THE SECULAR AND THE RELIGIOUS

IN

THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS OF THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH

BY

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Scope and Contents: The thesis aims to analyze the thought of Paul Tillich with a view to finding out the meaning and meaningfulness of his understanding of the religious and the secular. Specifically, this has been done through three steps: (1) by an analysis of Tillich's notion of the secular in terms of variations of his broad definition of religion; (2) by a look at the secular in its strongest cultural expression - autonomous culture; and (3) by a discussion of the chief sources of confusion and disagreement in his views of the religious and the secular. The thesis concludes with the author's views on the extent to which problems surrounding Tillich's broad definition of religion do, or do not, undercut the meaningfulness of that definition.

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

(Editions listed are those directly referred to in this work; unless otherwise noted, the author is Paul Tillich.)

CB ---The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University, 1952.)

DF ---Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1958.)

IH ---The Interpretation of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.)

K&B ---Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (eds.), The Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Macmillan, 1964 - first published 1952.)

LPJ ---Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.)

NB ---The New Being (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.)

OB ---On the Boundary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966.)

PE ---The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, abridged edition, 1957.)

RS ---The Religious Situation, Niebuhr, Richard H. (trans.), (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956.)

SF ---The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.)

ST ---Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press - Vol. I, 1951; Vol. II, 1957; Vol. III, 1963.)

UC ---Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue, Brown, D. Mackenzie (ed.), (New York: Harper & Row, 1965.)

WR? ---What is Religion?, Adams, James Luther. (ed./trans.), (New York: Harper & Row, 1969.)

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most distinguished thinkers of this century, Paul Tillich has left a system of thought which, in depth, scope, and originality, stands firmly among those extraordinary works of history. At the very heart of this philosophical-theological opus is a philosophy of religion whose reverberations have penetrated throughout a variety of academic and non-academic activities. The most direct expression of this philosophy is Tillich's definition of religion. As with the system surrounding it, this definition is both striving to speak to twentieth-century man and by its novelty and ambiguity making it difficult for him to receive its message. As a result Tillich's account of religion, which includes as well his view of secularism, is very often found implausible. In the interest of overcoming some of these all too simple rejections of this definition, this thesis aims to clarify Tillich's understanding of what it means to be religious and what it means to be secular. First however, it will be helpful to give a general introduction to Tillich's life and work.

LIFE AND WORK

Formative Influences. Ultimately Tillich's view of the religious and the secular is anchored in his notion of the

relationship of the finite to the infinite as one in which the finite "points to" the infinite for which it "longs."[1] This notion has its roots in Tillich's childhood experiences and can be seen as taking on fuller meaning for him as it comes under the scope of other formative influences. It was as a child in a small town in Eastern Germany that the sights, sounds, and scents of nature became for Tillich symbolic expressions of man's encounter with the divine. Although life here was in many ways restricted, as is symbolized by the ancient wall surrounding the town, "the yearly escape to the Baltic Sea, with its limitless horizon, was the great event, the flight into the open"[2] that offered once again "the experience of the infinite bordering upon the finite."[3] These same small towns, which in many ways restricted the early Tillich, in another way gave him additional nurture for his romantic soul. As he says: "To grow up in towns in which every stone is witness of a period many centuries past produces a feeling for history, not as a matter of knowledge, but as a living reality in which the past participates in the present."[4] This sense of sharing life with the past added depth to Tillich's feeling for the present.

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[1] To explore and establish this point is one of the underlying themes of the whole thesis. Cf. especially pp. 26f; 81-2, below.

[2] K & B, p. 6. [3] IH, p. 7. [4] K & B, p. 5.

Another aspect of Tillich's youth that had formative influence on his later thought was his study of the Greek language and learning at the Gymnasium. Of this Tillich says: "My love of the Greek language was a vehicle for my love of the Greek culture and especially the early Greek philosophies."[5] This interest in Greek philosophy led to a more involved study of philosophy in general, so that by the time he entered university Tillich already possessed "a good knowledge of the history of philosophy and a basic acquaintance with Kant and Fichte."[6]

It was at the University of Halle that Tillich studied under Martin Kahler and Fritz Medicus, the theologian and philosopher respectively, who were to have major influence on the future course of his thought. It was Kahler who gave Tillich the incentive for a new interpretation of the doctrine of "justification by faith," an interpretation that was decisive for Tillich's decision to remain a theologian. Perplexed over the possibility of Christian conviction being intellectual suicide Tillich welcomed Kahler's insight that doubt is fundamental to the human situation and cannot be overcome by subjective experience. Thus, he concludes: "The situation of doubt, even of doubt about God, need not separate us from God. There is faith in every serious doubt, namely, the faith in the truth as such, even if the only truth we can express is our lack of truth.

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[5] Ibid., p. 9. [6] Ibid., p. 10.

But if this is experienced in its depth and as an ultimate concern, the divine is present; . . . So the paradox got hold of me that he who seriously denies God, affirms him. Without it I could not have remained a theologian."[7] Further enucleation of this principle leads Tillich to protest against the Pharisaic nature of dogmatism, especially that of Orthodox theology. This, under the name of the "Protestant Principle," remained basic to Tillich's life-long protest against narrowness of all kinds.

Equally influential in the development of Tillich's thought was Fritz Medicus who, by formally introducing him to Schelling, gave Tillich a philosophical framework for his thought. It was from Schelling as one member of the German classical school of thought - others being Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Hegel - that Tillich acquired a keen interest in the task of relating the Christian faith to religiousness in general. This influence shows itself both in Tillich's broad definition of religion and in his concern to give a religious interpretation to all spheres of culture. It was also from Schelling that Tillich found his notion of a common ground for philosophy and theology as an awareness of an intuitive a priori. In addition to these two main themes one can also see traces of Schelling in Tillich's existentialism (Schelling's later

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[7] PE, pp. x-xi.

philosophy was a philosophy of existence); in his notion of God as one of both being and becoming; and in his conception of history and the kairos, both influenced by Schelling's interpretation of history as Heilsgeschichte. That Tillich was profoundly influenced by Schelling is evidenced by the following statement by Tillich himself written some forty years after he first studied the works of this philosopher:

> He was my teacher, even though the beginning of my studies was separated by some fifty years from the time of his death. I have never, in the development of my own thinking, forgotten my dependency on Schelling . . . . My work on the problems of systematic theology would be inconceivable without him.[8]

Tillich also acknowledges his indebtedness to the thought of many others: to Jacob Boehme's Grund and Ungrund from which he derives his conceptions of God as the Ground and Abyss of Being and the demonic as the separation of the form of being from its inexhaustibility;[9] to Rudolph Otto's mysterium tremendum et

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[8]Gesammelte Werke, Vol IV: "Philosophie und Schicksal" (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1961), p. 133; quoted by Aren Unhjem, Dynamics of Doubt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 17. For detailed studies of the influence of Schelling on Tillich's thought see: Daniel J. O'Hanlon, The Influence of Schelling on the Thought of Paul Tillich (Gregorian University: dissertation, 1957); Gunter Friedrich Sommer, The Significance of the Late Philosophy of Schelling for the Formation and Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Tillich (Duke Univeristy: dissertation, 1960).

[9]IH, pp. 84 ff.

fascinosum, which helped him understand the ambiguous character of man's experience of the holy as expressed in ultimate concern;[10] to Ernst Troeltsch's lectures on the philosophy of history, which encouraged him - despite disagreement with Troeltsch's idealist starting point - "to develop a philosophy of history that could become also a philosophy of religious socialism;"[11] to Kierkegaard's dialectical psychology;[12] to Nietzxche's vitalic affirmation of life which for Tillich was a clear expression of the experience of the abyss;[13] and finally, to Marx, whose prophetic, humanistic, and realistic thought was always close to Tillich's concern for all areas of culture, but whose calculating materialistic base received a Tillichian "No."[14]

In addition to these thinkers of the past and of his day, some historical events of the time also played a major role in deciding the direction of Tillich's thought. It was as a chaplain in World War I, for example, that Tillich discovered his German classical philosophical and theology to be unworkable. Recalling the night attack which finally brought about this major "transformation," Tillich says: "All that horrible night I walked along the rows of dying men, and much of my German classical philosophy broke down that night - the belief that man could master cognitively the essence of his being, the belief in the identity of essence and existence."[15] To encourage this transformation

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[10] ST, I, 215-16. [11] OB, pp. 54-5. [12] K & B, p. 11.
[13] OB, p. 53. [14] K & B, p. 13.
[15] Time, Canadian edition, March 16, 1959, p. 63.

of course was the fact that nineteenth-century bourgeois society had been shattered by the war.

A second major historical event which left its mark on Tillich's developing philosophy was the rise of Nazism and the ensuing World War II. In addition to uprooting him from his nativeland, these things also raised in Tillich the question: to what extent is religion being replaced by political and social movements? Variations of this theme were always at the centre of his interest encouraging him to search for religious depth in all, ostensibly non-religious movements.

A concrete expression of this search was his active participation in the German Religious Socialist Movement following the first World War. Returning from this war Tillich and a group of fellow scholars realized that throughout much of Europe there existed a gap between the cultural revolution and the religious tradition. Each side was rejecting the other - the churches rejecting the cultural movement as a secular autonomy, and the revolutionary movements rejecting the churches as a transcendent heteronomy. Realizing that this gap would eventually be disastrous for both elements Tillich and a group of his colleagues founded and organized the German Religious Socialist Movement. It was at this time that Tillich saw the need for a new interpretation of history and so conceived the notion of the kairos in order to restore piety to the struggle for justice without either dragging God down from heaven or raising man up

to heaven. Basically the kairos concept refers to a moment in the over-all historical process in which a turning point takes place, in which history takes a new religious consciousness.[16] The Religious Socialist group believed that such a moment was at hand in the postwar situation of central and eastern Europe. Their aim was to ensure that it worked in favour of a "theonomous" culture, a new culture in which the open breach between the secular and the religious would be closed. The direct historical effects of this movement were few of course. Under the weight of a strong autonomous secularism and an equally strong and conservative religious ruling class, the movement was impotent. However, the thesis on which it was based remained central to Tillich's thought for the remainder of his life.

Writings. To complete this telescopic look at Tillich's life and work it is necessary to comment briefly on his writings, noting particularly those most significant for this thesis. The basis of Tillich's philosophy of religion can be found in the three articles: "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," "Overcoming the Notion of Religion Within the Philosophy of Religion," and "Philosophy of Religion," all of which were published in Germany in the early post-World War I years.[17] It is in these

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[16]For a full account of the kairos doctrine see PE, pp. 32-51; 55 ff. The concepts of "autonomony," "heteronomy," and "theonomy," are dealt with in Chapter II of this thesis.

[17]English translation of these articles by James L Adams in WR?. For complete publication data on this and other books in this list see bibliography at the end of this thesis.

writings that Tillich first presents the ideas that were to remain the basis of his thought right through to his death. These include the concepts of: the Unconditional, the demonic, and religion as the substance of culture. A further elucidation of these fundamental ideas and the application of them to historical reality produced two other key concepts - the Protestant Principle, and the kairos concept - along with a bulk of lectures and articles and two important books: The Religious Situation (1932) and The Interpretation of History (1936). Throughout these writings the fundamental themes of Tillich's thought - his reference to religion as the substance of all cultural expressions, and his denial of ultimacy to any finite reality - undergo change only insofar as they are more thoroughly expounded and more widely applied to cultural and historical situations. There is no fundamental break in Tillich's main line of thought, neither in this period nor in any other. There are, of course, different orientations and emphases at different times. Between the two great wars, for example, he was much more concerned with explicit interpretation and change of social reality than with general theological conceptualizing as he was in his later years in America. But the heart of his thought remained throughout these changing emphases, as it was in his first important public lecture, given in 1919 ("On the Idea of a Theology of Culture"), grounded in a philosophy of meaning which describes religion as the supporting substance of all cultural expressions.

Other writings of Tillich's most pertinent for the analysis

to follow include: Systematic Theology (especially Vols. I and III), Tillich's magnum opus whose purpose is to correlate the philosophical questions of existence with the theological Christian answers; Theology of Culture, a collection of essays from various periods in Tillich's life with the same theme as is at the heart of most of his writings: the relationship between religion and culture; The Courage to Be, which as the title indicates is a discussion of various accounts of the source and nature of man's courage to live; Dynamics of Faith, Tillich's most popular account of what it means to be religious; and finally the three books of sermons entitled The Shaking of the Foundations, The New Being, and The Eternal Now, all of which give accurate reflections of Tillich's most profound thoughts in a consise and simple style. All these works were written in Tillich's later years after he moved from Germany to America. As already noted, however, they show no major departure from the foundations laid in the early German writings listed above.

"On the Boundary." In summing up this brief account of Tillich's life and work no statement is more apt than Tillich's own assessment of himself as a man "on the boundary," "the best place for acquiring knowledge." Prefacing his summary of the major boundary experiences of his life he writes:

> At almost every point, I have had to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either. Since thinking presupposes

> receptiveness to new possibilities, this position is fruitful for thought; but it is difficult and dangerous in life, which again and again demands decisions and thus the exclusion of alternatives. This disposition and its tensions have determined both my destiny and my work.[18]

To explore some of the fundamental principles and tensions of that work is the chief intent of this thesis.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To analyze the thought of Tillich in search of the meaning of two particular concepts is to engage in a largely ambiguous task. First, it is to abstract from a comprehensive system two particular elements which, it may be argued, cannot be fully understood except in terms of all the other elements constituting that system. If this problem is common to all attempts to abstract from systems, a second ambiguity faced by this particular study is brought on by the peculiarities of Tillich's work alone; that is, by the question as to whether Tillich is primarily philosopher or theologian. There are many other ambiguities in Tillich's thought itself, of course, but since much of this study is concerned specifically with these, they need not detain us at this point. However, it is decisive that we discuss at the outset the two problems mentioned above, since they have direct implications for the aim, method, and general character of the study which is to follow.

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[18] OB, p. 13.

