whether objective or subjective) than a relationship in which some (hidden) essence is revealed to the viewer. The word "picture" is used to designate an autonomous substance that in itself carries content, essence and does not direct us beyond what is shown. It is the role of the *image* to direct us to what is shown. The objective of the *image* is to resemble the model: the measure of its adequacy is the recognition of the model in the *image*. It is intended to cease to exist for its own sake and to serve entirely to deliver the represented. Such *images* include, for example, ID photos or the many snapshots we take with our phones (there are exceptions, of course). These *images* are meant to guide us beyond what is shown, so the *image* is fulfilled in the elimination of itself.⁹ Gadamer also assumes a model in the case of the picture, but unlike the *image*, the picture does not guide us beyond the model.

⁷ In the Judeo-Christian tradition, of course, there are general attributes of God, e.g. he is mostly portrayed as a man, but we are free to disregard this for now.

⁸ The passage from Gadamer on which my argument is based: GADAMER 2004, 130–138.

⁹ "A copy effaces itself in the sense that it functions as a means and, like all means, loses its function when it achieves its end" (GADAMER 2004, 133–134).

The purpose of the picture is not to eliminate because it is not a means to an end, since the showing and the shown form a unity in the picture. Just think of a painting: for example, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night* do not guide us any further, they do not navigate us to the specific model or the night sky. Because the picture is a higher reality, it claims an autonomous existence, states an autonomous content, and is the autonomous essence of reality. The *image* is a sign that dissolves itself in the reality of what it shows. (However, according to Gadamer, it is more than a sign because in some mysterious way it is linked to what is shown.) As for the picture, on the other hand, the intention is the original and autonomous unity of the non-differentiation between showing and the shown, which cannot be separated. The non-differentiation between form and content is an essential feature of all our visual experiences. The *image* is a one-sided relation, while the picture is not one-sided but a mutual relation, a statement. This way, the *holiness* of the picture, its higher reality becomes clear.

In the picture, there is an inseparable and autonomous unity between the showing and the shown. Thus, every picture is the result of a subjective judgment, an evaluation.¹⁰ This is easy to see in painting. Each painted picture stands before us as an autonomous reality, regardless of whether or not the content it represents resembles the world we experience. The painted picture is a statement, even if it is intended to declare its own irrelevance. Among modern and post-modern works of art, it is easy to find such aspirations. Let us mention, for example, Malevich's *Black Square* and his other squares; or *unpainted* blank canvases exhibited all over the world, etc.

The modern – or postmodern – paradigm of art, which may be in doubt: of material, form, author, originality, expressivity, appropriation, the technique of etching or *sophisticated destruction*, action art, the conceptualist multiplicity of signs–words–scribbles or the scent–light–nothing that substitutes the object – all this utterly powerless experimentation does not change the point that there is no work or theory which would not require the same basis: the subjective judgment of real content.¹¹

¹⁰ Value is an aspect: either an intersubjective aspect or an aspect by which the subject enters into a relation with the object.

¹¹ According to Hegel, the essence of all art is that it “presents man with himself” (Hegel qtd in GADAMER 2004, 43).

In a similar way, photography strives to make the created picture not merely an image but an autonomous revelation of a higher judgment.¹² A photograph that is not more than an image is not usually exhibited either – although the very circumstance of the exhibition, i.e. the isolated display, may predetermine the object's autonomous aesthetic value. Considering several modern artworks, the viewer might be confused, because if they saw the work not in an exhibition space but in another place, for example, Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* in a supermarket, they might see it as a decoration because the picture would not demand the aesthetic attention it demands when exhibited in a gallery.

