

GUILT AND ITS REMISSION THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY¹

Perhaps the most important question theology can address to psychotherapy today is whether the latter claims to be or hopes to become the secularized form of what takes place in the realm of the Christian Faith, of the sacrament and the proclamation of the faith, viz. the remission of guilt. If psychotherapy does not make this claim, since it would be senseless to believe that it could perform such a function, then we must ask ourselves where we should draw the real, basic line of demarcation between the activities of the Church and those of profane psychotherapy concerning guilt and its remission. For obviously it cannot be said that psychotherapy is in no way concerned with guilt and remission of guilt, just because it is an activity in the field of medical psychology which, unlike the activity of the Church, does not require any divine mandate. Consequently, we must determine the line of demarcation.

In the following pages we will attempt to define this boundary. We will do this in as concise a manner as possible, almost in bare thesis-form. The metaphysical anthropology underlying our reflections would, of course, require to be worked out and proved more exactly. Nevertheless we may hope that what will be said can be fairly well understood even in the form given.

[266] 1. ‘Guilt’ is one of the most fundamental notions in theology, for theology has to do with God and his word to man. This word, addressed to man in the totality of his being, declares him to be a sinner in the sight of God and one who is redeemed by God and his action. This at once implies a threefold truth for theology:

a. Sin or guilt, as understood in theology, is indeed an occurrence capable of description, even definition if you wish, but is not at all events a *derived* phenomenon reducible to other, more original phenomena. The theological meaning of guilt has, for instance, nothing to do with a problematical interpretation of states of depression, disturbances of the psychical mechanism, etc.; it is in no way an ideological superstructure imposed on the facts of immediate experience. Guilt is not the same as illness, ‘evil’ is different from ‘neurotic’, ‘ill’, etc. Theocentric ethics is neither an unwarranted *interpretation* of psychical events nor merely some sort of ideal standard *to which* the physics of the spirit ought to ‘conform’. Rather, it expresses the true reality of the spiritual, God-related person and *is*, together with Logic, the ‘physics’ of the spirit, so that any ‘setting-in-order’ or ‘disposing-to-the-good’ of spiritual-personal reality cannot escape the question of truth. This means that since really existing guilt is an intentional happening with an *intrinsic* constitutive moment of truth or falsehood, moral right or wrong, even ‘existing’ or, if you like, ‘physical’ guilt can be repaired only by attaining the objective truth or good. In the personal dimension, to which guilt belongs, there can be no question of ‘repairs’ or ‘setting-in-motion’ of the ‘physical

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Throughout this particular treatise, the author uses the term ‘*Schuld*’ almost exclusively – a term used equally by the theologian and the psychotherapist (although in different senses). Hence we have translated it throughout by the term ‘guilt’. It should, however, be noted that, whereas the German term (in its theological sense) refers directly to the free and responsible offence against God, the English term refers rather to the result of such an *offence* – *Tr.*

apparatus' (which does not really exist in this dimension), except as a result of its assimilation to the objective norms of truth and goodness which express not only an objective duty but the true essential structure of this 'apparatus'.

b. Guilt in the theological sense is not an offence against some universal custom, civic morality, public penal laws or conventions, the laws and conventions arising from normal upbringing, etc. Nor is it merely a wrong action with harmful, destructive, pathogenic, physically and socially perturbing effects. Sin and guilt in the theological sense are to be found only where man, addressed by God, acts in God's sight and together with Him (as is his will), even though the overriding refusal to admit this fact and the suppression of this truth (viz. of the dialogical structure of guilt) is one of the essential moments of guilt and one which is not confessed until there is a conversion by grace: *Tibi soli peccavi*.

