Ambiguous and Unambiguous Life: A Study of Some of the Principles, Definitions and Terms of Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Religion as Found in Part IV (First Division) on His Systematic Theology

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AMBIGUOUS AND UNAMBIGUOUS LIFE

A Study of Some of the Principles, Definitions and Terms of Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Religion as Found in Part IV (First Division) of his Systematic Theology

by

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INTRODUCTION

In Part IV of his *Systematic Theology*, entitled "Life and the Spirit," Paul Tillich makes the statement:

Logically, this could be the place for a fully developed philosophy of religion (including an interpretation of the history of religion). But practically this is impossible in the limits of this system, which is not a summa.1

This paper is an analysis of some of the implications of this statement, that is, a study of some of the definitions, principles, and terms by which Paul Tillich has attempted to understand religion and the religious dimension of man. By focusing upon one part of his *Systematic Theology*, this paper attempts to provide some understanding of the thought of one of the major contemporary thinkers in the philosophy of religion.

Paul Tillich has made many recognized and oft-quoted contributions in the philosophy of religion. That he has influenced many contemporary philosophers and theologians is obvious to anyone doing work in that field. Yet, some of his basic principles, definitions, and terms prove difficult to understand. His thought is often unclear because his language often lacks precise definition and consistency;2 Tillich

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1 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Vol. III, 1963), pp. 94-5. (In this paper this work will be abbreviated ST.)

2 Tillich mentions such criticism of his work and attempts
is sometimes more the preacher than the philosopher. His motivation is sometimes more a matter of religious inspiration than a desire for precision and consistency. This lack of clarity presents some of the major difficulty in doing this paper and at the same time furnishes a need to which this paper attempts to respond.

This paper will analyze some of the principles, definitions, and terms of Tillich's understanding of religion by interpreting his thought in the first division of Part IV of his *Systematic Theology*. His other works will be used only when they are helpful in clarifying something that he is stating in Part IV. Secondary sources will be used sparingly where they prove helpful to the interpretation.

Part IV of the *Systematic Theology* has two major divisions, as do all the parts of this work. The two parts correspond to the basic methodology used by Tillich in his *Systematic Theology*, to respond to it in his "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, edited by C. Kegley and R. Bretall (New York: Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 330.

3*Ibid.*, 341. (In responding to the criticism that some of his language is baffling and his metaphors unhappy, Tillich states his case for religious motivation being often the deciding factor).

4Guyton B. Hammond, *Man in Estrangement* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965). This work, subtitled *A Comparison of the Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm*, is one of the few secondary sources which treats Part IV of the *Systematic Theology* (and the only work which offered a detailed study of the importance of the concept of life for an understanding of Tillich's thought.) Most of the standard secondary sources concerning Tillich's thought were published before the publication of Part IV, and the few published after (Armbruster, Tait, Hamilton) present only a cursory treatment of Part IV (and especially Tillich's use of the concept of life).
the method of correlation. Each part of his Systematic Theology consists, first, of the philosophical statement and analysis of a problem or question and, secondly, of the theological development of a solution or answer to that problem or question.

In the first division of Part IV of his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich presents his philosophical statement and analysis of a problem-question: "Life, its Ambiguities, and the Quest for the Unambiguous Life." In the second division, consisting of three sections: "The Spiritual Presence," "The Divine Spirit and the Ambiguities of Life," and "The Trinitarian Symbols," Tillich presents the correlate, the theological development of a solution-answer: the Spirit and the Unambiguous Life.

Tillich formulates his question and answer in Part IV in terms of life: the question posed by ambiguous life and the answer found in unambiguous life. The concept of life is central to Tillich's methodology and development of his thought. Tillich uses it eventually in Part IV to formulate his principles, definitions, and terms for an understanding of religion. An analysis of this concept, therefore, is fundamental to any of the other analyses of this paper and is the first goal of this paper.

In the "Introduction" to Part IV of his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich faces the accusation that his attempt to systematize theology is, in fact, an attempt "to rationalize revelatory experiences." Tillich denies the charge and retorts

6Tillich, ST, Vol. III, p. 3.
that the systematic form is a "justifiable demand to be consistent in one's statements."³ In addition, systematic form is "an instrument by which relations between symbols and concepts are discovered and by which the wholeness of the object of theology is conceived as a Gestalt in which many parts and elements are united by determining principles and dynamic interrelations."⁸

Paul Tillich states his case for the necessity of using organizing principles which go beyond biblical language, and, therefore, the necessity of utilizing philosophical concepts, if the revelatory experiences are to be shared with the larger audience of mankind, the audience outside a particular "theological circle." According to Tillich, the Christian theologian must use non-biblical language, if his faith insights are to be compared with, and to criticize various insights of science and philosophy. Otherwise, theology and the theologian's faith exist in an isolated world, unable to speak to the world at large and unable to be spoken to.