The aim of this study is to get a clear understanding of what Tillich thinks it means to be religious and to be secular. To do this entails an emphatic discussion of some concepts and a slight mentioning, or perhaps even a complete ignoring, of others. This task is not only difficult - it is that chiefly because of the almost complete interrelationship of all concepts in the system - it is also dangerous; dangerous, that is insofar as it could give less than a fair and complete understanding of the concepts involved. Nevertheless, since my aim is to investigate Tillich's understanding of but two concepts and not to give a summary of the whole system, selection must be made of what I deem to be the most critical elements of his relevant to the concepts I wish to clarify. In general terms the principles of this selection can be deduced from a more detailed account of my purpose and procedure. This we will now give.

Aim. As already stated, in general terms the purpose of this thesis is to investigate Tillich's understanding of what it means to be religious and to be secular. The fact that one chooses to do this presupposes that Tillich's thought on these subjects is not without some problems, or is at least in need of some clarification. In fact it is my contention that it is this need for further clarification that is at the base of many misunderstandings and all too simple rejections of Tillich's interpretation of these concepts. Thus, in more specific terms, the aim of this study is to present a clearer statement of

Tillich's notion of the religious and the secular than he himself gives, and in so doing indicate how some of the major sources of confusion and misunderstanding in Tillich's discussion of these subjects can be overcome. In doing this it is not my aim to add anything new - not in the way of substance at least - to Tillich's definition of religion and secularism, but rather to clarify that definition. Neither is it my intention to argue for or against the ultimate validity of that definition, but rather to indicate how some rejections of it have been based on less than complete understanding.

Basic Ambiguity. A discussion of my method of acheiving this aim involves a consideration of the ambiguity raised by the question: Is Tillich's thought primarily theological or philosophical, or in some sense a combination of both? There is little need here to engage in a long debate on this issue. It seems apparent that Tillich is primarily a Christian theologian,[19] but a theologian whose very methodology - the method of correlation - leads him first to be philosophical. So it seems perfectly reasonable to label him a philosopher-theologian (or theologian-philosopher) as in fact most do. But far more important for our purposes than any labelling of Tillich is the fact that he is undeniably a committed Christian theologian, while the definition of religion and secularism I aim

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[19] His magnum opus is entitled Systematic Theology, while most of his other writings contain an obvious theological bent.

to investigate is, by my contention, a general philosophical one. That is to say, it is a basic presupposition of this thesis that the definition of religion and secularism it aims to expound is that of an "objective" philosopher not a restricted theologian. The ambiguity involved in this could obviously lead to a thesis on this subject alone. Nevertheless, our remarks must be confined to the following short explanation.

While it is true that Tillich is primarily a Christian theologian it is also true that his point of departure is a philosophical one. In other words, Tillich starts as a philosopher asking questions about reality and its structures, and in going further to ask about the meaning of that reality he finds the theological (Christian)symbols to be meaningful answers to his questions. As he says in discussing his method of correlation:

> In the light of this message [the Christian one] he [the theologian] may make an analysis of existence which is more penetrating than that of most philosophers. Nevertheless, it remains a philosophical analysis. The Analysis of existence, including the development of the questions implicit in existence, is a philosophical task, even if it is performed by a theologian . . . . The difference between the philosopher who is not a theologian and the theologian who works as a philosopher in analyzing human existence is only that the former tries to give an analysis which will be part of a broader philosophical work, while the latter tries to correlate

> the material of his analysis with the theological concepts he derives from the Christian faith.[20]

Tillich of course is the latter, "a theologian who works as a philosopher," analyzing existence in order to see the questions the Christian message must try to answer. His definition of religion and secularism is part of the analysis of existence not the answer to its question. The implication of this for this study is obvious: the definition of religion and secularism we are expounding must not be misconstrued as a claim to Christian conversion by definition. The definition might as easily have been given by a philosopher proper, or a philosopher-poet if one wishes. It is first and foremost the result of philosophical observation and analysis.

Method and Procedure. The implication of this for the method of procedure in this thesis might not be so obvious. It does not mean of course that we must necessarily analyze Tillich's thought from a philosophical point of view. However, since it is a general philosophical definition, it is certainly valid and meaningful to approach it from that perspective, as in fact we will. That is to say, for the most part we will analyze Tillich's understanding of the religious and the secular in terms of its internal logic; but since the validity of that definition does not depend on its logical integrity alone, we must also discuss its applicability to social reality. First, however, we must discuss our procedure in more detail.

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[20] ST, I, 63.

Since our aim is to understand the concepts of the religious and the secular in Tillich's thought, we will naturally concentrate more on his account of these concepts themselves than on his discussion of related ones. However, Tillich's analysis of these particular notions involves a simultaneous discussion of others. It is these "others" that we must select, and emphasize, from the whole of his thought, while only noting some of the many less related ones. Thus, in Chapter I, we discuss the secular in terms of the four ways Tillich describes the religious. These are: as ultimate concern, as the self-transcending function of life, as directedness toward unconditioned meaning, and as a special sphere of existence. This procedure not only allows us to discuss both concepts in terms of their inter-relatedness, it also leads to the very basic concept of the unconditional, the infinite, as well as the philosophy of meaning on which Tillich founds his whole thought.

In Chapter II the emphasis turns to Tillich's notion that essentially religion and culture belong together; one cannot be without the other. Besides giving the view of religion and secularism expounded in Chapter I a more concrete referent, the discussion of autonomous culture also reveals the ambiguous nature of religion and secularism as Tillich understands it. Furthermore, it anchors once again his understanding of religion and secularism in the basic concepts of meaning, and the finite-infinite relationship.[21]

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[21] Throughout these two chapters many of Tillich's concepts

Chapters I and II, then, constitute an analysis of Tillich's thought pertinent to his definition of religion and secularism. The primary purpose of Chapter III is to come to terms with some of the major sources of confusion and disagreement in that definition, and in so doing to point out how his understanding of the phenomena of religion and secularism might not be as meaningless as many - such as Cox, Bonhoeffer, Hook, Edwards, et. al. - think it is. Involved in this is the consideration of two types of criticism of Tillich's views. One questions the internal coherency of Tillich's position, and the other questions whether that position is an accurate account of social reality. To neither does this thesis pretend to give the final answer. Our aim, as is summarized in the conclusion, is to indicate what are generally considered to be the major problems in Tillich's account of the religious and the secular, and at the same time to note how many of these apparent problems may be overcome within the limits of Tillich's thought itself. First, however, we must pursue the initial investigation and analysis.

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receive little or no attention, even though someof them - the kairos, the "Protestant Principle", and the "New Being," to mention a few - seem to be very much related to our subject. The chief reason for this - apart from the interest of manageability, of course - is the fact that our analysis aims to be more philosophical than theological. While it is true that many of these concepts are grounded in Tillich's philosophy of religion, they are expounded primarily in terms of his theology. As such they are of secondary importance to this study.

CHAPTER I

THE SECULAR AND THE RELIGIOUS DEFINED

One of the fundamental distinctions in Tillich's thought is that between a narrower and a broader definition of religion. The narrower concept refers to conventional, constitutional religion, with its clergy, scriptures, and dogma, while the broader concept is that which describes religion as the universal state of ultimate concern. This thesis is concerned with the latter, Tillich's broad concept of religion, and the meaning of the secular in relation to it. Any discussion of the narrower concept will be done only to illuminate more clearly the broader one, for ultimately the smaller definition only makes sense for Tillich in terms of the larger one.[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze this broad definition of religion, and with it the related concept of the secular, in terms of the four ways in which Tillich describes religion: as ultimate concern, as the self-transcending function of life, as directedness towards unconditioned meaning, and as a special sphere of life, i. e., conventional religion. By looking at the secular in terms of these four different ways in which Tillich describes religion, we get to the heart of what he means by both these terms (religion and secularism) and the phenomena to which they refer. Specifically, we discover

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[1] UC, p. 4; 22.

how he sees an ambiguous, rather than a contrasting relationship between these two - this being the major distinguishing feature of his definition. Moreover, in each alternate way of describing the religious and the secular we find that, ultimately, we reach Tillich's most basic principle concerning the relation of finite realities to the infinite. This principle will be dealt with later in the study.

ULTIMATE CONCERN

In his early German writings Tillich elaborates the concept of religion in terms of das Unbedingte, the ordinary English translation of which is "the unconditioned," or "the unconditional." Thus, in his Religionsphilosophie, published in 1925, religion is defined as "directedness toward the unconditional" (die Richtung auf das Unbedingte).[2] While the notion of "unconditionality" is certainly not absent from Tillich's later (English) writings, the actual word "unconditioned" is very often replaced by the phrase "ultimate concern," which is an English equivalent of "die Richtung auf das Unbedingte."[3] Thus, in

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[2]English translation of this article in WR?, pp. 27-121.

[3]It is possible that one of the main reasons for Tillich's preference of "ultimate concern" over "directedness towards the unconditioned," is that the latter does not sufficiently exclude a connotation of "thingishness." Tillich is insistent that the "unconditioned" be considered a quality, not a thing (See PE, p. 32, n).

order to come to grips with Tillich's definition of religion and secularism it will be necessary first of all to explore his use and meaning of the difficult phrase, "ultimate concern."[4]

Tillich notes that we are always concerned about some thing or other - food, shelter, politics, knowledge - with varying degrees of urgency. Some of these concerns are decidedly trivial and temporary, while others are more urgent and lasting. But underneath all these pen-ultimate concerns, according to Tillich, is one concern that is of ultimate importance to the individual concerned. This is his ultimate concern, the "to be or not to be" of his life, that excludes all other concerns from ultimate importance. He may not be conscious of this concern, but it is there, argues Tillich, giving his life some direction and worth.

There are many aspects to this notion of ultimate concern as Tillich describes it. First, the content, that is, the "object" about which one is ultimately concerned, can be anything that has taken on the quality of ultimacy for the one involved. For many the nation is the object about which they are most seriously concerned. For them the welfare and greatness of the nation both conditions and takes priority over all their other concerns. Others are ultimately concerned about such loosely defined, finite "objects" as democracy, the common good,

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[4]Most of Tillich's discussion of ultimate concern is contained in the two books DF, and UC; see also ST, I, 211-18.

the church, or the leader. Such elevation of limited objects to the level of ultimate significance constitutes, for Tillich, idolatrous religion. "Nothing which by its very nature is finite can rightly become a matter of ultimate concern."[5] Only ultimate concern with the truly ultimate, that is the ground of being itself,[6] can rightly be called a true religion. Nevertheless, idolatrous religion is still religion; it is still characterized by the state of unconditional seriousness.

Secondly, ultimate concern is not a state which one can choose to produce or not to produce. Instead, according to Tillich, one is "grasped" by it. This notion of being grasped by an ultimate concern does not refer, necessarily, to a dramatic conversion or some other traumatic experience. Indeed, it may be the result of some dramatic experience, but it is more often the result of a gradual development. The word "grasped" simply indicates that one does not, by "active, reflective, voluntary processes" produce his ultimate concern. One cannot say, "'I will make this or that a matter of my ultimate concern'."[7] The state of ultimate concern has already grasped one when he begins to reflect on it.

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[5] UC, p. 24; emphasis mine.

[6] The "ground of being" is Tillich's abstract phrase for God. It refers to God as the source and sustenance of everything that has being. It is the power that permeates all forms of being, by virtue of which they have existence. See ST, I, 235 ff.

[7] UC, p. 8.

Thirdly, ultimate concern is characterized by both an unconditional demand and a promise of ultimate fulfilment. If, for example, the nation becomes the object of one's ultimate concern, it demands that all other concerns - economic well-being, family, aesthetic and educational endeavours, justice and freedom - be of secondary importance, and if necessary, in the interest of the well-being of the nation, be sacrificed. On the other hand the object of one's ultimate concern promises total fulfilment, the content of which may be only vaguely defined. In the case of the nation, for example, one might be promised such riches as participation in the "greatness" of the nation, even if one were to die for it, or membership in the "saving-race." In every state of ultimate concern the object of that concern promises total fulfilment and threatens exclusion from such fulfilment if the unconditional demand is not obeyed. Social and economic "success," the ultimate concern of many in contemporary western culture, demands total surrender to its rules even if the sacrifice is genuine personal relationships, convictions, and idiosyncracies. In return it offers the indefinite "secure and happy life" based on good social standing and economic power. Failure to meet the demands of "success" means failure to reap its fulfilling benefits. It, like the nation, the church, the charismatic leader, God, and all other objects of ultimate concern, is characterized by inconditionality in its demand, promise, and threat. It is this quality that defines "objects" as contents of the religious concern.

A fourth aspect of religion as ultimate concern is its integrating role in the human personality. By this we do not mean its strictly therapeutic value,[8] but rather the fact that it involves the total personality, including, yet transcending each of the functions of the human spirit. In the first chapter of Theology of Culture[9] Tillich speaks of religion as being at home in the depth of all the functions of man's spiritual life. Ultimate concern, he argues, cannot be confined to either the moral, cognitive, or aesthetic function of man's spirit; nor can it be restricted to the more general realm of feeling. As ultimate concern it must include but go beyond each of these spheres of spiritual activity. It is expressed through each of these functions but it also grounds them. Thus, it is the depth dimension in the totality of the human spirit. It is the a priori of all man's functions and actions that causes him to point to and seek ultimacy, either by elevating some limited object to the rank of ultimacy or by pointing to the ultimate itself, the ground of his being.

It is important to note that in this definition Tillich rejects as a starting point any theory which defines religion as "man's relation to divine beings." His own starting point is

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[8]For a discussion of this kind of integrating effect see DF, pp. 105-11.

[9]This chapter is one of Tillich's best condensed summaries of his definition of religion. See also DF, pp. 4 - 8.

"religion as an aspect of the human spirit." He points out, however, that it is not just any aspect, but the fundamental one: the depth in which all others are grounded. Furthermore, he argues against any attempt to derive religion from a phenomenon such as fear which some argue is more original and basic than religion itself. Not only is such a presupposition non-verifiable, he says, "one can prove that in the scientific method which leads to such consequences faith [ultimate concern] is already effective. Faith precedes all attempts to derive it from something else, because these attempts are themselves based on faith."[10]

In our discussion to date we have concentrated mostly on the subjective side of ultimate concern, i.e., on the state of ultimate concern itself. As Tillich points out, we "must understand that the term ultimate concern, like the German of which it is a translation [was uns unbedingt angeht], is intentionally ambiguous. It indicates on the one hand, our being ultimately concerned . . . and on the other hand, the object of our ultimate concern, for which of course there is no other word than 'ultimate'."[11] We will now discuss the objective side of the state of ultimate concern in terms of its

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[10]Tillich does not elaborate this point, presumably considering it self-explanatory. Implied in this statement, however, is his thesis that religion, ultimate concern, faith (all three are synonymous for him) is the uniting centre of the human mind, and as such is presupposed in all of man's intentional activities.