[267] c. Only when someone sins knowingly against God can there be guilt. It is quite a different matter (and one into which we do not wish to enter more closely here) to determine the extent to which there must be objective and reflex 'awareness' of saying 'no' to God and his will and of thus (and only thus) establishing guilt. The fact, however, that real guilt before God is possible only as a knowingly perpetrated act, does belong to the theological notion of guilt. Unconscious and involuntary personal guilt before God does not and cannot exist. There can be extremely reflectionless, forgotten, dissimulating or suppressed guilt, but not guilt brought about unknowingly and involuntarily. The different degrees of guilt, therefore, depend absolutely on the degree of knowledge and freedom. Yet, although there cannot be any unknowing and involuntary guilt before God in the theological sense, there can of course be wrong decisions or actions which are guiltless and yet offend in their material reality against the objective structures and rules of man and his world. Such decisions and actions can, without detracting from their guiltless character, have such injurious and pathogenic effects on man as to encourage and eventually induce him to incur real, conscious and voluntary guilt. In so far as there can be guilt only before the One God and his undivided will (which ultimately is the only binding one), man can also never find himself, objectively speaking, in the tragic situation of being able to choose only between different ways of becoming guilty, so that no matter what alternative he chooses, he necessarily incurs guilt. In certain situations the only choice open to us may lie between two actions, both of which must be regarded as harmful and wrong in a certain respect; yet, objectively speaking, no situation can ever force us into guilt. For this would imply the contradiction that God at the same time imposes and condemns the self-same behaviour. It is, therefore, also quite contradictory and immoral to say that we must learn to have the courage to incur guilt and to recommend such courage. It is true, however, that under certain circumstances man may have to learn to act courageously even though his action may, in certain more restricted aspects, harm him or others in some specific realm of human existence.

2. For theology and according to revelation itself, guilt and sin are principally and originally acts or events and not states, even though the very frame of mind produced by the sinful act helps to cause further [268] sinful acts and constitutes the atmosphere in which sin thrives. Sinfulness arises ultimately from sin – the first theology of sin, the account of the Fall given in Genesis, already shows this. By depicting man as becoming guilty through a deed in the state of paradisaean goodness, it tells him that his sinful state does not simply come into being without reference to his own active freedom but arises out of his responsible act. It tells him that he cannot shift responsibility for his guilty acts to a dark, impersonal, anonymous fate or to an 'Ego' from which he, the one who acts and suffers, can separate himself and which he can accuse as the tragic and incomprehensible power disposing of him, the active subject. On the contrary, it tells him that he must hold himself and no one and

nothing else responsible for his guilty state, in so far as he acts and suffers. Man has entered fully into the biblical truth only when he no longer makes any distinctions in this, and when (since the account in Genesis is the aetiology of man's disastrous state of suffering) he confesses the state from which he suffers to be his doing, which should not have happened and indeed did only happen because he who suffers, and he alone, willed it. He must not accuse his tempting surroundings or the woman or nature (real temptations all) of being the cause of his state; he must see that cause in himself and in his own inalienable act of freedom – he himself in his free act is the one whom he must accuse as the cause of the state making him now suddenly ask the question which really ought not to have been asked at all: how did all this happen? It is certainly true that, in spite (and because) of his consciousness and freedom which are the *a-priori* conditions making a guilty act possible, the reflecting man always encounters himself in his reflection as someone who has already decided, i.e. as someone in a determined moral disposition, and never as someone who makes a decision arising out of pure moral indifference – in short, as, a sinner or as someone redeemed by God's grace. And to that extent his reflection is never capable of retracing his own particular sinfulness sufficiently clearly in the unique direction of his sinful act *or* of simply attributing his sinful act to his sinfulness (brought about by previous decisions). Guilt, in spite of its basically active character and its nature as an event, has a diffused existence for us in the whole course of human history, even simply on account of the fact that ultimately our subsequent and always unfinished reflection and 'analysis' can never adequately resolve the conjunction of act and state, habitual disposition and new original decision, sin and sinfulness. We can, no [269] doubt, say with some probability or practical moral certitude that there and in this way, at this spatio-temporal point in this particular history, guilt began. And yet we must also say: it 'could' not help coming this way, in view of the 'sinfulness' which reigns throughout the whole of existence and out of which this culpable act arose. Our meaning here is not only that the culpable act was preceded by a dangerous or tragic but actually still innocent state, but also that it was preceded at least by an always possible, truly sinful state which was expressed in a consistent manner by this particular culpable act. It is of course true, as already stated, that the sinful state referred to must ultimately have sprung from an act of decision, but this does not mean that the latter must necessarily have been stored up in the person's historical memory and thus be always available for renewed reflection. Consequently, the fact of our getting the impression that this or that could really have happened no differently – 'I *acted* thus because I *am* that way' – does not necessarily argue against guilt considered as an act and thus for the tragedy of a development opposed to the responsible freedom of one's personal state; it is merely an indication of the fact that the person had always understood and accepted himself in a certain manner even before the action in question occurred, and that he had performed the act out of and in accordance with his freely acquired attitude and frame of mind.

