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Luthers' Impact on Modern Views of Man

LEWIS W. SPITZ

Regarding the disputed authorship of King Henry VIII's *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* Luther remarked that it really made little difference who actually wrote it, for either a fool wrote it or a fool let it go out under his name. Any knowledgeable reader encountering a title such as ours might well be tempted to draw the same conclusions regarding its author. The subject is vast and might well tempt an author to a wild uncontrolled ride across the unbounded terrain of modern intellectual history. Moreover, the *Einflussproblem* is one of the most difficult in intellectual history, full of hidden assumptions and defying authentication by standard canons of historical evidence and documentation.

There are special complications in the case of Martin Luther, Carlyle's *Wundermann* of religious history. His written works are so voluminous that encompassing them involves a problem in scholarly logistics. His collected works run well over a hundred folio volumes, upward of 60,000 pages. Some 3,000 sermons of his are still extant and over 2,600 letters. "I deliver as soon as I conceive," he once commented, and sent the first part of his *Address to the Christian Nobility* off to the publisher while he was still writing the final pages. His total ran to some 450 books and treatises, two a month when he was at the peak of his production. His work was also largely occasional, the occasion usually being polemic with a carefully chosen opponent, so that we learn what he thought of humanist anthropology from his *De servo arbitrio* against Erasmus, what he thought of scholastic philosophy from his *Contra Latomum*, or what he felt about the enthusiasts from his *On the Heavenly Prophets*. Robert of Melun in the twelfth century observed of the patristic writers, "Sacri patres quod non oppugnabatur non defendebant." The same was preeminently true of Luther. He resisted the plan to publish an *opera omnia* edition of his works with the plea that he wished all his works to perish and that men would simply read instead the Sacred Scriptures, for his own works were a great jumble. That is the way it is, he opined, when things are in motion; consider the five books of Moses! He once resolved to write a systematic work *De Justificatione* but fortunately never did, for it is the spon-

Lewis Spitz is professor of history at Stanford University.

taneous, occasional, hyperbolic, polemical, contrary, volcanic nature of his writings as they poured forth from his pen that make them to this present day a source of inspiration, wonder, and debate. "What a shame for our times," wrote Johann Georg Hamann, Magus of the North, in the eighteenth century in a letter to G. E. Lindner, "that the spirit of this man who founded our church lies under the ashes. What a power of eloquence, what a spirit of interpretation, what a prophet! How good the old wine will taste to you and how ashamed we should be of our spoiled taste. What are Montaigne and Bacon, these idols of witty France and earnest England compared with him!"¹

Wrestling with the problem of Luther's influence on Western anthropology is further complicated by the enormous volume of scholarly literature devoted to Luther and Reformation history. More has been written about Luther than about any other person in the history of the world with the exception of Christ. A student of Lord Acton, the indefatigable Cambridge historian, estimated that in the course of writing his famous essays he had read more than 20,000 volumes on the Reformation. German scholarship alone produced 245 titles in just a little more than a decade after the Second World War, a *Wissenschaftswunder* comparable to the economic *Wirtschaftswunder*.² A sizable library of books is devoted to interpretations of Luther through the centuries.³ "We have become the spectacle of the world!" Luther exclaimed in 1521, and so he has remained, controversial, hated and beloved, but never ignored.⁴

Nor has any age in history been so preoccupied with the problem of man as are these modern times. From the classical humanism of the Renaissance through the anthropocentrism of the Enlightenment, from the new humanism of the nineteenth century to the "progressive humanism" of the Marxists, modern man has been almost unwholesomely preoccupied with himself. When the Basel historian Jacob Burckhardt pondered the question of a fitting *terminus a quo* when doing his *Reflections on History*, he decided to begin with the problem of anthropology as the most promising *Anknüpfungspunkt*. "We, however," he said, "shall start out from the one point accessible to us, the one eternal center of all things—man, suffering, striving, doing, as he is and was and ever shall be. Hence our study will, in a certain sense, be pathological in kind."⁵ At the close of one of those lectures a younger man with a heavy mustache said to Burckhardt, "For the first time in my life I have enjoyed listening to a lecture." He was a classicist named Friedrich Nietzsche. Whether it be the humanistic view of the soft disciplines or the hominal approach of the social sciences, man is the center of attention.⁶ Our problem, then, lies at the confluence of three mighty streams

of history and historiography, Luther, Reformation bibliography, and modern anthropology. The historian must be one of William James' strong-minded individualists with the nerve to persist even when confronted by a nearly incomprehensible mass of data and many alternative paths to follow. Hermann Hesse in his *Magister Ludi* observed that the historian must expose himself to chaos while retaining faith in order and meaning. A brief treatment of a subject of this magnitude will necessarily be suggestive rather than definitive.

THE RATIONALIST, IDEALIST, AND LIBERAL TRADITION

A strange bifurcation can be discerned in Luther's impact upon modern views of man. He influenced and was used in turn by the rationalist, idealist and liberal traditions. But he also influenced and was used for purposes of achieving authentication by the anthropological realists. This dual nature of his impact was less the result of contrary forces within his theology than it was a reflection of the fact that different aspects of his theology and different levels of his understanding of man came into play as the intellectual currents of later centuries took new directions.