[11] UC, p. 11.

defining quality of holiness, or ultimacy.

It is of utmost importance in attempting to understand Tillich's definition of religion to realize that the "object" of ultimate concern is not in the strict sense an object. The distinction between the subjective and the objective sides of the state of ultimate concern can only be made in formal analysis. Ultimately, in the experience of ultimate concern itself "the ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same."[12] This can best be explained by the consideration of two other points. The first is Tillich's insistence that the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith is not a being but a quality. This is very forcefully expounded in the following lengthy quote. (Here the term unconditional is used but as we have already seen its meaning is synonymous with that of the term ultimate).

> The term "unconditional" . . . points to that element in every religious experience which makes it religious . . . . The unconditional is a quality, not a being. It characterizes that which is our ultimate and, consequently, unconditional concern, whether we call it "God" or "Being as such" or the "Good as such" or the "True as such," or whether we give it any other name. It would be a complete mistake to understand the unconditional as a being the existence of which can be discussed. He who speaks of "the existence of the unconditional" has thoroughly misunderstood the meaning of the term.

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[12] DF, p. 11; cf. CB, passim.

> Unconditional is a quality which we experience in encountering reality, for instance, in the unconditional character of the voice of conscience, the logical as well as the moral.[13]

In short, the ultimate is really ultimacy, the quality of being itself which, by Tillich's account, we all experience even though we may not be conscious of it.

This raises the second point: the source of universal ultimate concern. According to Tillich "the reality of man's ultimate concern reveals . . . that man is able to transcend the flux of relative and transitory experiences of his ordinary life."[14] The fact of ultimate concern itself, the fact that some men elevate finite objects to unconditional validity and others use finite realities to point to the unconditional itself - this fact indicates to Tillich that man has the element of infinity within him, and furthermore that this element of potentiality strives toward actualization. In other words, the source of man's ultimate concern is his immediate awareness of the infinite to which he belongs but does not own life a possession, and which, by his finitude, he is existentially estranged from. In Tillich's formula: "The human heart seeks the infinite because that is where the finite wants to rest."[15]

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13 PE, p. 32, n.

14 DF, p. 9.

15 Ibid., p. 13

The objective side of ultimate concern, then, is already implicit in the subjective side. Both the source and the object of religion is ultimacy. In the case of idolatrous religion, however, the ultimacy of the object is not the really ultimate but that which has been assumed by some finite reality.

Tillich further elaborates the concept of ultimate concern by relating it to the concept of the holy. The holy for him is synonymous with ultimacy. "What concerns one ultimately becomes holy. The awareness of the holy is awareness of the presence of the divine, namely of the content of our ultimate concern."[16] Or more pointedly, he says, "Only that which is holy can give man ultimate concern, and only that which gives man ultimate concern has the quality of holiness."[17] Holiness, then, is the quality of ultimacy or unconditionality, not that of moral goodness as is often thought.

Tillich again makes this point when he interprets Rudolph Otto's mysterium tremendum et fascinosum as "the experience of of the 'ultimate' in the double sense of that which is the abyss and that which is the ground of man's being."[18] By Tillich's interpretation, the "mysterium tremendum", as the abyss of being, indicates to man the unbridgeable gap between the finite and the infinite. The mysterium fascinosum on the other hand, as the ground of being, implies the fulfilment and

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[16] Ibid., p. 12-13.

[17] ST, I, 215.

[18] Ibid.

beatitude of man. These describe the way in which man always encounters the representations (objects) of his ultimate concern. As we have seen, man as finite being is attracted to the infinite so that everything which manifests ultimacy can, and often does, attract and fascinate man. But just as it fascinates him by its pointing to the infinite so also does it make him tremble by pointing out the unbridgeable gap between the infinite and the finite. This double feeling of fascination and trembling is the profound expression of man's relation to the holy which is always implied in every genuine state of ultimate concern.

We have seen, then, that ultimate concern is a state of unconditional passion involving the whole personality, directed toward an object manifesting ultimacy, a quality that demands complete surrender and offers complete fulfilment. The object, or content, of this concern can be something other than the really ultimate. It can in fact be any finite reality raised to the level of ultimacy. In this case the religion would be an idolatrous one but as such it is still religion. It still considers other concerns as preliminary and thus excludes them from ultimate importance. In brief: religion as ultimate concern is unconditional concern for that which to the one concerned is of ultimate importance. Next we must explore Tillich's understanding of the secular in terms of this description of religion.

The Secular. Whereas the holy is the realm of ultimate concern, of the unconditional, of the infinite, the secular is the

realm of preliminary concerns, of the conditioned, of the finite. The word "secular," like the German "profan," is a neutral term meaning "of this world" or "remaining outside the doors of the temple," and does not connote, as does the English "profane," an attack on the sacred. It means "belonging to the ordinary process of events, not going beside it or beyond it into a sanctuary."[19] In other words the secular is the non-ultimate, the non-holy, and thus refers to all finite realities, including all our preliminary concerns as opposed to our underlying ultimate concern. But as such it is not derogatory; it does not, in itself, suggest that our many functional and pragmatic concerns are in any way evil or unimportant. It merely indicates the fact of these concerns, describing them in contrast to our ultimate concern.[20]

This view of the secular as the pole opposite the holy can be further illuminated by a consideration of the three possible ways in which the secular can be related to the ultimate; that

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[19] ST, I, 218; III, 87; DF, p. 63. We must distinguish between "attack" and "resist," for as we will see later the profane (secular) does have the tendency to resist the holy. Tillich prefers to retain the word "profane"but not with its usual English connotation of attacking the sacred in vulgar or blasphemous language.

[20] However, the process of secularization, as opposed to the fact of secular realities, is not neutral, for it involves the tendency to reduce religion to just another pen-ultimate concern. See below p.35f.

is, the three ways in which preliminary concerns can be related to that which concerns us ultimately. The first of these is mutual indifference; a relationship in which ultimate concern is placed beside preliminary concerns so that the former experiences a loss of ultimacy. By Tillich's analysis this relation "is predominant in ordinary life with its oscillation between conditional, partial and finite situations and experiences and moments when the question of the ultimate meaning of existence takes hold of us."[21] The second relation is that characterized by idolatry: the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimate significance. "Something essentially conditioned is taken as unconditional, something essentially partial is boosted into universality, and something essentially finite is given infinite significance."[22] And the third relation is that in which preliminary concerns are bearers of ultimate concern. That is, finite concerns are neither raised to infinite significance, nor placed beside as if on par with ultimate concern. Instead they are taken as the vehicles through which ultimate concern is expressed. And this is the meaning of Tillich's much used phrase "point to." Finite, secular concerns and objects are necessary both to indicate the presence of, and to express the significance of the underlying ultimate concern. "The holy cannot appear except through that which in another sense is secular."[23] That is to say, finite objects and concerns are

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[21] ST, I, 13. [22] Ibid. [23] Ibid., 218.

not in themselves ultimate, yet they are necessary as vehicles through which the ultimate can be expressed, and they are also grounded in the ultimate. So in the last analysis "Nothing is essentially and inescapably secular . . . . Everything secular is potentially sacred, open to concentration . . . . It can become the bearer of the holy."[24]

In short, to be secular does not mean to be irreligious unless religion is defined in the narrower sense. Rather it means to be not holy, but potentially able to indicate the presence of the holy at its base.

However, a distinction must be noted here between the secular as the pole opposite the holy and the secular as it is usually understood, namely, as concerned only with this world, or being non-religious. In the first sense all men are secular for they are finite, conditioned and belong to the ordinary process of preliminary concerns. In the second case only some men are secular, and they are that insofar as they remain before the doors of the temple and do not participate in a particular religion or religious activity. However, to be secular in this or any other sense does not constitute for Tillich a life of irreligion. Be one ever so secular in his outlook and actions, he is still ultimately concerned about something and this constitutes an inherent religious basis to his life. "He who is not able to perceive something ultimate, something infinitely

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[24] Ibid.

significant, is not a man," Tillich claims.[25] At the same time he does not deny that men are secular in the sense of being what is generally described as non-religious; being religious does not mean being non-secular. Although he describes the humanist's concern for man as an ultimate, religious one, he does not try to make the humanist non-secular. On the contrary he "has a secular faith."[26]

In brief, then, the secular, described in relation to religion as ultimate concern, is the realm of preliminary concerns, the realm of finitude. A secular way of life can be considered non-religious only if religion is seen in the narrower sense as the cultus deorum. With his broad definition of religion Tillich can argue that all secular men (i.e., all men) are religious. The secular is the non-holy; but the non-religious it is not, for it points to the holy.

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[25] NB, p. 121. Here we might note Tillich's argument that "As the ultimate is the ground of everything that is, so ultimate concern is the integrating centre of the personal life. Being without it is being without a centre. Such a state, however, can only be approached but never fully reached, because a human being deprived completely of a centre would cease to be a human being. For this reason one cannot admit that there is any man without an ultimate concern or without faith." DF, p. 106.

[26] DF, p. 69.

RELIGION AS THE SELF-TRANSCENDING FUNCTION OF LIFE

Life and Self-transcendence. Within the process of life, which he describes as "the actualization of potential being," Tillich distinguishes three functions: the first, self-integration, is the circular movement of life from its centre and back to this centre. In it life actualizes its centredness. The second, self-creation, is the horizontal movement of life out from its centre in the process of producing new centres. In it the principle of growth drives life toward the new. The third, self-transcendence, is the vertical movement of life beyond itself as finite. In it the principle of sublimity drives life beyond its finite limits toward the great, the solemn, the high.[29] Although self-transcendence is implied in the first two movements, Tillich notes that only in the third does the transcendence refer to the drive of the finite to move above or beyond the finite. It is with this "third movement" that our efforts at this stage are concerned, for this is our first variation of Tillich's definition of religion.

Underlying this outline of the functions of life lies Tillich's philosophy that life itself is an ambiguous unity of positive and negative, essential and existential elements. We can never know life in its essential nature for it is

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[29] ST, III, 30-1.

disrupted by existential distortion. Thus Tillich says:

> To the degree in which this disruption is real, self-integration is countered by disintegration, self-creation is countered by destruction, and self-transcendence is countered by profanization.[30]

Again it is the third "movement" with which we are concerned. We have noted that self-transcendence refers to the driving of life beyond itself as finite. This vertical striving is true for all dimensions of life - the biological, the psychological, etc. - including the dimension Tillich calls "spirit." This dimension, present only in man, "denotes the unity of life-power and life in meanings," and includes eros, passion, imagination and above all the structure-giving principle, reason (logos).[31] It is the self-transcendence of life under this dimension which Tillich calls religion. The transcendence is the striving of the human heart to seek the infinite "because that is where the finite wants to rest."[32] This, of course, is synonymous with his description of religion as ultimate concern. To be ultimately concerned about the ultimate is to strive to transcend finitude and seek fulfilment in the infinite. It is a universal experience, for all men are existentially estranged from that to which they essentially belong.

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[30] Ibid., 32.

[31] Ibid., 22-4.

[32] DF, p. 13.

Resistance Against Self-transcendence. This experience, according to Tillich, is not without its ambiguity. Just as all men experience the drive to transcend their finitude so do they also experience the tendency to resist this drive, and it is this counterdrive which Tillich calls profanization or secularization of religion by the secular. As noted earlier the term "profane," in its genuine meaning, refers to the tendency to "remain before the doors of the temple." Tillich points out that, although the term "secular" has replaced "profane" in religious terminology, and is equivalent in meaning to that word, he prefers to retain the latter, for it more graphically expresses the exact meaning of "resisting self-transcendence."[33] In this context, then, the secular, or more correctly, secularization is the tendency to resist the drive to self-transcendence; the tendency to stand outside the holy and be content with the secular, the finite, the realm of preliminary concerns. The secular mind resists the urge to go beyond itself, to ask the penetrating question of its own existence, to experience the ultimate which is its ground. It is the attempt to deprive ultimate concern of its ultimacy.

The question naturally arises as to what extent this attempt is successful, and if it can be completely so, does this not then undercut the argument for the universality of the

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[33] ST, III, 87.

religious concern? In other words if men can completely resist the urge to point beyond their finitude would they not then be simply secular? It seems that this would indeed be the case, were it not for the ambiguous nature of the resistance itself. Tillich expounds as follows:

> The resistance against it [self-transcendence] produces the emptiness and meaninglessness which characterizes the finite when cut off from the infinite. It produces the inexhaustible, self-rejecting life which is driven to the question of an inexhaustible life above itself and so into self-transcendence. The secular is driven toward union with the holy, a union which actually is a reunion because the holy and the secular belong to each other.[34]

In brief, the resisting secular brings about its own reversal. The secular mind which refuses to ask the penetrating question of its own existence leads itself to a state of meaninglessness which unavoidably forces out the same question earlier repressed. This in effect is self-transcendence; this is ultimate concern.

Stated differently: the secular and the religious are essentially not separate realms. Neither can exist without the other. No matter how secularized one becomes, no matter how involved in the finite realm he gets, he is still supported by the religious concern; he can still see depth to life. Such is Tillich's argument. Religion, he claims,

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[34] Ibid., 248.

> . . . can be forgotten, neglected, denied. But it is always effective, giving inexhaustible depth to life and inexhaustible meaning to every cultural creation.[35]

This is one of his foremost principles and it is based on a philosophy which sees man as a finite being existentially estranged from the ground of his being, the infinite, to which he unavoidably points and for which he naturally seeks.[36] Thus Tillich can say:

> Even in such ideologies as communism, the attempt toward a total profanization [secularization] of life has resulted in the unexpected consequences that the profane itself received the glory of holiness.[37]

Man is man because he is able to perceive something ultimate, something infinitely significant. By nature he seeks and is open to the quality of ultimacy, holiness. If he does not consciously point to the really ultimate, the ground of being itself, he does so without being aware of it by raising a finite "object" to the level of ultimate significance. Because he is finite he longs for ultimacy; but for the same reason he also strives to resist this longing; he intentionally contents himself with the secular. In short the self-transcendence of life is ambiguous: man is always both secular and reilgious.