3. Man is that strange being who attains self-consciousness only by being conscious of something other than himself, who deals with himself by occupying himself with something else (even if this be merely the perception or thought of himself), who catches sight of himself only by perceiving an object. Man always requires some material distinct from himself which will act as the Archimedean point, so to speak, from which alone he can attain himself. He must be in-the-world in order to be capable of being personal; he must diffuse himself in order to concentrate himself on himself, he must 'go out' (as the German mystics used to say) in order to be able to enter into himself and into the very core of his person. Thus we may quite rightly say that in the case of man, who is a creature and essentially in-the-world and who is at home with himself only by being-with-others, the act of freedom

springing from the core of his person, where man is ultimately concerned with himself and his relationship to God (both insolubly [270] bound up with one another), is necessarily achieved in a material which, although different from the real spiritual core of the person, is nevertheless the prereduced object on which the act of freedom is exercised. Man's relationship to himself, and his action on himself and before God, is inevitably mediate, i.e. by means of objects. Man's culpable desire-to-be-God and his emancipation from the all-embracing will of God, who wants him to be always open to his infinity, operate within man's attitude to the fruits of the world and in the face of commandments relating to this or that finite object in the world. This is why there is, according to the Scriptures, more than one divine commandment and more than one human sin, each distinct from the other although (and because) the same reality of 'becoming-guilty' before God is realized in all of them. There is, therefore, a peculiar dialectic relationship between guilt considered in itself and as arising originally, and the material of guilt in which guilt, actualizing itself, is posited – a relationship similar to that existing between spirit and body: one cannot exist without the other and yet they are not the same; each refers, for its understanding, to the other which it is not itself. The objectively tangible offence against man's nature, against his due relationship to God which can be formulated as a law, and against the intramundane, ordered structure of persons and things in his surroundings, is the constitutive *sign* of the real revolt against God taking place in the depth of man's soul and utterly determining it. We call this objective falseness of man's concrete act a 'sign'. For firstly, it is not strictly identical with what is properly speaking meant in theology by the guilt of the person as such and before God as he is in himself; this is clearly shown even by the mere fact that the same objective perversity of the action, considered as an offence against a restricted material law, can also come about, indeed can even be induced from outside, without there being any personal guilt. And yet, secondly, this objective falseness also indicates the presence of such a guilt (in the normal case), and man looks at himself in it and recognizes himself reflectively as a sinner. For example, drunkenness is normally *physically* wrong because it normally offends against man's bodily health which, as the health of a spiritual person, is also subject to the binding sovereign dignity of the spiritual person assured to him by God. Now, in certain cases a person may make himself drunk quite innocently, either because he does not know that it is contrary to nature or because he lacks the necessary moral freedom in [271] doing it; in other cases, drunkenness may be brought about by external force and still other cases, it may be the concrete material or the sign-like manifestation of personal guilt, by and within which the personal turning-away from God realizes itself *in concreto*. In this last case the concrete action is called a *constitutive* sign, because personal guilt can realize itself only in this (or a similar) sort of concrete form. This dialectic unity, this difference between personal guilt and its constitutive, concrete manifestation still exists even when we are dealing with 'internal' sins in the superficial sense given to this term in everyday experience (or, in the language of Holy Writ: when it is 'merely' a case of 'lusting after'), or when it is a question of an apparently explicit and direct refusal to submit to God himself and his will. For even the merely 'internal' act of sin is an 'em-bodied' act (in the original sense of the word), which changes man's bodily, physiological, etc., constitution and, in consequence, indicates its presence, like the external sinful action, in the 'otherness' of external reality. In other words, it indicates its presence by expressing it in the 'other' of its own bodily reality (to be understood as an animated reality which consequently includes the psychical as one of its inner constitutive moments), i.e. it shows itself as 'now-existing' by positing itself. And similarly, even when sin seems to be directed explicitly and reflectively against God himself (in a judgement and objectively), it nevertheless takes place in the material of the world and hence with a constitutive sign-likeness. For propositional thought about God is even in this case constructed with the use of the 'materials' of the world. Also, there is a difference