With his high regard for human reason as the choicest creation of God, Luther clearly stood in the high-level tradition of Christian rationalism. Luther's detractors and even many sympathetic friends have depicted him as an antirationalistic fideist. Hartmann Grisar, S.J., in his *Luther* or A. Lunn in his *The Revolt Against Reason* distorted Luther's position into an anti-rationalism, if not to say anti-intellectualism. In his large tome *The Counter-Renaissance* Hiram Hayden classified Luther with Machiavelli, Montaigne, and the skeptical Agrippa of Nettesheim as an anti-Renaissance type approach to the rational, natural law, and ordered-cosmos tenets of humanism. Even some scholars sympathetic to Luther have done less than justice to his position. Otto Ritschel referred to Luther's *sarificium intellectus* in giving to God all honor and none to man. Karl Heim spoke of Luther's "basic irrational intellectualism." Karl Holl assumed that Luther meant simply "Christian reason" whenever he spoke of reason and had no operative concept of natural reason. Nor does a simple distinction in Luther between ministerial or instrumental and magisterial reason do his thought justice. For Luther stood squarely in the center of the tradition of Western Christian rationalism. He could agree with St. Augustine's definition of reason as "opus eius magnum et admirabile" and with St. Bernard's description of reason as "celsa creatura in capacitate maiestatis."

In the *Disputatio de homine* (1536) Luther offered his most

succinct statement on the commanding place of human reason in the created universe. There are admittedly problems in using theses for disputation as definitive statements, but these clearly reflect Luther's overall position and express it well:

1. Philosophy or human wisdom defines man as an animal having reason, sensation, and body.
2. It is not necessary at this time to debate whether man is properly or improperly called an animal.
3. But this must be known, that this definition describes man only as a mortal and in relation to this life.
4. And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine.
5. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life.
6. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.
7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, "Have dominion."
8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life.
9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away the majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.
10. In spite of the fact that it is of such majesty, it does not know itself *a priori*, but only *a posteriori*.
11. Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man.⁷

The delimiting qualification imposed upon Luther's rationalism, then, was theological. He was not an unrestrained rationalist but a Christian rationalist. Luther distinguished between three uses of the word reason, natural, regenerate, and arrogant reason. Natural reason is the crowning glory of God's creation, his loftiest gift to man, which even after the fall of man retained its majesty. Regenerate reason is the reason of the man who has come to faith in Christ. Such a man's positive understanding of life frees his reason for fully creative expression through a faith active in love. His raw intelligence is not one wit increased, but his outlook on life is fundamentally altered from his previous condition of unbelief or lack of trust in God. Thirdly, arrogant reason is that devil's harlot which refuses to accept God's revelation and the way of salvation upon God's terms, but

insists upon interpreting His Word and achieving salvation in his own way. It is clear that Luther regularly uses the word reason by synecdoche as a term for the whole man in different spiritual conditions, the reason of natural man, of regenerate man, reprobate man.⁸

Because of its dramatic appeal, Luther's speech at Worms has been cited more often than any other word of his regarding reason and conscience. His stand at Worms was, as James Froude put it, perhaps the finest scene in human history.

Since, then, your serene majesty and your lordship seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.⁹

In this famous quotation certain ideas leap out from the page, the heroic stand of an isolated individual, the appeal to *ratio evidens*, and the crucial importance of conscience. All three elements appealed to the men of the Enlightenment. The leading French philosophes and English rationalists were, however, generally critical of Luther. Voltaire despised the Reformation as little more than a "quarrel of monks." While he approved of Luther's attack on the pope, he was contemptuous of preoccupation with religion. Gibbon and Hume shared this general disdain for Luther's theological concerns. In the German Enlightenment by way of contrast there was a much more positive assessment of Luther. Although the men of the *Aufklärung* regretted Luther's medieval vestigial remains, they appreciated his battle for the freedom of conscience, a struggle which they believed to be the real essence of the Reformation. But, in their assessment, the gold of religious and ethical autonomy was in Luther's thought still mixed with medieval religious slag. Luther had stopped at a half-way house on the path to Enlightened religion. The idea of Reformation was very much alive during the centuries after Luther, in the Lutheran Church in the age of orthodoxy, to be sure, but also during the age of Enlightenment.¹⁰ The *Aufklärer* and reformers were sincere in appealing to Luther as the shield-bearer of their own reform movements. Reformation understood as freedom from a degenerate tradition and as a cultural phenomenon was associated in their minds with Luther as the reformer who broke the bonds of

medieval servitude.¹¹ Goethe's familiar quotation is typical of this level of Enlightened appreciation of Luther:

We do not really understand all that we owe to Luther and the Reformation in general. We have been freed from the shackles of spiritual narrow-mindedness, we have become capable as a result of our developed culture of returning to the fountain and of grasping Christianity in its purity. We possess the courage once again to stand with sure feet upon the earth and to feel ourselves in our divinely endowed human nature. May intellectual culture now continually make progress, and let the natural sciences continue to grow in ever broader outreach and depth and the human spirit expand as it will, it will not come out above the nobility and ethical culture of Christianity as it shines and glows in the Gospels!¹²

In the nineteenth century the *opinio communis* held that the Reformation marked the overcoming of the Middle Ages and the breakthrough of modernity. Novalis drew a direct line from Luther to the Enlightenment.¹³ The spirit of the Enlightenment metamorphosed into the soul of the German transcendental idealists. Heinrich Heine described the royal road from Luther to idealism in his liberal history of religion and philosophy in German, devoting book one to the great religious revolution and book two to the great philosophical revolution led by Immanuel Kant. This philosophical revolution, he declared, was nothing else than the final consequence of Protestantism.¹⁴

Kant was not a real Luther scholar and seems to have known only the Small Catechism. Moreover, on one level of comparison he seems diametrically opposed to Luther's theology, turning his sharp critique of the limitations of reason against traditional metaphysical supports for religion. And yet, on a deeper level there is a generic relation between Kant's agnostic position regarding the human capacity for theological knowledge based upon *a priori* synthetic judgments and Luther's assertion that man cannot even know himself *a priori* but only *a posteriori*, as expressed in theses 10 and 11 in the *Disputation Concerning Man* cited above. Similarly there is a striking affinity between that premise for moral action restored by Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and Luther's linking of experience and conscience. Luther, it has been argued, drawing upon the mystical tradition of inwardness, broke through the traditional formal anthropology and prepared the way for Kantian critical philosophy.