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[35] PE, p. xii.

[36] This view, of course, is central to Tillich's whole argument about the universality of religion. It will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter III as one of the major problem spots in Tillich's philosophy of religion.

[37] ST, III, 87.

This ambiguity can be further illuminated by an analysis of the logic of the formula: in every religious act an element of profanization is present.[38] Religion, the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of spirit, cannot function without finite (secular) realities to transcend. Yet by definition it is the transcendence of these realities. So simultaneously life is both transcending and not transcending the finite realm, for it must have concrete existence in order to be there to be transcended at all. In other words the holy can only be expressed through the secular, but the secular in itself is not the holy. To the degree to which the secular is considered the holy itself religion is profanized, and there is always some degree of this just as the religious element is always present in life.

In brief summation: the secular, seen in relation to religion as the self-transcending function of life, is the ambiguous resistance against this function. The ambiguity lies in the failure of the secular, despite its most avid persistence, to offer a completely successful resistance against the self-transcending drive. Ultimately the resistance leads to recognition and acceptance of what is being resisted. The reason for this is that life itself holds the basic tension of self-transcendence versus profanization.

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[38] ST, III, 98-9; cf. 87.

> In all forms of cummunal and personal religion, profanizing elements are effective; and conversely, the most profanized forms of religion draw their power to continue from the elements of greatness and holiness within them . . . . Life transcending itself at the same time remains within itself, and the ambiguity of religion follows from this tension.[39]

RELIGION AS THE DIRECTEDNESS OF THE SPIRIT TOWARDS UNCONDITIONED MEANING

Meaning, its Elements and Religion. Perhaps the most comprehensive and characteristic of all of Tillich's concepts is that of "meaning". Indeed this concept can be considered the foundation of his whole system[40] for his understanding of it has to do with the problem of the meaning of life which unquestionably is central in his thought. In short his whole philosophy of religion is a philosophy of meaning.

In constructing this philosophy Tillich sees meaning in relation to his whole philosophy of spirit and being. We have already mentioned that the concept of "spirit" denotes for Tillich the unity of life power and life in meanings, while "being" refers to an inescapable meaning-reality.[41] In view of this Tillich's analysis of meaning can be considered a re-evaluation of Dilthey's understanding of this concept as the relation of the part to the whole. The re-evaluation is in terms

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[39] Ibid., 100. [40] IH., p. 38.

[41] WR?, p. 42; cf. pp. 62-3.

of metaphysics so that meaning for Tillich refers to the relation of the human spirit to being. Because an analysis of the meaning of meaning is an endless, paradoxical enterprise, Tillich contents himself with presenting the three elements of meaning as they appear in consciousness. These are:

> First, an awareness of the interconnection of meaning in which every separate meaning stands and without which it would be meaningless. Second, an awareness of the ultimate meaningfulness of the interconnection of meaning and, through that, of every particular menaing, i.e., the consciousness of an unconditional meaning which is present in every particular meaning. Third, an awareness of the demand under which every particular meaning stands, the demand to fulfil the unconditioned meaning.[42]

The nature of ultimate, unconditioned meaning must be understood in reference to the form and content of spiritual acts. That is, every logical, aesthetic, ethical and social act of the human spirit is an individual act of meaning which has a form, a content, and an import. The form is the individual act of meaning itself seen in relation to the universal complex of meaning. The content is the subject matter, the objective element in the act of meaning, and the import is the unconditioned meaning which gives every individual meaning its reality. It is the ground of meaningfulness which gives

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[42] Ibid., p. 57.

significance to every form and its content. On the other hand the import of meaning also stands over against every form by demanding fulfilment in what would be an unconditioned form. However, the notion of an unconditioned form is a contradictory one, impossible of realization, for the ground of meaning is also the abyss of meaning in that it transcends any form and thus would be rendered finite if it could be contained in one form. Yet despite this impossibility, each individual form, each act of meaning, is beckoned to a unity of fulfilment with unconditioned meaning.[43]

From this view of the elements of meaning come the fundamental principles of Tillich's philosophy of religion and of culture for these elements are exhibited in every individual spiritual act, in every sphere of meaning, in the theoretical as well as the practical functions. The most basic of these principles Tillich states as follows:

> If consciousness is directed toward the particular forms of meaning and their unity, we have to do with culture; if it is directed toward the unconditioned meaning, toward the import of meaning, we have religion. Religion is directedness toward the unconditional, and culture is directedness toward the conditioned forms and their unity.[44]

Tillich hastens to point out that these principles, despite their merit of generality, are inadequate, for form and

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[43] Ibid., pp. 56-8. [44] Ibid., p. 59.

import belong together. To posit one without the other is meaningless.

> Every cultural act contains the unconditioned meaning; it is based upon the ground of meaning; insofar as it is an act of meaning it is substantially religious.[45]

However, by intention cultural acts are not religious for they are directed toward conditioned forms. Conversely, every religious act is, in form, cultural, for it cannot direct itself to the unconditioned meaning except through the unity of the forms of meaning. Thus, religion and culture meet on the common ground of directedness toward the unity of meaning.

With this principle as a basis Tillich discusses the various elements of religion and their relations. These include: religion and culture, faith and "unfaith," God and World, the sacred and the secular, and the divine and the demonic. In this context it is necessary to deal with only two of these: faith and "unfaith" and the sacred and the secular.[46]

Faith and "Unfaith". Since for Tillich "faith" and "religion" are interchangeable terms - at least in most contexts - faith in relation to meaning is directedness of the spirit in all its functions toward unconditioned meaning.

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[45] Ibid.

[46] A discussion of the divine-demonic relation will come in Chapter II in the context of types of culture, while the religion-culture relation will be the underlying theme of that chapter.

This orientation is expressed indirectly through symbols drawn from the conditioned order. Though these symbols are finite, "holy" objects, faith does not intend the object itself but rather "the Unconditional which is symbolically expressed in the object. Faith reaches beyond the immediacy of all things to the ground and abyss upon which they depend."[47]

In contrast to this, "unfaith" (secular scepticism or unbelief) does not penetrate through to the grounding import of finite objects and relations but instead stops with the objects and relations in their conditioned forms. Its directedness is toward the unity of conditioned forms, all individual menaings, rather than toward the unconditionedness grounding the meanings. In simpler terms: it absolutizes the finite. On the one hand it obeys the unconditioned demand for meaning while on the other it denies the unconditioned meaning itself. Such is the attitude of secular culture or philosophy. Its spiritual or meaningful acts are carried on without conscious reference to the source of meaningfulness.

Not suprisingly Tillich again amends this description of the secular, for in his view, the unbelief-ful attitude or culture is only so by intention. "Actually, every creative cultural act is also belief-ful; in it pulsates the meaning of the Unconditional."[48] The reasoning behind this is that

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47 WR?, p. 77.

48 Ibid.

without a source of meaning there could be no acts of meaning. All cultural acts would be reduced to meaninglessness, a state which - as we have already noted [49] - would lead to recognition of the unconditioned ground of meaning. Thus the secular has religious substance so long as it is creative, even though its intention is non-religious.

The Sacred and the Secular. These same notions can be expressed in terms of the sacred and the secular and their relation to the concept of meaning:

> A meaning-fulfilling act or an object of meaning is sacred insofar as it is a bearer of the unconditioned meaning; it is secular insofar as it does not give expression to unconditioned meaning.[50]

In the "ideal" state all acts of meaning and all objects are sacred; they all express the unconditioned meaningfulness of their supporting ground. But this state is a guiding symbol, not a reality. In reality the sacred and the secular stand over against each other in tensions and disrupted tensions so that there is a specifically sacred and a specifically secular sphere. The relation between the two is marked by an ambiguity on the part of the sacred. That is, the sacred both affirms and negates the secular. The affitmation lies in the fact that it must always be the depth, the supporting meaning, of the secular; the negation lies in just this fact:

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[49] Cf. above, p. 17.

[50] WR?, p. 81.

that the meaning of the secular comes not from itself but from the sacred which is its depth.

This, of course, is but a variation of the principle: the sacred object is never holy in itself but rather is a secular one which points to the holy. However, not all existent realities and acts of meaning intentionally point to the ground of meaning. Insofar as they intentionally do not they are secular; and this in a word is Tillich's understanding of the secular with reference to religion as directedness toward unconditioned meaning. An attitude, act, or culture is secular insofar as it fails to direct itself intentionally to the ground of meaning; conversely, it is religious because of its unavoidable dependence on this ground. Again we note Tillich's insistence that every attitude, act, or culture is ambiguously both sacred and secular. "Nothing is essentially and inescapably secular; everything has the dimension of depth."[51] On the other hand the secular is defined by its intention to ignore this depth.

RELIGION AS A SPECIAL SPHERE

Fundamental to understanding the essence of Tillich's system is the grasping of his distinction between the larger and the narrower definitions of religion. The former - with which the whole of our discussion has been concerned to date -

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[51] ST, I, 218.

is "religion of the heart," the state of being ultimately concerned; the latter is "public religion," the expression of this concern in symbols of God (gods) and its formulation in dogma and cult. It is institutional religion or personal piety - insofar as the latter is formalized - which by Tillich's analysis gives symbolic expression to an ultimate concern. In short, religion in the narrower sense is religion as it is usually understood: a special sphere including myth, cult, devotion and ecclesiastical institutions.[52]

It is over against religion described in this conventional manner that the secular is generally understood. On the one hand there is the religious, sacred, realm with its dogmas, cults and institutions, and on the other, the secular realm with its "non-religious" beliefs, institutions, and cultural practices. Any commonsensical observation will reveal that this is actually the way things are. Religion is compartmentalized along with, yet over against, an indefinite number of secular spheres of activity. In this situation some men are considered religious and others are not; some institutions are considered religious and others are not. In each case the latter is the secular sphere in which activity is centred on the functional and operational questions of day-to-day living, and in which questions concerning the meaning and worth of life are considered answerable without a transcendent referent.

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[52] TC, pp. 8-9, 177.

It is in these terms that twentieth century society is called a secular society in which religion is but one element, and indeed, one considered of less and less significance. It is also in these terms that religion is "not allowed" to interfere with the regular activities of day-to-day living. Religion is there for those who occasionally need its comforting, or status-aiding services, but its direct sphere of influence is limited to charitable social services and the emotional needs of "Sunday-worshippers". In brief, religion is a special sphere of life centred around dogmas, cults, and institutions; a luxury, as it were, midst a vast range of optional activities all of which (except religion) are secular.

Tillich agrees, of course, that in actuality this is the state of religion and secularism. Mankind has developed religion as a special sphere among the various secular spheres of activity. The question is: How can this be so if religion is the depth dimension in all functions of life? Tillich's reply is based on the principle of ambiguity prevalent in the self-transcending function of life. We will recall this principle as: in every act of self-transcendence there is also the tendency towards secularization.[53] To combat the secularizing forces religion concentrates in a special area,

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[53] ST, III, 98.

thus constructing the specifically religious sphere. The next question, of course, is: What is the source of this ambiguity? Is it a principle derived from the results of continuous social conditioning, or is it one that is basic to life qua life? Not unexpectedly Tillich replies with the latter:

> In all life processes an essential and an existential element, created goodness and estrangement, are merged in such a way that neither one nor the other is exclusively effective. Life always includes essential and existential elements; this is the root of its ambiguity.[54]

This is the root of the ambiguity which causes religion to establish itself as a special realm in opposition to the secular element which in turn tends to make itself independent of its religious depth. Man's situation, as one of estrangement from his essential being, causes him, on the one hand to ignore the creative depth of religion, and on the other, to attempt to confine religion to an independent realm. With neither is he completely successful, for the basic ambiguity of life, the merger of essential and existential elements, is inescapable. Life is inescapably both secular and religious.[55]

And this is the statement which most adequately summarizes the views on "the religious" and "the secular" which this chapter has attempted to elucidate. The secular has been described

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[54] Ibid., p. 107.

[55] Ibid., p. 100.

in four ways: (1) as the realm of preliminary, finite, conditioned concerns; (2) as the resistance against the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of spirit; (3) as directedness toward conditioned forms (of meaning); and (4) as the non-religious, where the religious is understood as a special realm of life centred around dogma, cult, and institution, and concerned with the question of the ultimate meaning of life. No matter how the secular is described, according to Tillich it is not to be construed as irreligious. However, that is not to say the secular is not a strong reality. On the contrary, all finite relations are secular and without them. the religious depth could not be expressed.

This presupposes religious depth to be expressed and for Tillich there is such ultimacy and unconditional meaning behind every preliminary concern, every cultural act and every secular intention. It is there as the basis of life itself, but not unambiguously for ultimacy has to be expressed through less than ultimate representatives. Life transcending itself at the same time remains within itself; from this follows the ambiguous nature and relationship of the religious and the secular. For a further enucleation of this principle we now turn to an analysis of the religion-culture relationship with particular emphasis on autonomous, secular culture and what Tillich calls its "latent religion."[56]

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[56] PE, p. 214.

CHAPTER II

AUTONOMOUS, SECULAR CULTURE

It can be said without fear of exaggeration that Tillich's insights on the relation of religion to culture constitute one of the most, if not the most, distinctive and significant of his contributions to the understanding of religion. As he himself says, "The problem of religion and culture has always been in the centre of my interest. Most of my writings - including the two volumes of Systematic Theology[1] - try to define the way in which Christianity is related to secular culture."[2] It is thus most pertinent for our analysis of Tillich's understanding of the religious and the secular that we look at these concepts as he sees them in the context of different types of culture. We will devote most of the chapter to a discussion of autonomous culture for it is in this context that the ambiguous nature of religion and secularism is most clearly defined. Since,

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[1] Volume III of his Systematics had not been written when Tillich made this statement; however, it too has the religion-culture relation as one of its central motifs.