between ‘*thought* about’ God and God meant ‘intentionally’ and aimed at by the transcendental nature of *original* thinking and willing. And thought about God, like any other ‘inner’ thought and act of the will, does include a physical manifestation in the form of a sign. Thus it is conceivable, for instance, that in certain circumstances such an opposition to God, although objectively wrong, may nevertheless not be existentially culpable (i.e. in the very core of the person), because in such a case God is denied in the objective concept but not with that real, fundamental grasp (*Zugriff*) which occurs in the basic act of freedom.

4. We started above with the simple fact that according to Scripture and Tradition sin against and before God is always the same and yet [272] there are *sins* (in the plural), which must be given specifically different names and must be appraised in a specifically different manner. Proceeding with logical necessity, we have now arrived at an ontological conception of man’s nature, which we now intend to outline again in greater detail so that it may then be easier to understand our subsequent propositions about guilt, recognition of guilt, guilt and suffering, divine remission of guilt and earthly triumph over suffering.

Man is a being constructed, as it were, from the interior towards the outside. He has, on the one hand, a spiritual-personal nucleus giving him an ‘intentional’ transcendental relation to ‘Being as such and in its totality’, and hence to God, and rendering him capable of hearing the word of God as such. Man’s transcendent orientation and consequent freedom and openness towards all being, allow him to maintain a selective, de-ciding, consenting or denying attitude towards individual things (and the merely *represented* totality of being and hence God in this sense), since he always transcends everything limited and desires the whole, Being as such, God. On the other hand, man always has to achieve himself *qua* transcending person in a relationship to something which is neither himself nor the transcendent counter-pole to his spiritual openness for the whole as such. In short, he must constantly achieve himself as a person in an ‘intermediary reality’ (*in einem Mittleren*), formed by the union of his animated corporeality and embodied spirituality together with their concrete, material and propositional objectifications, and by the external world of equally real persons and things as well as by the objectifications produced there by ‘external’ actions. This ‘intermediary reality’ – which alone provides man with the means of cognitive access to himself, free control over himself and a conscious, free attitude towards God – is at the same time different and unseparated from the ‘seminal’ (*ursprünglich*)² human person. There is no permanently fixed boundary-line between these two spheres of man which are continually undergoing osmosis into one another; man constantly transforms himself into the objectifications of his body, thoughts and actions-in-the-world; he deposits himself into them without being absorbed by them (like brute-animals) and without having to deliver himself to them [273] completely; and when he objectifies himself in this way in the world, he is constantly referred back again to himself and to God. These objectifications are ‘he himself’ and yet not he himself; he is in the Other and becomes the Other, but never in such a way that he can be in the Other as he is in his own self. For he is never contained totally in the Other which expresses him and shows him to himself and to others. And the Other is also never completely only his expression, since the intermediary material itself includes structures alien to the person to which the person cannot refuse to submit himself up to a certain point and in varying degrees, if he is to be at all able to express himself in the Other by forming himself into it and so fulfil himself in this intermediary reality. Only by passing out of the depth of

² We have translated ‘*ursprünglich*’ by ‘seminal’ rather than ‘original’, since the ‘seminal person’ is a *continuing* dimension of the one person, fulfilled in the ‘achieved person’ via the ‘intermediary reality of the person’ – *Tr.*