So, the picture is the result of subjective judgment. The picture of God, in which the showing and the shown, the finite subject and the experienced infinite are in an inseparable and autonomous unity, is given to each individual, but as a totally subjective experience. Thus, we can formulate a picture of God, but each picture shows only a particular point, a momentary impression of God. To quote Gadamer: "The content of the picture itself is ontologically defined as an emanation of the original."¹³ Since the picture is correctly interpreted as an emanation of the model in which the showing and the shown are linked, the picture of God always shows only a certain experience of God: We can see a *frozen* state of our experience of God.¹⁴ Since this picture is the *product* of man's spiritual reality, the picture of God has no objectivity. Therefore, it does not follow from our picture of God that it is actually consistent with the reality of God – even though God as absolute reality may comprise infinite correlation. (Especially the worship of the picture as God, the worship of idols does not follow from it). If we think about it: it does not follow from the painted picture or the photograph taken by the photographer that their content is consistent with their subject. We can only be sure that the common human experience of God's reality evokes more or less similar associations in people.¹⁵

¹² The situation is similar with cinematography since in the general sense a film is a series of pictures that stands before us as an autonomous judgment of reality.

¹³ GADAMER 2004, 135.

¹⁴ A lifelong series of pictures of God can be a *film* that already presents God as a happening, but only for man's personal reality.

¹⁵ The works of icon art are intended to be images, but in fact they are picture types developed to the general satisfaction of the period, which are also largely consistent with the personal

Thus, we can catch the distortion of atheism, when the creation of the divine *picture* is confused with the invention of gods; Gadamer says: "... one does not confuse creating an 'image' of the divine with inventing gods and refuses Feuerbach's reversal of the *imago dei* thesis of Genesis".¹⁶

We can see that objectivity based on empirical forms is not an essential condition for the existence of a picture. Perhaps it is rather the *image* that cannot be created without an external formal similarity; so, to put it right: We do not possess the *image* of God, we do not have a collective experience of His distinctive formal qualities. In Christianity, however, there is, and that image is man himself.¹⁷ According to atheists, this is surely not an argument and much less an objective experience. However, if we look at our picture of man, it is immediately apparent that the value of the individual does not lie within the collectively given external formal experience. Behind all the prejudices and centuries of bad human practice, there lies the mistaken idea that one can be judged by their appearance. In fact, the experience of external forms becomes irrelevant in judging the individual: their real value is what they represent, what they stand for. Given the general experience about man, it is clear that Christianity refers to the real value when it claims that man is the image of God. Man is the image of the reality he embodies and of the reality he demonstrates by his actions. And to deny the reality of this *something* would be as insane as denying the reality of, say, patriotism, loneliness, or any other inner experience. The ideas represented are presented to everyone with the consciousness of reality, even to atheists, because for them the truth – taken as factual – that there is no God is real consciousness.

Before we turn to the theological interpretation of the *image*, let us pause for a moment on the *sui generis* case of the picture, which is nothing other than the mirror image. Mirror image is a mere appearance; it has no autonomous reality and cannot even be an image/copy (theoretically) separated from the model. Mirror image is a momentary illusory state, a mere reflection of the model. If we accept that the value of man is given by the reality he represents, then the mirror image is the mass man himself,

reality of the artist and the content present in the religious community. So, it shall be understood that they trigger similar associations.

¹⁶ GADAMER 2004, 137.

¹⁷ "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

the perfectly copied state yet without independent judgments, which functions satisfactorily in the presence of the model, but which may not claim an autonomous spiritual reality. (Of course, the mass man does not exist by way of definition; the term is rather suitable to describe a trend or a given state of affairs.)

Image

Man in the post-Enlightenment era submits all authority and experience to reason. But how is it possible to submit the aforementioned inner experience to reason? – or to the criteria of positive science? Natural science strives to objectify experience by eliminating the element of historicity (personal experience). Experiments shall be verifiable and repeatable so that the historicity of experience is dissolved in its objectivity. However, the self as a transcendent subject is already inherent in all acquired experience, and thus a purely objective scientific description lacking any historicity will only be given again and again to the reality of the transcendent self.¹⁸ What does this imply? In my opinion, behind the attempt to objectively describe our experience, there will always be the subjectivity of the transcendently given self, which ultimately gives value to the experience. Science's explicit pursuit is to describe experience as perfectly as possible: that is, it tries to exclude the reality of the describing subject from the description.¹⁹ As Gadamer puts it, the scientificity of modern science lies in systematically “eliminating the subjective elements of the cognitive process”.²⁰ One could say that scientific description seeks to be value-free – it sees that as ensuring its objectivity. Inner *experience*, on the other hand, is pure historicity; it has no existential objectivity. Even if the notion of patriotism can be objectified (either verbally or pictorially), it is unable to represent the very historical experience that the subject went through. Inner experience is real experience, which in extreme cases can override rationality.