While a further exploration of the interior ties of Luther and Kant's thought would be of the essence, in terms of intellectual history what the Kantians believed to be true of their affinity was of greater significance than what in actual fact was true.¹⁵ The

younger idealists linked Kant with Luther as protagonists of the spirit of deepest inwardness, the sovereignty of conscience, the spirit of true freedom, and of all the cultural good derived from this heritage, education and learning, progress and liberalism. Thus the central contention of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's anthropology was that through an act of will man transcends the limitation of natural determination to the sphere of true freedom. When Fichte said, "One decision and I rise above nature," he was thought to be expressing the same confidence as Luther in personal liberty and the right to choose. For Fichte, "Luther ist der deutsche Mann," who stirred up the primitive German conscience against corruption. Similarly it was thought that Schiller's famous dictum, "Du kannst, denn du sollst," reflected Luther's view of man's moral essence. The idealists were said in the spirit of Luther to have deepened the Leibnitzian idea of personality. Under the influence of the Lutheran Jacob Boehme the philosopher Friedrich von Schelling came to understand the absolute as transcending the contradiction that controls the world and this absolute as in turn giving birth to contradiction.

Luther's conception of God working not in a straight line but *e contrario* was an important ingredient in the dialectic of Hegel. He considered the key to the Reformation to be man's determination to be free. He made of Luther the discoverer of the central idealistic truth and thereby came to pronounce the Reformation as the final step in the historical self-unfolding of the absolute spirit.

What the idealists defined as Luther's main contributions to anthropology, the nineteenth and twentieth century liberals emphasized in turn and gave to them socio-political as well as cultural significance. Luther's great importance for higher culture lay in his contribution to the full development of individual personality, the critical role of private conscience, and the advancement of liberty. Such a stress upon the genial by-products of Luther's view of man and of the Reformation is reflected in Adolph Harnack's quadricentennial address of 1883, *Martin Luther und seine Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Wissenschaft und Bildung*, and in Karl Holl's essay, *Die Kulturbedeutung der Reformation*, in which he discussed Luther's importance for education, history, philosophy, poetry, art and other aspects of higher culture. The idea of Luther as the liberator also trickled down to the masses. The nineteenth century poet Bridges, for example, wrote:

Luther and Calvin whatever else they taught
Led people from superstition to free thought.

A strange but widely held opinion.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL REALISM

"They are trying to make me into a fixed star," Luther once observed. "I am an irregular planet." The thought of few intellectual leaders in the Western world has been subjected to such varying modalities as has that of Luther. In the nineteenth and twentieth century another dimension of Luther's thought came into play with the development of anthropological realism in its varied forms, a way of viewing man more dominant in the late twentieth century than the rationalist, idealist, and liberal view of earlier centuries. Once again Luther is an influence and is used in turn. Aldous Huxley once referred to the reformers as "sweaty realists" and it is this side of Luther's anthropology that has come into play in these more recent and post-modern times.

Luther's theology is characterized by a strange dynamic concreteness and by a striking existential immediacy. "If you do not understand," he once wrote, "that your cause is occurring, the knowledge of history is in vain." "As a man believes, so he has," Luther declared. "Wer glaubt, der hat!" "Quia sicut credit, sic habet!" "Atque ut credunt, ita habent!" "Tantum habes, quantum credis!" Such phrases stud his pages and sometimes his expressions read, "He who believes that God is angry has an angry God, but he who believes that God is loving has a loving God!"

Moreover, Luther stressed the elemental importance of experience and especially of the experience of spiritual struggle, the *tentatio* or *Anfechtung*. "Oratio, meditatio, et lectio faciunt theologum," Gabriel Biel, his Occamist master had said, prayer, meditation, and reading or study make the theologian. "Oratio, meditatio, et tentatio faciunt theologum," countered Luther. "Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando, fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo, aut speculando," he declared, one becomes a theologian by living, yes, by dying and being damned, not by understanding, reading, or speculating.¹⁶ Luther was concerned with the *analogia fidei*, rather than with ontological problems of the *analogia entis*. Faith was for Luther a matter of life and death. While he waited impatiently in the Koburg fortress for word from the imperial diet in Augsburg he wrote in large letters on the wall the words of the psalmist, "Non morior sed vivam et narrabo opera Dei," I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord.