his being into the world, can man enter into the depth of the person where he stands before God; this is roughly what the medieval mystic would already have said. Thus we may say that we must distinguish between the ‘*seminal*’ person (*ursprünglicher* Person), understood as transcendent spirit and as freedom before God; the world-like and piecemeal ‘intermediary reality’ (*Mittleren*) in which the person, searching for himself, must achieve himself; and the ‘achieved’ person (*endgültigen* Person) who has freely fulfilled himself *via* his intermediary reality. By the fact that the seminal person achieves himself in the intermediary ‘world’ of his animated body and external surroundings, this constitutive sign (i.e. the intermediary reality of the person) becomes relatively independent; it may even remain when the act of the seminal person no longer persists. The connection between the act of the seminal person as such and its constitutive sign in the intermediary ‘world’ of the person is fluid, both as regards their interdependence and as regards the expressive capacity of the constitutive sign. The intermediary ‘world’ of the person is at the same time the medium of the constitutive sign and the medium of influences exerted on the person by the ‘Other’. Realities different from the person, the surrounding world, Nature, heredity, other persons, etc., reflect themselves into this intermediary reality and create in this way an *a-priori* basis for the possibilities of personal self-achievement in the sphere of the constitutive expression of the person; for personal self-achievement requires such an expression in the same medium as the ‘Other’. In this way (and only in this way) the ‘outer world’ influences the person himself; it naturally does so in the many different ways in which the intermediary sphere of personal exercise of freedom [274] can be determined: by physical influences, psycho-somatic influences of speech, etc. In so far as the seminal person *and* the Other find fulfilment in identically the same realm of the intermediary ‘world’ of the person, there is ‘interpenetration’ in this medium between Action, and Passion, between what is done and what is imposed, one’s own and the Other; one’s own is covered up by the Other and the Other becomes the property of the person; thus, the person posits the constitutive sign as the ‘other part’ of himself, becomes a stranger to himself and divests himself of himself – while, conversely, the surrounding world, originally strange to the person, finds fulfilment by forming itself into the very medium belonging to the person as sphere; of his self-fulfilment.

5. The person finds certain pre-determined structures in its nucleus, psycho-somatic medium and surrounding world which precede freedom and its formative control over the person. What in particular these structures are and how they are recognizable cannot of course be explained here; the analysis of the nature and necessity of these structures is the task of theology, metaphysical anthropology, ethics and all the other anthropological sciences (in so far as they do not regard themselves as purely positivistic descriptions of merely *temporary* conditions). Now, if an act freely performed by the seminal person (who is spiritually and freely referred to God) contradicts the right structure of the person and his proper relationship to God, i.e. if the person turns an intermediate reality and his own expression contained in it into an absolute (in other words, mistakes it for God and idolizes it), then there is sin *qua* act. The constitutive sign of sin, i.e. the embodied reality of the seminal, personal act and of the seminal person in his intermediary being, is called ‘suffering’ in theological language. Such a sign of the sinful act has necessarily a painful effect on the person. For the medium is not absolutely indifferent, or *pure* possibility of personal ‘expression’, but has its own *a-priori* structures, independently of the freedom of the person. And so when the seminal, personal act is formed into this medium in a manner contradicting its *a-priori* structures, it experiences the resistance offered by these structures as a conflict and hence as suffering (for the medium is inevitably also the medium of the ‘*passio*’ of the person). However, in so far as the surrounding world can also enter into this [275] same

medium by its painful influences, not every suffering is a constitutive sign of personal guilt. Yet, because the state of suffering induced from without. (independently of guilt), or continuing even after its originating guilt, constitutes in its turn a question posed to the person (about how he is to understand it), it can and must be answered either in a guilty or in a true manner. When answered in a guilty manner, the state of suffering becomes the ‘tinder’ of sin and hence the source of its own or new guilt. When it is accepted by faith as a sharing in the Passion of Christ (i.e. answered truly), the state of suffering becomes the means of making Christ’s Passion one’s own. The sinful act of the seminal person, achieved *via* the intermediary reality of the person but able to remain thus achieved even after its constitutive sign has ceased, is the state of sin, i.e. sinfulness.