¹⁸ Edmund Husserl faced the same problem when he was looking for the root of experience: HUSSERL, Edmund (1950–2004): *Husserliana*. VI. i. h.

¹⁹ Sure, scientific description is necessarily repeatedly intertwined with the subjectivity of the transcendently given self in experience.

²⁰ GADAMER 2004, 450.

Obviously, self-knowledge is an inner experience. It is about who one knows themselves to be, and it is about answering the very difficult question of *who I am*. Self-knowledge is also difficult because one comes to know oneself as an active being: not a static being but a dynamic, ever-changing one, for whom things that do not exist at the moment are also possible. One's knowing of oneself is focused on the reality that guides their actions. Clearly, this knowledge is not what (natural) sciences strive for.²¹ This kind of knowledge is a connection: to persons or objects, but ultimately to the reality which becomes a value for the subject. The value relation (whether benefit or altruism is attached to it) does not tolerate the very objectivity that scientific description seeks. The value-relation is only real for the subject – of course, it may be described in a scientific way, but the concepts (closed signs) do not carry the actual meaning. Only the subject carries the actual meaning. Thus, it makes sense – necessarily for the atheist ideology too – that man is an *image*, as value is not objectively given (although it can be more or less objectified; e.g. value becomes price), but it is a subjective judgment. It is the role of the *image* to direct us to what is shown: man is an *image* since he is directed towards the reality shown, and this gives value to him. For man, every value is so real that Feuerbach categorically stated that the object of religion is man himself since if we are to gain a deeper self-knowledge from it, it is obviously only possible if man himself is objectified in religion.²²

Either we accept that man is an *image*, or we must necessarily deny that man's value is mediated by the reality he represents (by his conscience and his actions). If Feuerbach is right that man is the object of religion, and if it is true that God is nothing but man's consciousness, then man is not an image because there is no real but only an illusory distinction between him and the represented values. Thus, we must necessarily come to the conclusion that man is not a being to be valued; indeed, all values are illusions themselves. And this predicts a grave and dark picture: our society, our contracts, the legitimacy of our institutions, our humane (as distinct from natural) way of life are all

²¹ Even Aristotle distinguishes the moral knowledge of *phronēsis* 'reason', 'insight' from the theoretical knowledge of *epistēmē* 'knowledge' (GADAMER 2004, 311).

²² FEUERBACH 1881, 13: "What was at first religion becomes at a later period idolatry; man is seen to have adored his own nature. Man has given objectivity to himself, but has not recognised the object as his own nature."

built on the foundation that the value given in subjective experience is real for the self – and not a product of fantasy.²³ If values are not real, then there is no real difference between the murderer and the innocent, the liar and the truthful and the dishonest and the decent. If man is not an image, then his existence, his values, even his whole world becomes absurd: he is constantly evaluating but without values, struggling but without purpose, and striving for consensus without reason (for example, Dr Rieux, from Camus's famous novel). The trend of absurdism in the 20th century may be appreciated as an artistic experiment, but there is no reason to consider such a self-destructive conviction and an illusion devoid of value and meaning a better idea than Christianity.

When one gives value to something, one is in fact giving value to oneself, or in other words, projecting oneself as value. But to appreciate anything, it is not the things – a chair, a lunch, or the science of theology – that have a need but first of all man himself. Through his relation to external things, man evaluates himself, gives meaning to himself and to his own existence. Existence can only be valued by reality – and this is the theological basis of human dignity. Existence being endowed with sense, that is, with meaning, which directs us towards the shown that is really different from it, fully exhausts the concept of image.