Luther's understanding of man was more "realistic" than that of the received theological tradition or of Renaissance humanism in its more luminous phase. Man is born into a state of sin, of estrangement, infidelity, alienation from God.¹⁷ He is *incurvatus in se*, turned in toward himself.¹⁸ His bound will remains willingly in this spiritual bondage. Luther distinguished between

necessitas and *coactus*, between a necessary condition and a compulsory action. Man's will, the *servum arbitrium*, remains genuine *voluntas*, will. Man remains a person with a *passiva aptitudo* for regeneration. Man is not a goose or a stone. Luther's *omni necessitate fieri* is a religious description, not a philosophical determinism. Luther's criticism of all "religions" is twofold; they do not take sin seriously, and they therefore do not understand the necessity of Christ's incarnation, fulfilling of the law for us, suffering, death, and resurrection. Luther linked the *cognitio Dei et hominis*, the knowledge of God and of man.¹⁹

If humanism, enlightenment, idealism, and liberalism found Luther's view of man too dark and unappreciative, modern realism is sure to judge his anthropology to be too sanguine so far as man's nature and ability to control his life is concerned. The Italian sociologist Pareto in his monumental *Mind and Society* described man's action as controlled not by reason and will but by derivations and residues, that is, rationalization and inherited attitudes. Contemporary psychology has moved beyond the classical faculties of the soul, as the behaviorists have reduced them to a branch of physiology. Freud's mental topography with its exaltation of instincts, experimental animal psychology and social psychology have annihilated the soul which was the common philosophical assumption of Luther and Kant. Reason, will, memory, and feelings have become empty phrases. The idea of natural law, a universal order harmonized by reason, has been undermined by materialism, empiricism, societal and historical relativism.²⁰ The biological sciences which promise genetic control and are working on clonal reproduction pose further moral dilemmas for man. In such a context Luther's anthropology in its idealistic dimension seems angelic indeed. But the realistic depth of his doctrine of man provides a more solid footing for approaching the modern or post-modern view of man. Thus Luther saw the limits of subjective self-knowledge and came close to the concept of a collective subconsciousness. In his soul struggles he is aware of dread, the concept of "throwness," of living toward death (*sein zum Tode*). In facing up to spiritual defeat he confessed, "and so I came to despair." He was acutely aware of human life as a border situation, a *Sein zum Tode*. And even faith remains a *getrostete Verzweiflung*, a comforted doubting, or a *fiducialis desperatio*, a trusting despair. Certain realistic elements in Luther's thought were of basic importance to the development of anthropological realism in these past two centuries.

Luther had a holistic view of man. Within a philosophical context Luther kept the traditional trichotomy of body, soul, and spirit. But in a theological context Luther said that "in my temerity I do not distinguish body, soul, and spirit but present

the *totus homo*, the whole man, unto God." In the Romans and both Galatian commentaries he spells out the theological reason for viewing man in his entire being as either flesh or spirit, trusting in self or trusting in God. There is an immediacy and personal involvement in explicit religious faith. God cannot be fully expressed but only addressed. The most important things in religion, he held, are the personal pronouns, the *I*, the *Thou*, and the *He*, my brother (birth of I-Thouism?). He was unblinkingly realistic about death, living toward death, and acutely aware of the fact that human death with its apprehension and anxieties bred by conscience is unique among animal deaths. In the *In-vocavit* sermons, which he preached after his return from the Wartburg, he emphasized the certainty and universality of death. Life is like a besieged city with the enemies—sin, death, and the devil—drawing closer and closer on all sides. Each of us has a place on the wall to defend. I cannot stand where you stand and you cannot stand where I stand, but nothing, Luther says, prevents us from whispering encouragement to one another. Luther's stress upon the centrality of the Incarnation authenticated the validity of the material. It is in that sense, as well as because of the creation story, that Dean Inge was justified in calling Christianity the most materialistic of all religions. In the poetic words of Robert Frost, God's descent into flesh was meant as a demonstration of the merit of risking spirit in substantiation. Finally, Luther's stress upon the priority of experience to being and of being to thought and action marked a critical breakthrough of a very essential realistic element which had a tremendous influence upon later thinkers. This final point is a rather difficult one, but so important for the realist tradition that it calls for some elaboration.

In his Romans commentary, in gloss 6 to chapter 12:1, Luther wrote: "Prius est autem esse quam operari, prius autem pati quam esse. Ergo fieri, esse, operari se sequuntur." "Being, however, comes before work, but suffering (being acted upon) comes before being. Therefore becoming, being, and working follow each other." Luther was not here involving himself in ontological speculation about the problem of becoming and being. Rather his statement was made in a concrete theological context. In the commentary on Romans it is set into the context of justification by faith. "Non enim iusta operando iusti efficimur, sed iusti essendo iusta operamur." "For we are made just not therein that we do the just things, but in that, insofar as we are just we do the just things."²¹ This same thought is central to his *Sermon on Good Works* and his *Freedom of the Christian Man*. The basis of being can only be a passive suffering, a becoming, being acted upon by the power of the Holy Spirit. The *fieri* is effected by God as *Spiritus Sanctus*. Luther holds this truth on authority higher

than his own. In the words of Jesus, "The good tree brings forth good fruit." "I do not have vision," Luther declared, "because I see, but because I have vision therefore I see."²² Luther's own experiences underlined for him the truth of this order of things. In 1530 he wrote: "The miracles of my teaching are experiences which I prefer to the resurrection of the dead. . . . Since this experience is more certain than life itself, it is not a deceiving sign for me, but serves instead of many thousands of miracles, since it agrees with the Scriptures in all things. You have two most faithful and invincible witnesses, namely, Scripture and conscience, which is experience. For conscience is a thousand witnesses, Scripture an infinite number of witnesses."²³ The same Holy Spirit is active in both the Scriptures and in conscience and reveals this basic truth.