6. The essential freedom of the seminal person, i.e. freedom as distinct from its exercise in the intermediary outer world of the person, is of its very nature a conscious occurrence. This does not mean, however, that basic freedom strictly as such is an objective datum of consciousness and can, therefore, be the direct object of reflection. Man can look at himself and his freedom only in their constitutive sign (by considering himself as an object) and in the objectifications of his freedom which are different from freedom itself even though they are its *constitutive* signs. This leaves him in an essentially ambiguous situation as far as his knowledge of guilt is concerned. To understand this we need only consider the sober facts of theology, even before making any deductions from what has been said so far. According to the Scriptures, man ought to confess his sins; he ought to say (hence *can* also say) that he has sinned in this way or that, and not merely make a general, vague statement about his sinful state. Now, in so far as he makes an explicit confession or admission, he must have an objective knowledge of his sinful acts which is expressible in concepts and propositions. He must, therefore, be able to gather sufficiently certain information from the objective, material data of his internal and external life to be able to say that he has sinned. The material of his consciousness, tangible to reflection and open to analysis, must really be the *sign* of the personal guilt of the seminal person about which he wishes ultimately to make a statement. And yet, according to the same Scriptures, man is not only commanded not to ‘judge’ others, i.e. [276] not to make *absolute* assertions about the real state of a person deep down and in the sight of God, but he also cannot and is not allowed to pass such an absolute judgement on himself and declare himself to be either absolutely justified or an absolute sinner, in the sense of declaring that a justifying or sinful act has *certainly* taken place here and now. Thus, the constitutive sign on which such a judgement would have to be based, cannot be *so* absolutely unequivocal that it allows him to pronounce such a judgement *before* the divine tribunal, in spite of the real informative function of the constitutive sign, the *real* information given by it is of an essentially equivocal character. In the light of what has been said previously, it is easy to see the reason for this ambiguity; since the constitutive sign is ‘embedded’ in the very same intermediary reality as that which acts as the medium for passive determinations from outside (i.e. outside in the widest sense, including the antecedents of the person as regards free, personal self-determination and the inner conditions making it possible), there is at least in principle absolutely nothing in this medium which could not be an impression received from outside as well as an expression of the original, personal act. When reflection interprets the realities in the intermediary medium of the person as expressions or impressions or both, this cannot basically be anything more than an approximate, provisional interpretation. Such an interpretation may be sufficient for practical conduct and the duties imposed by it – and indeed will be sufficient for it in the normal, everyday case – but it will not be an absolute interpretation and will always remain subject to reservations; it will always remain exclusively reserved to God, the only Judge. Only in this way can the interpretation

correspond to the indistinct situation with which the creature must bear patiently to the end. By its character of ‘not being absolutely clear about oneself’, of ‘not being able to deal definitively with oneself’, this interpretation not only realizes a regrettable fact but also a basic and essential situation of the creature, since it is precisely at this point that the creature surrenders himself unconditionally to God. Any would-be final analysis of guilt and justice implies usurpation of God’s Judgement. Reflection can never ‘catch up’ with man, for the simple reason that every reflection, whatever its pretensions to objectivity, is itself a morally good or evil act demanding a new reflection on its own quality and so on *ad infinitum*. A reflective self-knowledge and analysis of guilt (by oneself or with the help of others) means primarily an analysis of the constitutive sign of [277] guilt and only indirectly (and with reservations) a knowledge of the guilty act committed by the seminal person. *Qua* analysis of the constitutive sign and of the ‘deposit’ of the seminal person in his psycho-physical external nature (i.e. of everything which is at all analysable in itself), our analysis can of itself and *in principle* reach real certitude, even though it will not usually do so in actual fact. But even if we were to attain certitude in this, it would not be an absolutely safe foundation for an unequivocal decision about the seminal or achieved person who remains in himself necessarily unattainable by analysis. *Homo videt faciem, Deus autem cor*. The ‘science of the heart’ is even today reserved to God alone. Any progress made in any of the ways and techniques of psychology is amazing and important; but it is always concerned only with the outer zones and not with the real centre of the person or the ‘heart’ in the biblical sense, which never objectifies itself adequately. We can draw conditional conclusions from these zones, applicable to the ‘heart’, and these will be important, indeed may even involve practical consequences. Yet this is all we can do. The ‘heart’ remains the secret of the King, a secret known to itself and God but not to the Ego as it faces itself by reflection and self-expression, and not to others either. In parenthesis, it should also be remembered in this connection that every analysis even of the intermediary dimension of the person changes the data to be observed, rather like (but even more than) the effect produced by observation in physics. And so, what is observed is not the pure constitutive sign of the personal act but rather a synthesis (no longer adequately dissoluble) of the sign and the change resulting from its being observed by the self or some other person. Consequently, this observation itself is again no purely theoretical matter untouched by ethics, but a moment in that chain of moral decisions which no man can escape during his life; and so man can never, not even for a single moment, become a purely objective observer. In short, every reflection is always faced with an ultimate ambiguity: what seems to be guilt, when read off the supposedly or really constitutive sign, may ultimately be guiltless suffering alien to the person due purely to the ‘passio’ caused from outside; and conversely, what seems to be suffering tragically inflicted from without, may in reality be a proper constitutive sign of one’s own guilt, at least by the fact that it would not have assumed its present form if man had not been guilty of misunderstanding this originally non-personal suffering by his inevitably-activated personal decision. An adequate [278] analysis of this synthesis of possibly culpable Action and possibly merely endured Passion would be feasible only if we could stop this continually flowing process of synthesis and turn ourselves for a single moment into a purely active or purely passive subject. Man never is, however, either of these while living here below. And when the ontological difference between the inner and outer person is removed in death, man is no longer the judge but God alone judges, looking into the heart and from there to the works (not vice versa); he can judge them from this viewpoint – they are the works in which the heart has fulfilled itself.