[2] TC, p. v.

however, cultural types never exist in a pure and distinct state, our examination of autonomous culture will include at the same time some discussion of heteronomous and theonomous cultures. The aim throughout this, however, is not to explore Tillich's notion of cultural types but to investigate further his understanding of religion and secularism. To do this under the motif of the religio-cultural relationship it shall be necessary first of all to examine his general definition of culture. To this task we now turn.

CULTURAL ELEMENTS, STYLE AND TYPES

We noted earlier what, according to Tillich, are life's three basic functions: self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence.[3] The second of these, described as the horizontal movement of life out from its centre in the process of creating new centres, is the function of self-creativity and growth, and it is its activity under the dimension of spirit which Tillich calls culture.[4]

Culture, he says, "is that which takes care of something, keeps it alive, and makes it grow. In this way man can cultivate everything he encounters, but in doing so, he does not leave the cultivated object unchanged; he creates something new from it."[5] The impetus to create something new - that is,

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[3] Cf. above p.33.

[4] ST, III, 57, 402-3.

[5] Ibid., 57. (Emphasis mine).

the basis of cultural creations - comes from the "being polarity" of dynamics and form. Every reality has a form; it is the form which makes a thing what it is. Under the impetus of dynamics a formed reality breaks out of its form, goes beyond itself, and develops a new reality. Such is the activity of cultural creation.

Thus, culture includes everything new that man produces beyond the encountered world. It refers to "the act of looking at the encountered world in order to take something of it into the centred self as a meaningful, structural whole,"[6] as well as the act of shaping reality by fashioning tools and controlling nature. Tillich names these cultural functions theoria and praxis respectively; the former points to man's search for truth and beauty, the latter to his striving to procure individual and social good. In a word, culture is the secondary world which man, in his attempt to come to grips with his ambiguous situation, superimposes on the natural world.[7]

Cultural Elements. As an act of meaning[8] every cultural creation is characterized by three elements: form, substance, and subject matter (content). The form is decisive for it makes the

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[6] Ibid., 62.

[7] Cf. H.R. Niebuhr's Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 32.

[8] Conditioned forms, individual acts of meaning, and spiritual acts are synonymous phrases descriptive of all cultural creations.

creation what it is - a poem, a law, a painting. Substance is also most important for it is "the soil out of which it [the creation] grows."[9] It is the underlying meaning, the source of inspiration, depth and significance for both the creative spirit and the creation. The subject matter, on the other hand, can be almost anything chosen from the inexhaustible manifoldness of encountered objects. In brief: the subject matter is chosen, and the form is intended, but the substance is "unconsciously present in a culture, group, or individual, giving the passion and driving power to him who creates and the significance and power of meaning to his creations."[10] Tillich's stress on the interdependence of these elements is seen in the formula:

> Substance or import is grasped by means of a form and given expression in a content. Content is accidental, substance essential, and form is the mediating element.[11]

Or again:

> One cannot exist without the other; a form that forms nothing is just as incomprehensible as substance without a form.[12]

Cultural Style. We note that of these three elements form and substance are the more significant. One important corollary of this is that when any form is qualified by substance in a

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[9] ST, III, 60.

[10] Ibid..

[11] WR?, p. 165. (Italics original).

[12] Ibid., p. 164.

large number of cultural creations there emerges a pattern which Tillich calls "style." Just as there is a style of art, so also is there a style of thinking, of politics, of social life, and of any other sphere of human creativity.[13] By reading cultural styles one can compare the cultures of different peoples and ages, for the style of a sphere of activity reflects the way in which that sphere encounters reality. By the same token, style is the key to a theological understanding of culture, that is, a "theology of culture" which Tillich defines as:

> . . . the attempt to analyze the theology behind all cultural expressions, to discover the ultimate concern in the ground of a philosophy, a political system, an artistic style, a set of ethical or social principles.[14]

Style, then, provides the key to an assessment of a culture in terms of the degree to which religious substance has been realized in its cultural forms.[15] It is important to note that

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[13] ST, III, 60-1.

[14] ST, I, 39.

[15] "Religious substance" refers to ultimate concern: the underlying unconditional drive and impetus of any culture which inspires the creative spirit of that culture and imports significance to its productions. It is not to be confused with cultural content. The latter is the subject matter, the objective realities that are raised up by form to the intellectual-cultural sphere, while the substance is the spiritual substantiality which gives the form "culture" its significance. Cf. WR?, p. 165.

Tillich thinks such assessing is possible expressly because all cultures do have an ultimate concern, they do thrive on religious substance. The question is: What is their ultimate concern and to what extent is it consciously expressed? To a certain extent these questions can be answered from an analysis of "types" of culture.

Cultural Types. We have seen that cultural styles result from a combination of form (laws governing cultural functions) and substance (the unconditioned meaning expressed by these laws). From this it follows that three general types of culture are possible - types characterized by: (1) form dominant over substance, (2) substance dominant over form, and (3) a balance of the two. Although these types never appear in a pure and distinct state, they do serve as guidelines for "reading" cultures and interpreting history.

Cultures characterized by these relationships Tillich calls autonomous, heteronomous, and theonomous, respectively. These descriptive terms indicate the presence of a predominating law (nomos) in each type. In the case of autonomy this law is self-law (auto-nomos) that is, the principle of self-sufficiency; in heteronomy the predominating law is a strange (hetero-nomos) imposed by an outside, superior authority. In theonomy, the superior law (theo-nomos) is recognized as the ground of the innermost human law; that is to say, the superior law is there but its relation with self-law is not that of a strange, imposed one. Primarily, we are concerned with the first of these three,

autonomy, for it is this type of culture which, by Tillich's principles, is most secularized, yet still retains its religious base. First, however, we will examine more thoroughly Tillich's interpretation of heteronomy and theonomy.

Cultural Types and Reason. A heteronomous culture, we have seen, is one whose law of life is imposed from outside on the assumption that universal reason alone cannot sustain man. It is a culture which "subjects the forms and laws of thinking and acting to authoritative criteria of an eccleseastical religion or a political quasi-religion, even at the price of destroying the structures of rationality."[16] Implied in this statement is Tillich's account of the concept of reason, in which first of all he makes the distinction between technical reason and ontological reason. The former is defined as the capacity for "reasoning;" it involves only the cognitive aspect of the mind, and deals only with the discovery of means for ends, either accepting the ends from some other source or refusing to consider ends whatsoever. But technical reason does not exhaust the structures of the human mind. Tillich agrees with Pascal in saying that there are "reasons of the heart which reason cannot comprehend." That is, there are rational structures of aesthetic and communal experience which mere cognitive reasoning cannot overcome. It is these which help to constitute ontological reason: the structure of the human mind which includes the capacity

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[16] PE, p. 57.

for reasoning but also includes in interdependence with it the capacity to "grasp" and to "shape" reality. Ontological reason is the very nature of the mind by which - through its various inderdependent functions - it relates to its environment in terms of reception and reaction.

But the very fact of this ability of the mind to grasp and shape reality presupposes for Tillich, as it does for classical philosophy, the rational structure of reality itself. This is the objective side of ontological reason: the logos "of reality which the mind can grasp and according to which it can shape reality."[17] That is to say the logos of the human mind, "the word which grasps and shapes reality, can do so only because reality itself has a logos character." There have been various explanations of the relation between "the logos structure of the grasping-and-shaping self" and the "logos structure of the grasped-and-shaped world," but the necessity of positing some such relation is almost unanimously acknowledged, says Tillich.[18] Included among those acknowledging this is Tillich himself, but he goes further and speaks not only of the subjective and objective structures of reason but also of the "depth" of reason. This notion of "depth" is one of Tillich's more difficult concepts for by its very nature it cannot be defined but only "pointed to." "The depth of reason," he says, "is the expression of something that is not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it. Reason in both its objective and subjective structures points to

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[17] ST, I, 77. [18] Ibid., 75.

something which appears in these structures but which transcends them in power and meaning."[19] Essentially the depth of reason is being-itself — the creative power manifest in every rational creation - or the abyss of being - the inexhaustible potentiality of being and meaning that permeates all rational acts. Metaphorically, it can be called truth-itself, beauty-itself, justice-itself, and love-itself. In the following description Tillich applies these metaphors to the various fields in which reason is actualized:

> In the cognitive realm the depth of reason is its quality of pointing to truth-itself, namely, to the infinite power of being and of the ultimately real, through the relative truths in every field of knowledge. In the aesthetic realm the depth of reason is its quality of pointing to "beauty-itself,"namely, to an infinite meaning and an ultimate significance, through the creations in every field of aesthetic intuition. In the legal realm the depth of reason is its quality of pointing to "justice-itself,"namely, to an infinite seriousness and an ultimate dignity, through every structure of actualized justice. In the communal realm the depth of reason is its quality of pointing to "love-itself,"namely, to an infinite richness and an ultimate unity, through every form of actualized love. This dimension of reason, the dimension of depth, is an essential quality of all rational functions. It is their own depth, making them inexhaustible and giving them greatness.[20]

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[19] Ibid., 79.

[20] Ibid., 79-80.

Ontological reason, then, is characterized by the two polar elements of structure and depth. Under the distortions of existence this polarity produces a conflict between autonomous and heteronomous reason. Autonomous reason is that which "affirms and actualizes its structure without regarding its depth." Contrary to many others, Tillich argues that "autonomy does not mean the freedom of the individual to be a law to himself."[21] In its positive side auto-nomos is present in every rational act as obedient expression of the structure or law of reason that is within mind and reality. Its negative side of disregarding its depth we will explore later.

As a protest against the denial of depth by autonomy, heteronomous reason is an authority which actually claims to represent the depth of reason; that is, it claims to speak in an unconditional way on behalf of the ground of being. It usually arises as a reaction against an autonomous reason that has lost reference to its depth and is thus becoming empty, but in doing so it tends to destroy the autonomous right of the structures of reason. In terms of the elements of cultural styles, heteronomy can be described as the tendency to destroy concrete forms by assuming the power of the substance supporting, and being expressed through the forms, as happens when a church, a sacred text, a person or a community claims the

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21 Ibid., 83.

absolute authority of its meaning-giving substance. In other words, a heteronomous authority is "something finite, something limited, which puts on infinite unlimited dignity."[22]

This definition, along with the repeated mention of the destructive tendencies of heteronomy, suggests the possibility of relating this concept to that of the "demonic," the latter clearly being one of Tillich's most fundamental and incisive notions. As early as 1926, in his essay "Das Dämonische,"[23] he had thoroughly worked out this concept, relating it to primitive art, various themes in the history of religions, and not least of all, his metaphysical notion of "the ground of being." The statues of gods, fetishes, and dance masks of primitive art, Tillich maintains, both contain forms (men, animals, and plants) and yet by their strange distortions shatter and burst through form. Hands, feet, eyes, teeth, and sex organs are all recognizable as such, yet at the same time are distortions of their true organic natures. This indicates for Tillich that "there is something positively contrary to form that is capable of fitting into an artistic form." This he calls the demonic: "the actuality of that which is positively contrary to form."[24]

In the history of religions the demonic is expressed through such "holy demonries" as phallic cults, cults of war gods,

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[22] IH, p. 26.

[23] English translation in IH, pp. 77-122.

[24] Ibid., p. 79.

laceration myths, and most frightening of all, Dostoievsky's "Grand Inquisitor": "the religion which makes itself absolute and therfore must destroy the saint in whose name it is established - the demonic will to power of the sacred institution."[25] In all these cases the demonic breaks through as a very powerful reality, characterized by "the unity of form-creating and form-destroying strength."[26]

True to his insistence on depth, Tillich anchors this notion in a metaphysics. Being is both the ground of all things and at the same time their abyss. But the latter, the inexhaustibility of being, is not a passive reservoir; it is instead, says Tillich, a dynamic, driving activity that bursts through every form in which it is contained. It is the will of every individual thing "to realize in itself as an individual the active infinity of being, the impulse toward breaking through its own limited form, the longing to realize the abyss in itself." In short, the demonic "is the form-destroying eruption of the creative basis of things."[27]

The relation of this notion to heteronomy is that the demonic drive usually ends in a heteronomous reality. This is because of the attempt of the demonic to realize the unrealizable infinity of being in a finite reality. And this is exactly the description of a heteronomous authority: it claims to have

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[25] Ibid., p. 80.

[26] Ibid., p. 81.

[27] Ibid., pp. 84-5.

achieved the infinite in the finite, thus breaking down the autonomous structures of rationality. Because of this a full-fledged heteronomy is even less desirable than a similarly extreme autonomy, for the former is rooted in the destructive drive of the demonic. The rampant heteronomies of the Inquisition and Nazism, for example, are much more destructive than the fully-developed autonomy of the Enlightenment. Neither autonomy nor heteronomy, however, according to Tillich, "can give the answer."[28] The one leads to emptiness, the other to destruction. The balance between the two, the essential unity in which both are rooted is theonomy.

Theonomy means autonomous reason united with its depth: the actualization of reason both in its obedience to its structural laws and in the power of its own inexhaustible ground. It differs from autonomy in that, together with asserting the autonomy of reason, it also acknowledges the depth of reason on which this autonomy depends. It differs from heteronomy, first in granting man's reason its right of autonomy, and secondly, in pointing to the infinite as its ground rather than claiming unconditional power itself. In other words, a theonomous culture is one "in which the ultimate meaning of existence shines through all finite forms of thought and action; the culture is transparent, and its creations are vessels of a spiritual content."[29] It is transparent in that it indicates meaning

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[28] ST, I, 86. [29] PE, p. xii.

without claiming to be that meaning; it respects the autonomy, validity, and necessity of finite objects, but refuses to give them an assumed infinite dignity or ultimacy. In short, it keeps a balance between the religious base of a culture and its cultural expressions, neither authoritatively imposing the religious nor ignoring its sustaining presence.