Just as Immanuel Kant was a key figure in transcendental idealism, so he also triggered a new development in religious thought by pointing toward anthropological realism. In one of his later treatises *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) Kant propounded a key text for religious illusionism:

Anthropomorphism scarcely to be avoided by me in the theoretical representation of God and His being, but yet harmless enough (so long as it does not influence concepts of duty), is highly dangerous in connection with our practical relation to His will, and even for our morality; for here *we create a God for ourselves*, and we create Him in a form in which we believe we shall be able most easily to win Him over to our advantage and ourselves escape from the wearisome uninterrupted effort of working upon the innermost part of our moral disposition.²⁴

Kant went on to explain that this creating of a God is not reprehensible, for a man must compare a revealed God with his own ideal in order to be able to judge whether he is justified in regarding and honoring it as God. In his *Ideas* (1784) Johann Gottfried Herder put this thought in epigrammatic form: "Religion is man's humanity in its highest form."²⁵ In writing on the Incarnation the great Hegel pronounced that it is man's destiny to know the identity of his own nature with God.

From the left-wing Hegelian school came Ludwig Feuerbach who shocked the world with the radical assertion in his *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) that all religion is anthropology. In his subsequent work, *The Essence of Faith According to Luther* (1844), which though published later was a necessary premise to the earlier work, Feuerbach explained that it was Luther who had led him to this astonishing insight that man creates God as he would have him rather than that God creates man in his image. Feuerbach often said of himself in good humor, "Ich bin Luther II." Luther was very vulnerable to that kind of

exploitation, but only by omitting Luther's important qualifications. Luther did indeed say: "Fides est creatrix divinitatis," faith is the creator of divinity. But the whole statement reads: "Fides est creatrix divinitatis, non in persona, sed in nobis," not in God's person, but in us.²⁶ For Luther "the antithesis of divine and human is not illusory"! In the commentary on the *Magnificat* and in many other places Luther stressed that the form which God's self-disclosure in Christ took is precisely the opposite of any form which man would have anticipated or desired. Luther always stressed that the Scriptures are not a depository for human notions about God, but the vehicle which God uses in order to address man.

A brilliant materialistic realist who largely shaped the twentieth century world, Karl Marx, saw as soon as Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* reached the public that Feuerbach could easily use Luther to support his thesis. In January, 1842, Marx wrote a brief comment on *Luther als Schiedsrichter zwischen Strauss und Feuerbach*, Luther as umpire between the liberal theologian David Friedrich Strauss and the realist Ludwig Feuerbach. Strauss had argued like a rationalistic skeptic against the reality and utility of miracles. Feuerbach had countered that Luther understood that miracles tell us something profound about man. At this point in the debate Marx pronounced in favor of Feuerbach. He cited a lengthy passage from Luther's commentary on Luke 7 in which he discussed the miracle of resurrection from the dead and declared:

In these few words you have an apology for the whole Feuerbach writing—an apology for the definitions of providence, omnipotence, creation, miracle, faith as they are presented in this writing. Oh, shame yourselves, you Christians, shame yourselves that an *anti-Christ* had to show you the essence of Christianity in its true unconcealed form! And you speculative theologians and philosophers, I advise you: free yourselves from the concepts and prejudices of speculative philosophy, if you wish to come in another way to things as they are, that is, to the *truth*. And there is no other way for you to *truth* and *freedom* except through the *Feuerbach* [stream of fire]. Feuerbach is the purgatory of these times.²⁷

Marx and Engels soon moved beyond Feuerbach in *The German Ideology* (1846), and later Engels criticized him in his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* for not moving along with what the modern empirical sciences had to say about man and for not accepting the implications of materialism. Marx blasted Feuerbach's "half-way" ideology in his

famous thesis xi in the *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."²⁸ Feuerbach had sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

A second development in nineteenth century anthropological realism may be labelled voluntarism. The pessimistic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and the rambunctious, though brilliant, Friedrich Nietzsche in stressing the priority of will and the dominance of the will to power as the mainsprings of human action cited Luther as their predecessor on the way to this great insight. In his most important work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, the world as will and idea, Schopenhauer repeatedly cites Luther to support the idea of will as being prior to reason and determinism dominant over freedom. "I call especially upon the authority of Luther," he wrote, "who in a book devoted specifically to the question, the *De servo arbitrio*, argued with all his strength against the freedom of the will."²⁹ Schopenhauer quotes the key Luther phrases on the priority of being to thought and action, "*operari sequitur esse*," to work follows being, and "*non enim habeo visum quia video sed vides quia habeo visum*," I do not have vision because I see but I see because I have vision.

Nietzsche moved on from will to the will to power. His famous lines on man read:

I teach you beyond man

Man is something that shall be surpassed.

What have you done to surpass him?

Nietzsche, who as a young man knew and admired Luther as a great religious and cultural German, in his later years became a bitter critic of Luther as the man who had revitalized Christianity and reimposed its slave morality. Luther had deprived the world of the most beautifully ironic scene history could ever offer, Cesare Borgia as pope! Nietzsche's chronology was off but his thought was clear enough. Nietzsche could never free himself of Luther, for he was plagued by some of Luther's very questions, beyond moralism—not whether God exists, but whether God is kindly disposed or hostile toward me. For despite his *Gott ist tod*, Nietzsche agonized. He saw from Luther the priority of will over reason and of experience and being over thought and action.³⁰ In his *Wille zur Macht*, will to power, Nietzsche argues that thought and action are secondary manifestations of what man is, for, as Luther says, "*Tun wir immer noch was wir sind*," in the final analysis we still always do what we are. For Nietzsche Luther always represented "the most recent German event."