7. The foregoing considerations allow us also to see the already-mentioned connection and

ontological difference between guilt and suffering (illness in the widest sense of the word). Suffering is the constitutive sign of guilt. Accordingly, it is not the same as guilt. It is *not* always and unequivocally a constitutive sign of *personal* new guilt, actively caused from within, or the simple expression of the suffering person's guilt. It is certainly, according to Scripture, always a sign of guilt, but this may be the guilt of the race, original sin. Yet it is not a neutral suffering for all that. Since (and in so far as) man had already understood himself, and taken up a position towards himself, even before making any *reflective* stand by his original free choice, suffering (in man already grown up to personal freedom) is never a merely neutral, personally indifferent happening simply to be deplored. Rather, it is suffering understood and responded to in this way or that and thereby actually becoming the expression of our own guilt *or* the material for justifying faith and the expression of our appropriation of redemption by sharing in the Passion of Christ. In consequence of this double possibility, always decided but veiled, suffering itself is also ambiguous.

8. Only through God can man be delivered from guilt in the strict sense. In the first place, the original, personal act of guilt of the seminal person and the sinfulness of the achieved person, of the person who has fulfilled himself, cannot be removed by evading the freedom of the person. Such removal demands at least a free personal act of conversion. We do not wish to enter here into the question of the conditions [279] under which such a conversion is even thinkable, in view of the fact that the person has *completely* activated, 'understood', and (apparently) exhausted himself in the choice demanded by the previous, presupposedly guilty 'option fondamentale'; it is – let us note – not very easy to explain how this person, who has not only done a guilty act but also *has* become guilty as a result of this act, can still be capable of such a fundamental transformation of the whole nucleus of the person. In any case, this transformation alone does not yet wipe out guilt. For the wiping out of guilt is essentially a kind of dialogue, the adoption of a position concerning God and in the sight of God. God, in spite or rather because of his absolute nature, is not an impersonal 'It', or the stationary, unattainable vanishing-point of the spiritual person's transcendence. He is the 'living God'; relative to him, every human act is essentially a response to his call, so that after the creature's 'no' to this call, the dialogic process of human existence can really continue only by a new Word of God. HE must forgive the guilty act committed against him. Guilt can, therefore, be remitted only by his act, and this act can be known only through *his* Word and can be decided upon only by him. This word, if it is to take place in the tangible manner of this world, can be spoken only by a man if and in so far as he can truly say that he has been appointed and sent to accomplish this word and be its servant. To the '*Tibi soli peccavi*' corresponds God's '*Ego te absolvo*', and this alone delivers from guilt. This deliverance remains in the nature of things just as transcendent to empirical reflection as guilt itself; it must, therefore, be heard and accepted by faith – only in faith does it become real and known.