Of course no culture can be found which is characterized totally by only one of these cultural types. In any given culture or age elements of all three - autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy - appear intermingled. At the same time one can describe any particular age or culture as being characterized primarily by one of these types. The early Middle Ages, for example, in Tillich's mind, was primarily theonomous, while the early years of the Reformation were very heteronomous. Moreover, in the process of change from one age or culture to another the three cultural types constantly interact in a dialectical manner. The shallowness of an autonomous period generally precludes the coming of a theonomous era, and in turn the theonomy tends to degenerate into an oppressive heteronomy, which once again provokes an autonomous reaction and so begins the cycle anew. This indicates of course the momentary and incomplete character of theonomy, caused, according to Tillich, by the distortions of finitude. On the other hand the theonomous element of life is never completely defeated, for essentially human nature is grounded in being-itself.[30]

[30] For further discussion of theonomy see ST, III, 245 ff.

We have discussed in some detail the concepts of heteronomy and theonomy not only for the purpose of understanding these notions themselves but also in the interest of shedding more light on the related concept of autonomy. We have seen how for Tillich these concepts have their roots in the relationship of finite realities to their infinite ground, or in the relationship of man's reason to its depth and source. In terms of this, autonomous reason is that which "affirms and actualizes its structure without regarding its depth."[31] It remains, then, to expound this notion more thoroughly, considering at the same time the cultural expressions, ambiguities, short-comings, and positive worth of autonomous realities.

AUTONOMOUS CULTURE AND ITS LATENT RELIGION

A fuller exposition of autonomous reason as that which affirms and actualizes its structure without regarding its depth is given in Tillich's early discussion of the concept of meaning. Here he says:

> In every autonomy - that is, in every secular culture - a twofold element is implied: the "nomos", the law or structural form that is supposed to be carried out radically, and the "autos," the self-assertion of the conditioned, which in the process of achieving form loses the unconditioned import. Autonomy therefore, is always at the same time obedience to and revolt against the Unconditional. It is obedience insofar as

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[31] See above, p.59.

> it subjects itself to the unconditioned demand for meaning; it is revolt insofar as it denies the unconditioned meaning itself.[32]

And this is the basic ambiguity of autonomy: it is on the one hand a "world" of meaning, but on the other a denial of the source of meaning; it is infinite in its concern but its concern is with the finite. It is, to quote Tillich's interesting phrases in The Religious Situation, a reality of both "infinite" and "self-sufficient finitude."[33] And this is the source of its weakness. Although it arises with the noble purpose of protesting against heteronomous imposition of false absolutes, it is unable to maintain itself to the point of cultivating a culture of "rich" content. Autonomy is a moving reality, Tillich argues, which leads either toward emptiness or toward the acceptance of the same type of absolutes which it arose as a protest against. Emptiness, of course, invites the entrance of other forces. In this case these could be either demonic, destructive forces or religious, creative ones. Such is the ambiguity of secularism. Its big defect is that the emptiness which it leaves is usually filled by demonic forces.[34] By inward necessity it meets its own limits, thus leading to a loss of ultimate meaning. Such, Tillich claims, is the case with our period. The decision to throw from her throne a superstitious and too-powerful church was a "great and much-needed"one.

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[32] WR?, p. 75.

[33] RS, pp. 105-107.

[34] UC, p. 38.

However,

> it excluded those deep things for which religion stands: the feeling for the inexhaustible mystery of life, the grip of an ultimate meaning of existence, and the invincible power of an unconditional devotion. These things cannot be excluded.[35]

The secular mind of self-asserting reason cannot wait, of course, to ask, "Why?" Why cannot these elements of inexhaustible mystery, ultimate meaning, and unconditioned devotion be discarded? Tillich's reply is quite simple: "if we try to dispel them in their divine images, they re-emerge in daemonic images."[36] These things are expressions of the power of the infinite, the power of being-itself, the ground of meaning. They inevitably appear in some form of another. When the secular mind tries to ignore them they generally appear in demonic, destructive expressions. Such is the œfact of the secularistic attitude as Tillich sees it.

The cultural expression of this ambiguous law of life is classicism or humanism which Tillich defines as:

> The attitude which makes man the measure of his own spiritual life, in art and philosophy, in science and politics, in social relations and personal ethics.[37]

It is the attitude of disregarding the self-transcending function of life that makes humanism a secular philosophy. In its assertion

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[35] SF, pp. 180-81. [36] Ibid.

[37] DF, pp. 62-3.

that the aim of culture is the actualization of the potentialities of man, humanism is to be praised. It is also to be commended for not completely ignoring religion. However, its big weakness is its tendency to subsume religion under the human potentialities and accordingly consider it one cultural creation among the many others. In doing so it disregards the self-transcendence of life (the innermost character of religion) and makes man the measure of all things, thus cutting him off from ultimate fulfilment.[38]

Tillich believes that only twice in world history have humanistic cultures become fully developed autonomies. Only twice has secularism become so complete that the ultimate concern of the culture was not expressed in strictly religious symbols. The first occurred around 100 B.C. with the rise to autonomous strength of Greek philosophy and its criticism of traditional religious symbols and the figures of the gods. The second came with the Renaissance or the Enlightenment which arose as a rational and romantic revolt against the heteronomous church of the middle ages.[39] In both these cases the inability of secularism to maintain itself as a worthwhile cultural expression is historically demonstrated (at least to Tillich's satisfaction). In both cases the autonomous culture bloomed for a while and then became empty. But the emptiness provoked

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[38] ST, III, p. 85.

[39] UC, pp. 32-3.

a countermovement. In the Greek autonomy the rise of Scepticism represents the emptiness; and the Stoic acceptance of Platonic religious ideas - the countermovement - represents the return to a theonomy. In the autonomous period brought on by the Renaissance the emptiness is expressed in the"self-sufficient" spirit of nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism; the countermovement is the longing of our present age to return to an age of religious depth.[40]

Another point which Tillich emphasizes about these periods of outspoken secularism is that they, like all secular ages and philosophies, ultimately, are grounded in a religious tradition. "Humanism is always based on a religious tradition," he says. Thus, the greatness of Plato's dialogues lies in the fact that "the religious background of Apollo and Dionysus shines through every one of [them]."[41] Indeed, Plato was a secular philosopher but in every dialogue he asked the religious question of the meaning of life. This is because (according to Tillich) the substance of a religious tradition

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[40] UC, pp. 32,38. Cf., RS, pp. 103 ff. The countermovement in both these instances, according to Tillich, is the return to a theonomous period. This would seem to contradict his theory that the emptiness brought on by secularism will usually be filled by destructive forces. However, I think what he means is that during the autonomous period itself certain times are characterized by emptiness of religious substance. It is then more often than not that destructive forces will invade the culture.

[41] UC, p. 37.

remained in him. Similarly, the secular humanism of our present era is really a Christian humanism. It is founded on the substance of the Christian tradition. Thus, even Nietzsche could say of himself that "the blood of the priests" was still in him.[42]

These then, are concrete illustrations of Tillich's basic principle of the "essential belongingness" of religion and culture to each other. Every culture has an ultimate concern, a depth dimension, just as to some extent every culture is secular; it cannot be otherwise. However, a culture becomes more or less secularized to the extent to which it intentionally ignores or expresses its latent religion. It cannot help but express this ultimate concern in some way or another. If this expression be in specifically religious symbols, it is less secularized; if not, then it is more secularized. However, a secularized culture does not necessarily equate with the worst type of culture. A heteronomous religious culture, in Tillich's estimation, can be much worse an expression of the religious concern than some secular cultures which express that concern in secular forms.[43]

Thus, Tillich's assessment of secular, autonomous culture is not by any standards a totally negative one. His warning about such philosophy and culture concerns their potentiality for leading to a loss of meaning; that is, their tendency to

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[42] Ibid., pp. 37-8. [43] See above p. 62.

sponsor attitudes of self-sufficiency which in time lead to a state of emptiness and failure to ask the question concerning the meaning of life. Cultures without the concreteness of religious symbols and devotional activities - that is highly secularized ones - tend gradually to lose sight of the religious substance which gives them their meaning. In short, a secular culture is not necessarily an empty one, although it is more likely to become such than is a culture consciously expressing its ultimate concern in specifically religious forms.

In summary, an autonomous culture is one which emphasizes the forms of meaning at the expense of the substance of meaning; it emphasizes the structure of reason at the expense of the depth of reason. It does not express its latent religion in "religious" forms and thus takes the risk of losing sight of the one thing which can give it direction: the question of the meaning of life.

We have arrived then, at the same basic principles as we met in Chapter I. Behind every preliminary concern, behind every secular reality, lies the fundamental ultimate concern, the basic religious depth. And although secular concerns and autonomous cultures run the risk of becoming more and more devoid of religious substance - by losing sight of such "symbols" as truth, beauty, goodness, and dignity - nevertheless, so long as they exist at all they are dependent on the sustaining power

of ultimate concern, the unconditional ground and abyss of being. The basic ambiguity of life is that its source of power and continuance is the infinite, while all its many expressions are in limited, finite "forms." "Religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."[44]

These principles obviously invite closer and more critical examination. To this task we devote the next chapter.

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[44] TC, p. 42.

CHAPTER III

MAJOR SOURCES OF CONFUSION IN TILLICH'S VIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR

My stated intention in this thesis was to enucleate and investigate Tillich's understanding of the concepts of religion and secularism, and in so doing to distinguish and clarify some of the major problems of that understanding. The first and analytical part of this task has been done. We have expounded the basic principles of Tillich's view of the religious and the secular, and have noted at various places some of the more problematic aspects of these principles. It now remains to examine some of these major sources of confusion in a more critical light to see exactly what the problems are, and perhaps to see if, in the last analysis, they are major shortcommings of Tillich's thought or merely unclearly expounded points. At issue of course are two basic questions: (i) Is Tillich's thought logically coherent in itself, and (ii) If it is, does it really give an adequate account of social reality? We cannot hope in this limited investigation to give full treatment to these fundamental issues. Be that as it may, however, we will proceed and at least attempt to define the problems involved in each. Our procedure will be to examine first Tillich's puzzling assertion that genuine atheism is an impossibility.[1] This leads to the sources

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[1]The introduction of the atheism issue here might be considered contradictory to the statement above that the

of other problems, taking the form of a series of questions as follows: Are all men ultimately concerned? Is ultimate concern really religion? Are all men ultimately concerned about the really ultimate? That is, is the finite really striving for the infinite? Finally, we note as another common source of misunderstanding Tillich's distinction between true and false religions. Throughout all these considerations the theme will be "the meaningfulness of Tillich's definition of religion," and discussion on this issue usually centres on the universal aspect of that definition. This discussion falls into two basic parts: one concerns the bold statement that all men are religious; the other questions whether the term "religion" retains any significant meaning when it is used to describe the state of all men. In an attempt to discover Tillich's response to these issues we begin with the question of the possibility or impossibility of atheism.

GENUINE ATHEISM - AN IMPOSSIBILITY ?

The fact that Tillich regarded his realization of the impossibility of atheism as a decisive point in his theological

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analytical part of the thesis has already been given. Actually, most of previous analysis has been on this same subject: the universality of religion. I introduce it here because more than anything else it leads directly to the very basis of confusions in Tillich's view of religion. At any rate, the introduction of new material will be limited.

journey is of more than biographical significance.[2] It indicates, one would think, some very profound reasons for his reaching this conclusion. These we will now attempt to explore.

The immediate source of Tillich's strong conviction on the universality of religion is the Protestant principle of "justification by grace through faith." Although he first became acquainted with this principle through his Lutheran background, he was introduced to new formulations of it under the impetus of his great teacher Martin Kaehler. On this Tillich says:

> Under his influence a group of advanced students and younger professors developed the new understanding of the Protestant principle in different ways.[3] The step

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[2] PE, p. xi. Tillich first reached this conclusion at least as early as 1919 when he presented his first important public lecture, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," reproduced in WR?, pp. 155 ff.

[3] The "new understanding" refers to the rejection of the traditional Protestant formula "justification through faith" in favour of the phrase "justification by grace through faith." This was done on the ground that the original formula had been misunderstood to mean that God's justifying act was set in motion by man's act of faith. This group insisted that faith itself is a gift of God and that all justifying action is carried on completely through God's initiation. In line with this the most general statement of the Protestant principle is that it "contains the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality." (Ibid., p. 163). However, in this context we will be discussing one formulation of this

> I myself made in these years was the insight that the principle of justification through faith refers not only to the religious-ethical but also to the religious-intellectual life.[4]

Thus, not only the sinner but the doubter too is justified through faith.

Justification for Tillich means salvation and salvation is "healing" for "healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself."[5] So in saying that the doubter too is justified by grace through faith Tillich means that even the situation of strongest doubt cannot separate us from God. On the contrary, "there is faith in every serious doubt, namely, the faith in the truth as such, even if the only truth we can express is our lack of truth."[6] With this principle Tillich became convinced that "there is no possible atheism."[7]

The atheist is defined as one who denies that there is a God. But God, Tillich argues, is not a being above or beside

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principle - one of the "different ways" of understanding it referred to by Tillich above.

[4] Ibid., p. x.

[5] ST, II, p. 166. For more on this subject see ST, III, 275-82; EN, pp. 112-121; NB, pp. 34-45.

[6] PE, p. x.

[7] PE, p. xi.

other beings about whose existence or non-existence you can argue. Rather, God is the fundamental symbol for what concerns us ultimately; whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes for him a god.[8] Therefore, to deny God's existence means to deny the reality of that for which one is ultimately concerned. Thus, we have the peculiar (hypothetical) situation of denying God in the name of God; the situation of ultimate concern denying its own ultimacy. In Tillich's mind this simply cannot happen. Therefore, he concludesthat the only possible type of atheism would be the attempt to remain unconcerned about the meaning of one's existence. "Indifference toward the ultimate question is the only imaginable form of atheism."[9]

It is clear, however, that Tillich does not think that in the last analysis any man can be genuinely atheistic. At the risk of labouring the point we will note several statements on the subject, the hope being that in addition to seeing <u>that</u> Tillich maintains atheism is impossible we will also see further <u>why</u> he maintains this view:

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[8] <u>ST</u>, I, 211; <u>DF</u>, p. 45.

[9] <u>Ibid</u>., It is statements such as this that makes Tillich's thought so ambiguous. Here he appears to be allowing for the possibility of atheism, but as we will see below such is not the case. The only type of atheism he would acknowledge is what might be called an assumed atheism, in which men claim to be atheistic but according to Tillich are really not. In the limited confines of <u>Dynamics of Faith</u>, we must assume, he could not go into this issue.