A third line of Luther's impact upon anthropological realism is his influence through Kierkegaard upon modern existentialism in its atheistic and its theistic forms. That line of intellectual descent

in philosophy, philosophy of history, and theology has been so thoroughly explored and is so familiar to a theological audience that it hardly requires elaboration here.³¹

Luther's impact on modern views of man has, then, been tremendous, though strangely bifurcated.³² This schism in Western thought which alternately climed and exploited disjunctive aspects of Luther's thought was, of course, only in small part of his making. The dual nature of his influence was due in part to his incautious utterance and even due to the fact that he playfully at times took a malicious joy in giving the "contradictionists" something on which to exercise their misguided ingenuity. But the real reason for the seemingly antithetical direction of his influence lay in the paradoxical nature of his theology and the uncommon depth of his thought. The key operative word in his theology was not the smooth *ergo* or "therefore" of the scholastics but rather the agonized *dennoch* or "nevertheless," in spite of everything, of faith. Moreover, by making a philosophical application of his theological thought without distinguishing carefully as to his categories of natural man and regenerate man, later thinkers misapprehended and only partially understood him. Beyond that, some clearly consciously exploited Luther's authority to support their own deviating or revolutionary positions. It was a case, as Lord Chesterton put it, of the tyranny which the living exercise over the dead. Luther contributed to, but was also used by idealists and realists alike. Neither group was able to appreciate Luther's deepest concerns, the primal anxiety, the dread (*Urgrauen*), the guilt, the sense of finitude which oppresses mortal man, the concern to find gracious and loving the God who is the final ground of being, nor the conviction that the Holy Spirit can change man's being, makes of him a new creation, offers light and life everlasting, conveys hope and joy. The existentialists and post-liberal theologians have been able to wrestle more seriously with Luther's thought in its third and fourth dimensions.

Ever since Copernicus, Nietzsche observed, man has been falling from the center of the universe toward an X. Lacking a precisely defined cosmology, religious thinkers, idealists such as Kant and realists such as Feuerbach, were forced to retreat to the domain of man's inwardness. The principle of analogy between heaven and earth has been supplanted by a dialectic of identity or alienation between Creator and creation. Evidence of Luther's precocity and an important clue to his impact on post-Reformation thought is the fact that while the Ptolemaic cosmology was still intact he replaced a synthetic with an antithetical dialectic and called it the *theologia crucis et passionis*.

"Before one seeks man," wrote Nietzsche, "one must have found the lantern—must it be the lantern of the cynic?"³³ He

thereby posed the ultimate question for twentieth century man. Understanding how Western anthropology became bifurcated into two antithetical intellectual forces should help in diagnosing the problem. It is because Luther's Biblical anthropology sees man whole that it remains disconcertingly relevant down to the present day. A reemphasis upon Luther's Biblical idealism and realism, his understanding of man as *Homo Aeviternus* can contribute to a solid base for humanistic culture as well as to evangelical renewal. Happily such a development depends upon a power greater than our own. In Luther's words: Summa summarum: res non sunt in manu nostra, sed Dei.³⁴

FOOTNOTES

1. Friedrich Roth, ed., *Hamanns Schriften* (1821-1843), I, 343f., about 1759, cited in Fritz Blanke, "Hamann und Luther," *Lutherjahrbuch*, X (1928), p. 46.
2. Vilmos Vajta, ed., *Lutherforschung Heute* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 150-171, Walther von Loewenich, "Lutherforschung in Deutschland."
3. By way of a small sample of such volumes one might cite Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Heidelberg, 1955); Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Interpreters of Luther. Essays in Honor of Wilhelm Pauck* (Philadelphia, 1968); Ernst Zeeden, *Martin Luther und die Reformation im Urteil des deutschen Luthertums*, 2 vols. (Freiburg, 1950); Gerhard Wolf, *Das neuere Französische Lutherbild* (Wiesbaden, 1974); Hans Leube, *Deutschlandbild und Lutherauffassung in Frankreich* (Stuttgart/Berlin, 1941); Kurt Aland, *Martin Luther in der modernen Literatur* (Witten/Berlin, 1973); Hartmann Grisar, S. J., *Der Deutsche Luther im Weltkrieg und in der Gegenwart* (Augsburg, 1924); Lewis W. Spitz, ed., *The Reformation—Basic Interpretations* (Lexington, Mass., 1972).
4. In recent years, for example, the bibliography on the Marxist interpretation of Luther and the Reformation has mushroomed. See Abraham Friesen, *Reformation and Utopia* (Mainz, 1974) and Lewis W. Spitz, "Reformation and Humanity in Marxist Historical Research," *Lutheran World*, XVI (1969), no. 2, pp. 124-139.
5. Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom. Reflections on History* (Bosont, 1964), pp. 80-81.
6. A few titles representative of a vast new literature are Walter Ong, S. J., ed., *Knowledge and the Future of Man* (New York, 1968); William Barrett, *Irrational Man. A Study in Existential Philosophy* (Garden City, N. J., 1962); Crane Brinton, ed., *The Fate of Man* (New York, 1961); Joseph K. Davis, *Man in Crisis. Perspectives on the Individual and His World* (Glenview, Ill., 1970).
7. WA 39 I, 175-180, cited here from the American edition of *Luther's Works*, XXXIV, Lewis W. Spitz, ed. (Philadelphia, 1960), p. 137. The disputation theses go on to define the theological understanding of man.
8. There is substantial agreement on this analysis between the two brilliant works by Brain Gerrish, *Grace and Reason* (Oxford, 1962) and Bernhard Lohse, *Ratio und Fides: Eine Untersuchung über die ratio in der Theologie Luthers* (Göttingen, 1958). Early in our century Hans Preusz distinguished Luther's three uses of the word reason, "Was bedeutet die Formel 'convictus testimoniis scripturarum aut ratione evidente' in Luthers ungehörnter Antwort zu Worms?" *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 81 (1908). p. 62ff.