9. This-worldly victory (at least partial) over suffering and cure of sickness in the widest sense of the word are quite a different matter. Sickness and suffering differ from guilt as such (even though they spring from guilt in certain circumstances), just as the constitutive expression (sign) is different from the reality expressed or signified; they extend over the intermediary, world-like reality of the person, where they receive their objective character. And so, suffering and sickness can be reached also from without by somatic and psychical intervention, for the dimension in which they exist is exactly the same as that in which these determinations from without are received. Combative outside interventions against suffering are possible even [280] independently of the question whether suffering in a particular case is

due to personal, past or present guilt, in so far as the relationship between guilt and its constitutive sign is a fluid one (i.e. in so far as there is no unequivocal and absolutely fixed connection between them, in the sense that guilt can exist without any adequate expression), and the expression of guilt, i.e. suffering, can still continue to exist even after guilt has been remitted by the word of God. Since suffering is never an absolutely unequivocal constitutive sign of guilt, it is also morally justifiable to fight against it by direct means intended to destroy it, even when it can be supposed with sufficient practical certitude that the suffering comes from still unremitted guilt. Whether this attempt to remove suffering under these presuppositions will be successful in a particular case, is quite a different question which cannot be answered *a priori*. It must, however, be stressed also that there is a Christian way of overcoming suffering which does not consist in removing suffering (sickness, etc.) from the intermediary realm of the person, but in faith's acceptance of suffering – of the suffering which continues to exist in this world of transitory things and of probation, as a means of sharing in the redemptive Passion of Christ. Consequently, the phenomenon of suffering will always remain ambiguous, and this ambiguity will always put man in doubt whether he is not after all merely a sinner and will always incite him to renewed efforts in his fight for perfect happiness in this world, offending thereby against faith and hope; accepted in faith, on the other hand, suffering is the very way in which redemption, the eschatological good coming from God alone, appears. On this basis, it must be asked whether every kind of combat against suffering in this world (which in itself is permitted and a duty) for the Christian) is not itself culpably based on the secret opinion that there 'really' should be no suffering and that, with a little bit of energy and cunning, suffering can really be banished through the progress of technical science, medicine and psychotherapy, even while the economy of this world is still in existence. To say 'no' to the sufferings of this world is at once a sacred duty for the Christian in the sight of God and, at the same time, the greatest danger of allowing himself to steal past the Cross of Christ. This 'no' can ultimately consist only in helping man, by means of teaching and God's merciful benevolence, to shoulder the Cross in spite of its continued weight, so that he may carry it without bitterness and despair and go on believing in the promise of eternal life.

10. As a result of the dialectic unity and ontological difference between guilt and its constitutive sign, between sin and suffering, regarding their actual dimensions, natures and conquest, the respective tasks of priest and physician are also mutually related and different from each other. Each has a different object and procedure. The priest in himself can only be the mediator of the word of God which remits sin but which as such does not simply and necessarily remove the constitutive sign of sin, viz. suffering, even when the latter has arisen from personal guilt. For once the suffering springing from sin has arisen, it attains its own manner of existence, like any other objectification of the personal spirit and freedom, since it is supported by the intermediary reality of the person and not by the personal nucleus and the seminal person himself. The physician (both of the body and psyche) aims directly at the pathogenic suffering and not at the sinful act or state of the seminal or achieved person. He must not, indeed, simply bypass the question of real guilt in the theological sense, for his own proper object may be a constitutive sign of real guilt, and this question inevitably poses itself for the sufferer. Moreover, suffering often (though not by any means always) cannot be removed from the person, i.e. from his intermediary reality, without a conversion – *μετανοια* – having taken place in the seminal person; and such a conversion can take place, at least in actual fact, only when man, believing, accepts remission of his real guilt from God. Yet the object and activity of the physician as such remains strictly different ontologically and theologically from that of the priest. The physician should not indeed be merely

a healer of the body; but even in so far as his 'patient' suffers or may suffer spiritually, his task still differs from that of the priest. His task remains, directly, confined to the objective materializations of the proper guilt of the seminal person in this world; it confines itself, if you wish to put it this way, to the psyche and does not directly reach the immaterial, personal ground of spiritual freedom as such, where man is called directly by God and answers him with a 'yes' or a 'no'. In so far as guilt and suffering are nevertheless connected, though not identical, i.e. are connected in the unity of the dialectically 'veiling' and 'revealing' relationship between origin and the originated, between sign and the signified, expression and the expressed, the priest and the physician are referred to each other and dependent on each other, in spite of all the differences of their task and commission.