> Even the atheists stand in God - namely that power out of which they live, and truth for which they grope, and the ultimate meaning of life in which they believe . . . . [in other words] genuine atheism is not humanly possible, for God is nearer to a man than that man is to himself.[10]

> Unconcern or ultimate concern - those are the only alternatives. [But] the cynic is concerned, passionately concerned, about one thing, namely, his unconcern. This is the inner contradiction of all unconcern. Therefore, there is only one alternative, which is ultimate concern.[11]

The most striking confirmation of the point in hand appears in a sermon by Tillich entitled "The Escape from God." This particular expression of the ontological basis of Tillich's stand on atheism merits a lengthy quotation:

> We all know that we cannot separate ourselves at any time from the world to which we belong. There is no ultimate privacy or final isolation. We are always held and comprehended by something greater than we are,

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[10] SF, pp. 127-28. One might wish to argue that Tillich's employment here of the terms "atheists" and "Genuine atheism" is indication that he really does consider atheism to be possible in some way or other. However, such need not be (and I think is not) the case. When he uses the term "atheists" he is referring to those who call themselves atheists. Similarly, "Genuine atheism" is contrasted with one's contention that he is an atheist. But, calling oneself atheistic, or being convinced that one is atheistic, does not make one such. Thus Tillich is not being inconsistent on this point.

[11] NB, p. 158.

> that has a claim upon us, and that demands response from us . . . . The centre of our whole being is involved in the centre of all being; and the centre of all being rests in the centre of our being. I do not believe that any serious man can deny that experience, no matter how he may express it. And if he has had the experience, he has also met something within him that makes him desire to escape the consequences of it . . . .
>
> Is there a release from that tension? Nietzsche offers a solution which shows the utter impossibility of atheism. The Ugliest Man, the Murderer of God, subjects himself to Zarathustra, because Zarathustra has recognized him, and looked into his depth with divine understanding. The murderer of God finds God in man. He has not succeeded in killing God at all. God has returned in Zarathustra, and in the new period of history which Zarathustra announces. God is always revived in something or somebody; He cannot be murdered. The story of every atheism is the same.[12]

Suffice it to say in Tillich's estimation there can be no such reality as atheism. One can call himself an atheist - many do; one can really be convinced he is an atheist - and many are; but in the final analysis his position is a religious one for he cannot help but be ultimately concerned about something.

Needless to say such a strong position invites closer examination of the principles and the reasoning upon which it is based. We have referred to the Protestant Principle as just

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[12] SF, pp. 46-7. (Emphasis mine).

this basis. However, the ultimate source of Tillich's certainty of the universality of religion lies beyond this principle and is found in his philosophy of existence and being.[13] Specifically, we are referring to his understanding of man's relation to being-itself. This relation is thoroughly dealt with in the Systematics;[14] however, in the final analysis there is no more concise summary of Tillich's position on this issue than that contained in the quote above (see page 77).

"We are always held and comprehended by something greater than we are." This something, of course, is being-itself, the ground of being, the centre of which "rests in the centre of our being." This is the relation of man to being; the centre of his being is supported by being-itself. He is unable to escape it. (However, living in finite, distorted existence he tries to; thus the inner tension between religion and profanization). The polarity of freedom and destiny frees man - though only in degrees - from complete bondage to his finitude, the

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[13] While we call this the "ultimate source" we must also note that theultimate source of Tillich's sweeping view of religion is, in one sense, his reflection upon man, for it was chiefly on such reflection that he founded his ontology, and not vice versa. However, our aim here is to examine the ontological principles which, in effect, anchor his observations.

[14] ST, I, Part II.

result being his "striving in the vertical direction toward ultimate and infinite being."[15] In other words, "the human heart seeks the infinite because that is where the finite wants to rest."[16] However, the striving is not always obvious, and neither is it unchallenged, for man like every other "thing" in existence has the tendency to resist the "call of the holy." That is, his life is ambiguous: it is basically religious in that, in some way or another (sometimes very indirectly), it tries to relate itself to the power of being which it simply cannot escape; yet, life is also by nature, secular. It is estranged from essential being, yet it depends on the power of being. Midst this confusing ambiguity it tries to ignore the inherent tendency to relate to being, to ask seriously about the ultimate meaning of itself.

In brief paraphrase these are the principles in which Tillich grounds his strong insistence on the impossibility of atheism and its complement, the universality of religion. Whether or not these are true to the principles of reality is an issue beyond the examining scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is within our range to note what for many are the major problems with these ontological statements as they apply to Tillich's definition of religion, as well as some of the possible directions in which to pursue them.

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[15] ST, III, 86.

[16] DF, p. 13.

Surely one of the major questions is: on what does Tillich ultimately found his argument that the finite is striving for the infinite? One answer of course is "his extensive ontologival considerations." But this raises the further question: Is there any way of verifying ontological judgements? Tillich himself raises this issue and answers as follows:

> There is certainly not an experimental way, but there is an experiential way. It is the way of an intelligent recognition of the basic ontological structures within the encountered reality, including the process of encountering itself. The only answer, but a sufficient answer, which can be given to the question of ontological verification is the appeal to intelligent recognition.[17]

For this study we must bracket the question of who (if either) among Tillich and his critics has truly recognized the basic ontological structures. We can and must acknowledge, however, that Tillich's ontological statements are based on prior general observations of man and his relations. In support of his argument that the finite is striving for the infinite, for example, he can cite "the fact that man never is satisfied with any stage of his finite development, the fact that nothing finite can hold him although finitude is his destiny."[18] He can cite the fact that men universally are deeply disturbed by the limitations on their time, space, and fulfilment. In short, he can refer to the fundamental angst

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[17] LPJ, p. 24.

[18] ST, I, 191.

of existence itself that underlies all of man's particular anxieties and concerns.[19] That all or any of these are not facts of our existence has to be established before one can claim to have undercut Tillich's interpretation of life as being basically religious. And one might note that this cannot be established by an appeal to man's apparent contentment with pragmatic and functional concerns. This would be but to beg the issue. Tillich's appeal to probe what lies beneath these cosy fabrications is much more convincing, and certainly much more deserving as a serious attempt to understand man. In short, any serious criticism of Tillich's view of man as _homo religiosi_ will have to take into account the basic _angst_ of man: his questions of why he is here? and where he is going?; his attempts to conquer more space, and extend his life-span; in a word: his attempts to overcome his finitude. It will have to consider serious alternatives - either ontological or otherwise - to Tillich's argument that life at its very centre is ambiguously grounded in being yet limited by the threat of non-being.[20]

Apart from these major considerations another possible source of disagreement is Tillich's selection of criteria by which to judge the religious. That is, his argument that all men are ultimately concerned may be a valid one, but is it really

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[19] Cf. _CB_, _passim_.

[20] For Tillich's discussion of being and non-being, the finite and infinite, as well as the related concept of "anxiety," see _ST_, I, 86 ff.; _CB_, pp. 32 ff.

valid to conclude from this that all men are religious? Some attempt to deal with this question will be made in the succeeding section as we discuss more explicitly the criticism that Tillich's definition is so broad as to be all but meaningless.

THE MEANINGFULNESS OF TILLICH'S DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Ultimately the decision as to what constitutes a good definition of religion has to be an arbitrary one, for it is based to a large extent on the definer's understanding of what a definition should do and consequently what elements it should include. Moreover, in defining religion the definer's particular attitude toward the subject is decisive. (For instance, a radical secularist would be more inclined to think of religion as a social phenomenon based on unfounded beliefs and superstitions than would an orthodox Christian theologian. Thus, in all likelihood the ideal definition of religion for each of these would be quite different). It would seem that countless definitions of this word could be given, all bearing adequate meaning if looked at from particular perspectives. On the other hand there are undoubtedly many definitions which a majority would consider inadequate. A description of this phenomenon which does not, for example, include non-theistic religions would likely fall into this category. Similarly, a definition of religion which blankets every human activity is likely to be considered too broad to be meaningful.

The latter is the type of criticism often levied against Tillich. His description of religion is so broad as to include everyone under its scope. Critics ask[21] (and understandably so) if there is any real value to such a definition and if in fact it is fair to the special phenomenon generally called religion. Is there really nobody who can genuinely be described as being "non-religious?" If not, then of what value is a definition which in effect is the tautological statement: "All religious beings are religious?" These are completely legitimate questions to pose to Tillich. Let us examine them in the light of Tillich's thought itself.

First, one might wish to maintain that not all men are ultimately concerned, that not all men are anxious in the sense that Tillich claims they are.[22] It might indeed by that Tillich's

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[21] Many of these critics have expressed their views on Tillich's definition of religion in Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium, Sidney Hook, (ed.), (New York: New York University Press, 1961). See particularly the articles by Sidney Hook, Howard Hintz, Kai Nielsen, and Paul F. Schmidt.

[22] Such is Cox's criticism when he says Tillich's religious questions "do not trouble the newly emergent urban-secular man." (Secular City, p. 79). Unfortunately his inconsistency cancels the effect of this criticism, for later he says: "It is his experience of the transcendent that makes man man." (Ibid., p. 228). This is exactly Tillich's position. See above, p. 79.

particular interpretation of this concern is false; however, his observation that all men do have some such concern is not easily refuted. Any observation will show that all men have some underlying concern, some fundamental drive which "keeps them going," so to speak. All men "go about their business" driven by some basic motivation. Some are encouraged by the promises of success; others are inspired by some "religious" ethic; while still others ramble through life apparently under no particular impetus. The latter, while they appear to have no underlying motivation, are in fact motivated by the ultimate concern of "making the best of things," or by the hope of some imminent change in their situation. In fact even the cynic par excellence is ultimately concerned, if about nothing else, then about meaning and value of his cynicism. Thus we have the interesting paradox of affirming the reality of one's ultimate concern by strongly attempting to deny it. Many of Tillich's readers[23] find this logic frustrating, and indeed it is, but that is no argument at all against its validity. Perhaps those responding thus are presupposing that in the last analysis life, including its expression in language, is totally ordered and free of frustration. Tillich does not presuppose this; for him the frustration experienced by simultaneously affirming and

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[23] See particularly Howard Hintz, "On Defining the Term 'God'," Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium, Sidney Hook (ed.), (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 254-60.

denying ultimate concern is but an expression of the fundamental ambiguity of life.[24] That there should be such confusions in the first place would seem to lend support to this view; at least it does not undercut it. In short then, Tillich's claim that all men are ultimately concerned is an argument and observation not easily refuted, and as such is a view demanding thorough examination by critics of Tillich's definition of religion.

As a second approach, one may argue that admitting all men are ultimately concerned is not the same as saying they are all concerned about the really ultimate. In other words, is it really meaningful to say that men are religious if they are not ultimately concerned about the really ultimate, but instead direct their concern to some finite object? This, I think, is one of Tillich's most confusing points, but nevertheless one that is not without an underlying consistency. Let us examine it in detail.

In Dynamics of Faith (the best exposition of his view of what it means to be religious) Tillich distinguishes between the "subjective" and the "objective" meaning of religion (faith). The former he describes as "the state of being ultimately concerned,"[25] while in the latter he transfers the emphasis to the object concerned about, as expressed in the phrase, "the concern about the unconditional."[26] The crucial point is his linking of

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[24] ST, III, 87; DF, pp. 16 ff. [25] DF, p. 1.

[26] Ibid., p. 9.

the two in the statement: "The ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same."[27] This means, of course, not only that man is ultimately concerned, but also that he is ultimately concerned about that which is really ultimate, the unconditional itself. This follows from Tillich's statement that "the finite which claims infinity without having it . . . is not able to transcend the subject-object scheme."[28]

It would appear then that Tillich is contradicting his view that almost anything - a nation, success, money - can become the object of one's ultimate concern, for none of these things are really ultimate. Indeed, he is confusing on this point; however, I think there is no doubt that he meant both statements: (1) all men are ultimately concerned about the really ultimate, and (2) some men are ultimately concerned about finite realities which claim to be ultimate but which in reality are not. To which of these then does his definition of religion refer? The answer is "to both," for there can be true and false religions. (A religion is true if (1) "it adequately expresses an ultimate concern" and (2) "its content is the really ultimate."[29] It is false if neither of these things is true of it). But this does not really clarify the issue of man's being ultimately concerned about both the really ultimate and that which merely claims ultimacy, for in either case the religion is still religion

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[27] Ibid., p. 11. [28] Ibid., . . [29] Ibid., p. 96.

whether it be really true or disastrously false.

The dilemma might be solved if it could be demonstrated that what Tillich really means is that, though all men are religious, only some are ultimately concerned about the really ultimate. However, as the following passages show, such is definitely not the case:

> That which concerns us ultimately must belong to reality as a whole; it must belong to being. Otherwise we could not encounter it and it could not concern us. Of course, it cannot be one being among others; then it would not concern us infinitely. It must be the ground of our being, that which determines our being or non-being, the ultimate and unconditional power of being.[30]

> One is ultimately concerned only about something to which one essentially belongs and from which one is essentially separated, [namely, being itself].[31]

> Religion means ultimate concern about the ultimate, unconditional seriousness about that which is ultimately serious, infinitely serious, namely the question of the meaning of my life.[32]

The ambiguity is quite pronounced. However, one thing has been over looked, namely the fact that the "really ultimate" Tillich refers to is not a being above all other beings but a

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[30] ST, I, 21.

[31] DF, p. 112.

[32] Paul Tillich, "God as Reality and Symbol," Essays and Studies (Tokyo), XI, March, 1961, p. 101. Quoted by Carl J. Armbruster, The Vision of Paul Tillich (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 72.

quality of all beings: the quality of pointing to the depth of being. Tillich explains it thus:

> The power grasping us in the state of faith is not a being besides others, not even the highest; it is not an object among objects, not even the greatest; but it is a quality of all beings and objects, the quality of pointing beyond themselves and their finite existence to the infinite, inexhaustible, and unapproachable depth of their being and meaning.[33]

In the state of faith man is "grasped by the power of something unconditional which manifests itself to us as the ground and judge of our existence."[34] This "grasping" is effected by the unconditional itself - it is not initiated by man - and thus "places" man in the state of ultimate concern. Thus, "the ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same;"[35] they both refer to the quality of ultimacy. Finally then, we get to the meaning of Tillich's apparent contradiction on the issue in hand: All men are ultimately concerned about the ground of being even though the object of their ultimate concern might be any finite reality. This can be so because being ultimately concerned means being <u>grasped</u> by the power of the unconditional. Thus, even though the object of one's ultimate concern is a nation, for esample, the very fact that he is ultimately concerned indicates that he is concerned about the really ultimate, about the question

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[33] <u>PE</u>, p. 163. Cf. p. 32. [34] <u>Ibid</u>.