Language

Having introduced the concepts of picture and image separately, I hope that I was able to illustrate why the basic atheist position (God is an imaginary being) is wrong. The fact that the picture of God is not derived from sensory experience does not exclude the reality of God at all – not merely because God is by definition a disembodied reality (i.e. a pure spiritual being) but because the picture is the result of subjective judgment, so objective existence cannot be its measure. Moreover, the existence of the image makes the existence of a pure spiritual reality much more likely – otherwise we cannot conceive

²³ To claim that values can have meaning even if they are not actually different from human beings would bring the evaluation of the experienced world on a par with the products of imagination; thus, for example, the merits of Harry Potter would be no different from the actions of an actual student.

of man as an attitude or a relation to the represented reality. And if man is not an image, it is difficult to find value in him beyond purely bodily forms, bodily functions, or even the bonds created by fantasy.²⁴ Naturally, all of this does not prove the reality of God in a philosophical sense – rather, it makes the legitimacy of belief in God more likely and confirmed. A further critique of atheism can be derived from the linguistic application of the notions of picture and image. For the following reasoning, I will use Gadamer's writings on the hermeneutics of language.²⁵

The common understanding is that in the word we possess the thing itself. This idea is general not in the sense that people explicitly think of it this way but in the sense that “he who lives in a language has the feeling that the words he uses utterly correspond to the things he thinks about”.²⁶

According to Gadamer, the effort of interpretation, that is hermeneutical experience, allows the thinking reason to escape the prison of language – however, meanwhile it realizes that this experience itself is a linguistic one.

Because all the subject's experience of being is of linguistic nature – not in the sense that language carries the experience itself but that experiencing the world (and oneself) is revealed to consciousness through language. The hermeneutical effort in which Gadamer interprets language points to the truth that “the sign acquires meaning as a sign only in relation to the subject who takes it as a sign”.²⁷ A certain degree of variation in the meaning of words is part of the essence of language, i.e. there is no

²⁴ The proper functioning of bodily functions is surely an essential condition for the manifestation of the spirit. To quote Wolfgang Kuhn: “even a great pianist cannot play a Mozart sonata flawlessly if, for example, every second key on the piano is missing. In the same way, a conscious mind cannot express its calibre if its instrument – the brain – is not intact, if its essential tools, the centres, are rendered dysfunctional by some disease.” KUHNS, Wolfgang (2007): *Állat és angyal között*. Budapest. Kairosz. 112. (Translated by the author.).

²⁵ GADAMER 2004, 383–468.

²⁶ The quote goes on: “It seems impossible that other words in other languages could name the things equally well. The suitable word always seems to be one's own and unique, just as the thing referred to is always unique. The agony of translation consists ultimately in the fact that the original words seem to be inseparable from the things they refer to, so that to make a text intelligible one often has to give an interpretive paraphrase of it rather than translate it” (GADAMER 2004, 403).

²⁷ GADAMER 2004, 413.

purely terminological language. A *term* is a word whose meaning is clearly delimited, i.e. a strictly defined concept. These, often artificially created words in the service of scientific description perform the above-mentioned function of negating the subjective value relation of the individual. Consequently, language – like image – is not merely a set of signs, although it is intended to direct us to what is *shown*.²⁸ Though the word is not a pure sign, in some mysterious way it still belongs to its imaged existence – and not only in the case of onomatopoeic words. Words that make up language: *events* that *occur* in the inner, subjective experience of the individual. In other words, language is the instrument of subjectivity, the *film* of consciousness, i.e.: its happening in being. But consciousness is always more than words: “No human word can express our mind completely.”²⁹ Thus, it becomes clear that the word is occurrence and meaning, i.e. a fragmentary expression of the spirit’s experience.

The *inner word*, borrowed from St. Thomas Aquinas, can be used to describe the process of thinking in which the thinker puts before himself what he thinks, similarly to the case of inner experience. The *inner word* does not refer to a specific language because the *inner word* is an outpouring (emanation and incarnation) which originates from the intellect and is the realization of cognition itself: it is essentially a spiritual content that is given form and sound in spoken language.³⁰ So, it is understandable that

²⁸ It is impossible even to imagine a word or a picture that could show the relationship between existent and non-existent. Thus, the necessity of the shown, of the image stands before us as an argument for God in itself, for our word of God could not have come into being if it had not been for the real inner experience which we designate in this word. St Anselm’s (1033–1109) proof of God was also based on the logic that the concept of God has an objective denotation – unless God is only conceived of as the ultimate. However, if we want to name the ontologically existent ultimate, we cannot conceive of God as a mere name.