9. *Luther's Works*, XXXII, George Forell, ed. (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 113.
10. Hans Leube, *Die Reformideen in der deutschen Lutherischen Kirche zur Zeit der Orthodoxie* (Leipzig, 1924). The theology of the age of orthodoxy is admirably analyzed with special reference to the articles of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of creation in Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis, 1970, 1972). One is struck by the fact that the *ipse dixit* of the orthodox theologians was the authority of the Holy Scriptures rather than the authority of father Luther, which accorded with the wish expressed by Luther that his works perish so that men might read the Scriptures themselves, "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings," *Luther's Works*, XXXIV (Philadelphia, 1960), pp. 283-284. A fascinating spectrum of selections from the religious thinkers of the age has been edited by Winfried Zeller, *Der Protestantismus des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Bremen, 1962). See also Herman Preus and Edmund Smits, eds., *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis, 1962).
11. See Lewis W. Spitz, "Reformation," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, Philip Wiener, ed., IV (New York, 1973), cols. 60-69.
12. Gespr. mit Eckermann, 17. Febr. 1832, cited in Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Heidelberg, 1955), pp. 136-137.
13. Hanns Rückert, "Die geistesgeschichtliche Einordnung der Reformation," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 52 (1955), pp. 43-64, here, 43, 44.
14. Heinrich Heine, "Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland," *Werke*, IV (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), pp. 44-165, 85.
15. The older monographs such as Bruno Bauch, *Luther und Kant* (Berlin, 1904) and Ernst Katzer, *Luther und Kant* (Gieszen, 1910), have been improved upon by more recent studies which have added new depth to the analysis. A particularly brilliant essay, except for its concluding mythology about the Nordic soul, is Robert Winkler, "Der Transzendentalismus bei Luther," *Luther, Kant, Schleiermacher in ihrer Bedeutung für den Protestantismus* (Berlin, 1939), pp. 20-47, 34: "Luther setzt zwischen der Wirklichkeit Gottes und der Gotteserkenntnis des Menschen dasselbe transzendente Verhältnis, das Kant allgemein zwischen Erkenntnis und Gegenstand setzt. Deshalb ist Kant der Philosoph des Protestantismus." Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, I (Munich, 1958), pp. 69-71, lends support to the linkage of Luther with the later critical philosophy: "Hier stößt Luther durch die gesamte mittelalterliche Anthropologie hindurch und schafft mit seiner Rechtfertigungslehre die Voraussetzung der späteren kritischen Philosophie. Deshalb ist seine "Justifikationslehre" eben nicht nur eine bloße Variation der mittelalterlichen, sondern sie eröffnet eine neue Epoche." The Neo-Kantian founder of the modern *Geisteswissenschaften*, Wilhelm Dilthey, also saw Luther as the bridge between mysticism and transcendental idealism. Dilthey, "The Interpretation and Analysis of Man in the 15th and 16th Centuries," *The Reformation—Basic Interpretations*, Lewis W. Spitz, ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1972), pp. 11-24, 17: "I wish to discuss that which allies Luther with the German mystics before him and with our transcendental idealism after him, that through which at the same time he was for his contemporaries the renovator of society in the deepest religious-moral foundations." A sensitive appreciation for Kant's place in the humanistic tradition is expressed by the historian Karl F. Morrison, "A Feeling for Humanity," *Criterion*, XII, no. 2 (Winter, 1973), p. 12, and the undermining of his position by the social sciences.
16. WA 5, p. 163, 28-29. For statements on having as one believes see WA 40 I, p. 444, 14; WA 18, p. 769, 17-18; WA 18, p. 778, 13-14; WA 40 I, p. 360; WA 4, p. 511, 13, and countless others.