[35] <u>DF</u>, p. 11.

of the meaning of his life, for this is what ultimate concern means. He directs this concern to a nation because this particular finite reality has claimed ultimacy, it offers some answer to his question.

In recapitulation we note three points: (1) Tillich's contention that all men are ultimately concerned cannot be easily, if at all, refuted, for any attempt to do so leads ultimately to an affirmation of it; (2) Tillich is justified in calling ultimate concern "religion" because he relates it to the inescapable mystery of life, to the search for meaning in life, and to the infinite. In some way or another all religions embody such references; (3) contradictory though they seem, the statements, (a) that all men are ultimately concerned about the really ultimate and (b) that some men are ultimately concerned about finite realities, can be reconciled by noting that no matter what the object of one's ultimate concern is he is still grasped by the quality of ultimacy, and as such is concerned with the question "What is the meaning of my life?" In this sense he is concerned with the really ultimate.

Finally then, we must comment specifically on the issue of the meaningfulness of Tillich's concept of religion. The criticism that it is too broad to contain any worthwhile meaning might hold up had Tillich not distinguished, first of all, between a formal and a material definition, and secondly, between a true and an idolatrous faith. The first distinction refers to the universally

valid definition of religion as "ultimate concern" in contrast with the material concept of religion which refers to the expression of an ultimate concern in a particular "religious" context. The formal definition is understood by Tillich as "a criterion by which to judge the concrete religions included under the smaller, traditional concept."[36] In the history of religions he finds many events to support his argument for the reality and need of such an ultimate judging principle. Jesus and Buddha, for example, express the reality of this principle in their challenges to the prevailing religious institutions. No one would seriously maintain that they were non-religious, yet in a sense they were anti-religious. The impetus behind their protest was their religion of ultimate concern. Similarly, specific religions at all times are inherently susceptible to criticism from this principle which is greater than the content (doctrines, rituals, etc.) in which it is expressed.

This is one sense, then, in which Tillich's definition, as broad as it is, does have meaning. Indeed, I would say that the universality of the definition is a merit, for such a general principle is invaluable in focusing common themes, as well as in judging the genuineness, of various concrete religions.

However, the formal definition only has meaning when related to the material. There must be a concrete expression of an

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[36] UC, p. 4.

ultimate concern. In the case of Christianity the concrete expression, according to Tillich, centres around the "state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ."[37] Here Tillich demonstrates the applicability of his concept of faith. It is not completely abstract or unrelated to traditional religions.

We note at this point a criticism by George Tavard of Tillich's application of his formal concept of religion to the material faith of Christianity. I refer to this criticism for two reasons: (1) by confusing the formal with the material definition it shows how the ambiguities in Tillich's discussion of religion could lead one to consider the whole thing an absurdity; (2) it introduces Tillich's distinction between true and idolatrous faith and points out how, if misunderstood, this distinction could be a prime reason for questioning the validity of his overall view of religion.

The criticism itself is to the effect that Tillich's broad definition of religion is unfaithful to biblical tradition on the issue of "selectivity of faith." Speaking of Tillich's concept of faith he says:

> Instead of erecting the holy community out of the world, it sees the whole world as already being the holy community [Cf. Bonhoeffer's criticism below, p.95]. Nobody

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[37] ST, III, 131.

escapes it. All, even unawares, belong to it. Is this still the Christian faith?[38]

The problem with this criticism is twofold. First, it confuses the distinction between faith as a formal concept and faith as content. Tillich does not say that the whole world is explicitly Christian. Admittedly, he does say that the particular Christian concept of faith is universally valid, but this is because of the broad base that he gives to the Christian understanding of faith; he would not necessarily say that the material faith which is explicitly Buddhist is universally valid. Secondly, Tavard is involved in the traditional "battle . . . between faith and unfaith" which Tillich so strongly decries.[39] In saying that faith is universal Tillich is not making "the whole world" a "holy community." in the sense of being the Christian "holy community." He does make a distinction, and I would say, a rather strong one, namely the distinction between those whose faith is "true" and those whose faith is idolatrous.

This brings us to a crucial point in our assessment of the meaningfulness of Tillich's concept of religion, a point at which we may also focus on the relation of the issues discussed in this chapter to our overall analysis of Tillich's understanding of secularism.

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[38] George H. Tavard, Paul Tillich and the Christian Message (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 38-9.

[39] ST, III, 130.

The essence of all criticisms of Tillich's analysis of the religious and the secular is that he makes everyone and everything religious, and that, although he says all men are secular as well, it doesn't really mean anything for these same men are also religious. Critics are suspicious over Tillich's apparent attempt to put something over on men by denying them the chance to be irreligious. Maybe these critics are correct; maybe man is not naturally religious. However, I do think there is an issue to be considered before we completely dismiss Tillich in favour of his critics. This issue, as I have already suggested, is concerned with the crucial distinction Tillich makes between true and idolatrous religion.

We have already seen how, as a result of confusion on this same point, Tavard's criticism is rendered ineffective. I now suggest that the same might be true for many other questionings and rejections of Tillich's sweeping view of religion.

Most of the criticisms against Tillich's (or anybody's) universal concept of religion are based on an inherent conviction that the distinction between the religious and the secular is a valid one, and moreover, a very pronounced one. Since the rise of the social sciences religion has come to be considered as one element in a man's life, one element in society; indeed, an element very different from others - the aesthetic, the political for example - and one which not all men are involved in. Some men are religious, others are not; some philosophies,

institutions, and communities are religious, others are secular; finally, some men believe in God, others do not. The distinction is considered an unavoidably reality; moreover, there is a definite tension between the two elements, so that each is regarded by the other as something less than the best way to come to grips with life. Nowhere is this tension more pronounced than in the minds of theologians on the one hand and radical secularists on the other.[40] And these are the major sources of criticisms of a universal definition of religion.

What then, does this mean for the arguments against the universality of religion? It means chiefly that such arguments come as no surprise whatsoever. It is symptomatic of the age that a statement asserting the universality of the religious attitude be considered an attempt to "force secular man into asking religious questions"[41] or be viewed as an interpretation of the world "against its will."[42] And well it might be so,

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[40] This is not to deny the concern of recent theologians to be more open and relevant to secular man. However, I would argue that even in Bonhoeffer's case, where openness to secular man is outstanding, there still exists an undeniable tension between theologian and ardent secularist.

[41] Cox, Secular City, p. 69.

[42] Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers, pp. 108-9. Of course, I am not at all suggesting that everyone who is concerned about such issues comments on them negatively. Schubert Ogden, for example, speaks very positively (and convincingly, I think) on the subject. See Schubert M. Ogden, "The Strange Witness of Unbelief,"

for the pronounced reality of secularism, to all intents and purposes, contradicts any such assertion. Thus, despite their most ardent efforts to be receptive to a "world come of age" neither Bonhoeffer, Cox, nor Tillich (nor for that matter any others who might fall into this general category) can completely philosophize away the very real tension between religious and non-religious elements. However, to all intents and purposes Tillich appears to be doing so - or at least attempting to do so - by making everyone essentially religious. This accounts for much of the disagreement over his interpretation of secular man. But has Tillich really removed the religious/non-religious contrast? I maintain that he has not and that, in a sense, neither did he intend to. Admittedly, this appears to contradict earlier statements concerning the omnipresence of religion and the impossibility of being completely secular. However, this need not be so, as we will now expound.

Tillich's definition of religion does not force everyone into a religious straight-jacket. Although all men are by nature

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The Reality of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 120 ff. In addition there are undoubtedly countless others who, in some way or another, agree with Tillich on this principle if not on his particular formulation of it. Neverthless, there are many others who would consider the assertion that all men are religious a complete misunderstanding of the real situation of modern western man.

ultimately concerned (according to this definition), not all men explicitly direct this concern to the really ultimate. "The continuing struggle through all history is waged between a faith directed to ultimate reality and a faith directed toward preliminary realities claiming ultimacy."[43] The tension does remain, a tension between true and idolatrous religions; and although this is not exactly the same as the religion-secularism tension, it is most similar.[44] The only really significant difference lies in the fact that idolatrous religion goes beyond secularism inasmuch as the former includes some religions proper. Secularism denotes an attitude of turning away from the world of "religion" and turning toward the everyday world of man and his technology. Similarly, idolatrous religion (as Tillich defines it) refers to the directing of ultimate concern to preliminary, finite realities. On the other side of the contrast both "religion" (as opposed to secularism) and true religion (as opposed to idolatrous religion) imply the concern of man for dignity and greatness.

In effect then, Tillich's interpretation of religion does leave room for the same kind of tension between "religious" and "secular" elements as is demanded by an accurate observation of

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[43] ST, III, 131.

[44] One could become extremely technical and detail many minor differences between these two. However, my point demands only that the basic attitude permeating and "flowing" from each be somewhat the same. This, I think is the case.

the social situation. Saying all men are ultimately concerned is not equivalent to saying they are all "religious" in the narrow sense. This is a fact which should not be overlooked in an assessment of the value of Tillich's view of religion. However, I think this point has been overlooked, or at least de-emphasized, with the result that Tillich is criticized for attempting conversion by definition. Such criticism is not completely unfounded, but the fact that it is founded on a misinterpretation detracts from its value. However, it does serve to point out the confusing nature of Tillich's view of religion which, undoubtedly, itself contributes much to the fact of misinterpretation. This view in essence is as follows: all men are religious but not all men are "religious." Admittedly, this paradox is most frustrating but it can be disentangled by noting, as we have already done, the major distinctions and nuances involved in it. Of course, I am not suggesting that favour toward Tillich's definition of religion hangs solely on recognition of his distinction between true and idolatrous religions. My aim has been to clarify some of the major sources of confusion on the subject; this is one which, I think, deserves special consideration.

CONCLUSION

It has not been my chief aim in this thesis to comment for or against the validity of Tillich's understanding of the religious and the secular. Rather, my main objective has been to present an analysis of his views on these subjects pointing out some of the major sources of disagreement and confusion in them. Nevertheless, I do not maintain to have remained completely outside the subject. On the contrary, in the course of noting problems in Tillich's analysis of these concepts, I have at various times stated or implied my conviction that underneath the ambiguities and apparent contradictions lies a view of *homo religiosi* which can indeed be quite meaningful. In view of this it seems in order to conclude by reiterating what I consider to be the main problems in Tillich's notions of the religious and the secular, the implication being that I consider none of these major enough to render his views on these subjects meaningless.

One of the main problems, of course, deals with Tillich's observation that all men are ultimately concerned. The question is: Is this really true to the human situation? I can only repeat that in my view it is. Call this basic concern what you will, but the fact remains that all men are "grasped," are "pushed" so to speak, by some underlying impetus that is of utmost

importance to their will to proceed with day to day living. On this issue, I think, Tillich is quite strong. I do not consider this to be simply a case of a Christian theologian struggling to explain all other ideologies, all other human attitudes, in terms of some non-explicit Christianity. Here, I think, Tillich is (to a certain degree) transcending such interpretation, and by philosophical observation getting to something more basic to the human situation. In any event, as he says, any strong denial of the univerality of ultimate concern is in effect its affirmation.[1]

However, the fact that he calls this basic concern religion could be a more problematic issue. Yet, he does relate the phenomenon of ultimate concern to questions concerning ultimate meaning and the infinite. This, in my mind, justifies his calling it religion, but admittedly, it does not establish whether or not in real life the basic concern referred to is actually related to such ultimate subjects. Within the limits of Tillich's observation it is of course, and to support this observation he has an ontology which grounds ultimate concern in man's relation to being. This raises a third problem, namely, that concerning the validity of Tillich's ontology. Indeed, this question plays a major role in establishing to what extent and in what ways Tillich's philosophy of religion is

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[1] See above p.85.

meaningful. As I have already stated, unfortunately it is a question of which a thorough dealing lies beyond the scope of my present effort. Yet, I will note that many of the suspicions concerning the excessively ontological nature of Tillich's analysis of man's situation seem to ignore the fact that this ontology is constructed on the basis of reflection upon man. That is to say, it is from his observations of man's situation that Tillich becomes convinced that ultimately the basis of man's problems and actions is ontological. He does not first construct an ontology and then later impose it on man. This fact is very significant, for it means (among other things) that one can, if needs be isolate Tillich's view of man as a religious being from the particular ontological interpretation he connects with this view.[2]

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[2] I realize that this challenges a not uncommon view that a system, such as the one Tillich has constructed, must be either accepted or rejected in toto. However, I do so with the conviction that this view is incorrect. Many philosophical systems offer countless insights that can be meaningfully extracted from the whole without losing their inherent worth. Such, I contend, is definitely the case with Tillich's system. The observation that all men are ultimately concerned and that in this sense they are all religious need not be anchored by Tillich's ontology in order to have meaning and validity. Consider, for example, Schubert Ogden's relating of the concept of ultimate concern to Hartshornian philosophy (See Ogden, The Reality of God p. 196; cf. pp. 120-44).

(I must note that in making this point I am not at all

In effect this takes us back to the question of the extent to which Tillich's observations and reflections upon man are true to reality. Ultimately, this monumental question can only (if at all) be answered by further study and observation. Nevertheless, despite this human limitation, it can be said with a fair degree of confidence that Tillich's thought on the religious and the secular contains many truthful insights. The extent to which such insights are incorporated into man's moving search for meaning depends largely on the extent to which they are clarified and re-presented by the continuous study of religion. To have added even the slightest to such clarification and re-presentation is the concluding hope of this thesis.

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suggesting that Tillich's ontology is completely, or at all, invalid. Certainly, many do not think so, and their arguments must indeed be considered, though not in this context).

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