²⁹ GADAMER 2004, 424.

³⁰ How different human speech is from animal communication is well summed up in the following quote from French zoologist Pierre-Paul Grassé. “The vocal expressions of non-human primates (i.e. apes and lesser apes) have no symbolic meaning and are scarcely relating to each other. Animals do not combine the vocal signals into sentences of precise value; they use them to express their mood, the presence of an intruder, the discovery of a food source, or something similar. Animals do not speak; their brain is not equipped to do so. The definition of ‘pseudolanguage’ is perfectly valid for the semantics of the vocalizations of apes.” GRASSÉ, Pierre-Paul (1972): *Entwicklung zum Menschen*. Stuttgart. 316. (Translated by the author.).

the word is more than a sign: it is also a subjective connection. Even Feuerbach happened to accept this when he wanted to prove that the so-called divine word is nothing but a human word. “But does not the word of man also contain the being of man, his imparted self – at least when it is a true word?”³¹ This implies that what the word represents is not its form but its content that can be put into any form. It is also clear that the spirit retains its relevance in all embodiment: content does not become material in the word, God in man does not materialize, and man’s spiritual (artistic) aspiration in the picture does not lose its own immaterial quality. In every word and picture, i.e. in every single manifestation of the spirit, the infinity of self-consciousness can become apparent since its words and pictures never perfectly contain the thing given. “Thus thought constantly proceeds to new conceptions and is fundamentally incapable of being wholly realized in any. This incapacity for completeness has a positive side: it reveals the true infinity of the mind, which constantly surpasses itself in a new mental process and in doing so also finds the freedom for constantly new projects.”³²

Conclusions

The linguistic interpretation of *picture* and *image* points out that in every thought, in every experience that reveals itself to the subject, there is a real priority of intellectual content. In the process of formulating or showing, this content occurs by some medium – it is transmitted either towards others or towards oneself. This dualistic approach (essentially since Plato) seems to be valid and appropriate until today to describe the duality of the material world and the spirit, as well as of existence and reality. In fact, atheism denies this duality by relegating God to the realm of fantasy and defining man as a purely material being. Consequently, atheism assumes a narrow and insufficient monistic universe in which we must deny the reality of any entity other than the physical world. In general, therefore, we must say that even the properties of the substance cannot be of spiritual nature. This statement does not seem contradictory at

³¹ FEUERBACH 1881, 79.

³² GADAMER 2004, 424–425.

first sight, but a closer look reveals that properties of the substance cannot derive from physical nature. Because if they were derived from it, then either the property would need another property to be perceptible, or the substance would not need any property at all since it would be perceptible and understandable in itself. It is the properties of physical objects – e.g. smooth or hard, heavy or light, yellow or blue, etc. – that make the material world comprehensible to us, i.e. it is the properties that we understand and not the substance itself. Similarly, we understand the content of words and not the physical medium. Substance as substrate: the result of assumption, i.e. the substrate of properties about which we know nothing – we only have more or less knowledge about its properties. It is therefore necessary that the properties have a different kind of existence than the substance itself, that is, they should be really different from the substance, transcending it as a principle of existence.

With regard to the picture, we have seen that the reality of the picture is not found in material objectivity but in spiritual judgment. It is also clear in the case of the image that the shown, the model is the higher reality represented by the image. The content and formal diversity of the words prove beyond doubt that the thinking mind does not merely accumulate indexes of empty signs, but it formulates subjectively experienced content that is the result of inner experience, the intellectual endeavour of the inner word. So, we shall assume that the *invention* of God is the result of real human experience, that is, it can in no way be a subjective fantasy, an illusory image or a meaningless concept. It follows from the quality of the picture that we are creating the image of God, not God Godself. Words, inner events by which we describe God: they are not meaningless signs because they express real inner content, i.e. value. Belief in God is achieved and understood through belief in the self-worth of man. In fact, atheism and materialism, by excluding the existence of God and by proving the existential nature of pictures and concepts, encourage the Christian churches, theologians, and believers to create a more accurate and adequate image of God than has been the case so far.

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