17. WA 101, 508, 20.
18. WA 56, p. 356, 5.
19. While this is not the place to debate the issues raised by Paul Althaus, *Paulus und Luther über den Menschen. Ein Vergleich*, 4th ed. (Gütersloh, 1963), focusing upon Luther's exegesis of Rom. 7:14ff. and 1 Cor. 15, he seems to have isolated Romans 7 too much from the total argument (in chapters one through five St. Paul is speaking of justification by faith, from chapter six to twelve, exclusive of the digression in nine to eleven, he is speaking of the justification of the believer), to interpret Luther's fallen man too unhumanly, and to have found disjunction where there is in fact harmony between Paul and Luther. On Luther and Paul on the sinful nature of man, see Heinz Bluhm, "Luther's View of Man in His Early German Writings," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 34 (1963), pp. 583-593, especially 585-586. Hans-Georg Geyer, *Von der Geburt des wahren Menschen* (Neukirchen, 1965), discusses the problem of Pauline and humanist anthropology for Melancthon, pp. 13-122.
20. Karl F. Morrison, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
21. WA 56, p. 255, 18. In a letter which is contemporary with Luther's work on Romans Luther explained to Spalatin: "The 'righteousness based upon the Law' or 'upon deeds' is, therefore, in no way merely a matter of [religious] ceremonial but rather of the fulfillment of the entire Decalogue. Fulfillment without faith in Christ—even if it creates men like Fabricius, Regulus, and others who are wholly irreproachable in the sight of man—no more resembles righteousness than sorb-apples resemble figs. For we are not, as Aristotle believes, made righteous by the doing of just deeds, unless we deceive ourselves; but rather—if I may say so—in becoming and being righteous people we do just deeds. For it is necessary that the person be changed, then the deeds [will follow]. Abel pleases [God] before his gift does." WA Br. 1, pp. 70-71; *Luther's Works*, XLVIII, *Letters I*, ed. and tr. by Gottfried G. Krodel (Philadelphia, 1963), Letter to Georg Spalatin, Wittenberg, Oct. 19, 1516, P. 25.
22. WA 4, p. 19, 21-24.
23. WA 30II, p. 672, 37; WA 37, p. 673, 13-17.
24. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (Chicago, 1934), pp. 156-157.
25. J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (2nd edition, Leipzig, 1921), p. 153.
26. WA 40 I, p. 360.
27. Marx-Engels, *Werke*, I (Berlin, 1961), pp. 26-27.
28. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Appendix A, pp. 73-75. The literature on Feuerbach is very extensive, but the following titles are of special relevance to the question under discussion here: Uwe Schott, *Die Jugendentwicklung Ludwig Feuerbachs bis zum Fakultätswechsel 1825* (Göttingen, 1973); Erich Schneider, *Die Theologie und Feuerbachs Religionskritik. Die Reaktion der Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts auf Ludwig Feuerbachs Religionskritik, mit Ausblicken auf das 20. Jahrhundert und einem Anhang über Feuerbach* (Göttingen, 1972); J. Wallmann, "Ludwig Feuerbach und die theologische Tradition," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 67 (1970), pp. 56-86; Oswald Bayer, "Gegen Gott für den Menschen. Zu Feuerbachs Lutherrezeption," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 69 (1972), pp. 34-71; Carter Lindberg, "Luther and Feuerbach," in Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, I (St. Louis, 1970). Bayer, p. 70, sees a parallel with Luther's charge that the scholastics saw faith as a latent quality of the soul. An interesting theological counterpoint is Karl Barth's reaction to Feuerbach and its implication for Barth's misgivings about Luther's concept of God and insistence upon the "Calvinist corrective" to his Christology, early preference for Anselm's conceptualization of God, but final appreciation of

- the utility of Luther's concreteness in making thought about God accesible to modern man. Two articles of special interest are John Glasse, "Barth on Feuerbach," *Harvard Theological Review*, 57 (1964), pp. 69-96 and Manfred H. Vogel, "The Barth-Feuerbach Confrontation," *Harvard Theological Review*, 59 (1966), pp. 27-52.
29. Panerga. *Sämmtliche Werke*, III (Frankfurt a. Ma., 1962), pp. 583-584. See also *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, I (Wiesbaden, 1965), pp. 480, 482, 621; II (Wiesbaden, 1961), p. 693.
 30. Rudolf Homann, "Luther und Nietzsche," *Luther. Zeitschrift der Luthergesellschaft*, 1973, no. 2, pp. 86-95, explores Nietzsche's road to nihilism, his affinities to Luther, and draws lessons for contemporary man. See also Emmanuel Hirsch, "Nietzsche und Luther," *Lutherjahrbuch*, II-III (1920/21), pp. 61-106. Heinz Bluhm has a series of excellent probing articles on the relation of Nietzsche to Luther, "Das Lutherbild des jungen Nietzsche," *PMLA*, 58 (1943), pp. 246-288; "Nietzsche's Idea of Luther in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*," *PMLA*, 65 (1950), pp. 1053-1068; "Nietzsche's View of Luther and the Reformation in *Morgenröthe* and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*," *PMLA*, 68 (1953), pp. 111-127. See also Jean-Edouard Spenle, *La Pensée Allemande de Luther a Nietzsche* (Paris, 1967), who says, on p. 20, that Luther's miracle of faith in opposition or transcendence of moralism is like Nietzsche's transvaluation of values.
 31. A key article is that by Eduard Geisman, "Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" *Luther Jahrbuch*, 10 (1920), pp. 1-27.
 32. A plethora of recent articles and volumes are concerned with Luther and the modern world. Among the more noteworthy may be cited: Heiko Oberman, ed., *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden, 1974); Erwin Mühlhaupt, "Fragen Luthers an die modernen Welt," *Luther. Zeitschrift* (1972), no. 1, pp. 20-29; Gerhart Ebeling, "Luther und der Anbruch der Neuzeit," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 69 (1972), pp. 185-213 (in English in Oberman, *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era*, pp. 11-39); Roland Bainton, Warren Quanbeck, and E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther Today* (Decorah, Iowa, 1957); Georg Wunsch, *Luther und die Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1961); Kurt Aland, *Martin Luther in der modernen Literatur* (Witten-Berlin, 1973); and a much discussed book not on Luther but on the modern world, Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a. M., 1966).
 33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, II, *Nietzsches Werke* (Leipzig, 1900), III, p. 205; Zweite Abteilung: "Der Wanderer und seine Schatten," no. 18: Der Moderne Diogenes.
 34. WA 20, p. 47, 16.