Tillich states the reasons for his use of the concept of life in the first division of Part IV. Tillich notes the encouragement he drew from reading Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's book, The Phenomenon of Man. "It encouraged me greatly to know that an acknowledged scientist had developed ideas about the dimensions and processes of life so similar to my own." Paul Tillich

³Ibid.
⁸Ibid.
summarizes his intentions for using the concept of life to develop his thought in Part IV of his Systematic Theology: 9

Of course, theology cannot rest on scientific theory. But it must relate its understanding of man to an understanding of universal nature, for man is a part of nature and statements about nature underlie every statement about him. The sections in this book on the dimensions and ambiguities of life attempt to make explicit what is implicit in even the most anti-philosophical theologies. Even if the questions about the relations of man to nature and to the universe could be avoided by theologians, they would still be asked by people of every time and place—often with existential urgency and out of cognitive honesty. And the lack of an answer can become a stumbling block for a man's whole religious life. These are the reasons why I ventured to enter, from the theological point of view, the field of a philosophy of life, fully aware of the cognitive risks involved. 10

Some of the implications of this brief summary will be analyzed in this paper.

Paul Tillich is concerned with the necessity of theology's dialogue with the sciences, physical, social, and psychological. He is interested in developing his basic theological concerns and insights in light of the concerns and insights offered by the sciences. Whereas the central concepts used by Tillich in the first three parts of his Systematic Theology were more traditionally philosophical (e.g., concepts such as being, non-being), the central concept used in Part IV is the concept of life.

This paper is an attempt to interpret Paul Tillich's philosophical statement and analysis of a problem-question:

9Ibid., p. 5.
10Ibid.
Ambiguous life and the quest for Unambiguous life. This will be accomplished by a triple analysis.

In chapter one Tillich's concept of life will be analyzed. It will be shown that an understanding of his basic definition of life is dependent upon a definition of terms which can be found only in some of his work written prior to Part IV of his Systematic Theology. It will also be shown that Tillich's formulation of a question and answer in terms of life is another attempt by Tillich to point to a concern central and fundamental in much of his thought. By studying this fundamental concern it is hoped that some of Tillich's thought, especially in the philosophy of religion, will be more intelligible.

In chapter two, the concept of the self-transcendence of life will be analyzed. This is the fundamental characteristic of life according to Tillich. It is in terms of this concept that Tillich presents his analysis of the ambiguity of life. In this chapter an interpretation of Tillich's analysis of the first two functions of life will be presented: self-integration and self-creativity. Tillich's analysis of these two functions focuses upon morality and culture. This paper hopes to present a schema or structure by which Tillich's analysis of the first two functions of life can be more clearly understood and which will also provide a means of interpreting Tillich's analysis of the third function of life.

In chapter three Tillich's concept of the self-transcendence of life, not in its general sense as found in chapter two, but in a more specific sense, will be analyzed. This more
specific concept of the self-transcendence of life is the third function of life and also Tillich's definition of religion. An analysis of this third function of life yields a clearer understanding of some of the principles, terms, and definitions of Paul Tillich's philosophy of religion.
CHAPTER I

THE CONCEPT OF LIFE

What Paul Tillich attempted to say consistently in the first three parts of his Systematic Theology with the more traditionally philosophical concepts of being, non-being, essence, and existence, he attempts to say consistently in Part IV with the concepts of ambiguous and unambiguous life. There is a difference in emphasis, yet Tillich is attempting to share his faith concerns and insights with mankind, a community larger than his particular theological circle.¹

That Tillich's use of the concept of life is important for understanding his work and that its use points more to a change in emphasis than to any change in his fundamental concerns and insights is supported by Guyton B. Hammond in his book, Man in Estrangement.² Langdon Gilkey in his forward to Hammond's book commends the author for pointing out the importance of the concept of life for an appreciation of Tillich's thought³ and for showing that Tillich's thought is not as static

¹In Part IV, published six years after Part III and twelve years after Parts I and II, Tillich's use of the concept of life is an attempt to enter into theology's necessary dialogue with the sciences.


as might be suggested by the Greek categories of being and non-being, the terms which are so fundamental to Tillich's thought in the first three parts of his *Systematic Theology*. Hammond suggests that Tillich in his later work, especially Part IV of his *Systematic Theology* uses the more dynamic concept of life; yet this concept of life is built upon the categories of being and non-being and can only be understood in terms of these categories.

We might observe here that Tillich's concept of life contains the ideas of the overcoming of non-being, the movement from potentiality to actuality, creativity, self-transcendence, freedom, and self-consciousness. Surely a concept with this richness of implication is a key to much of Tillich's system and cannot be ignored in any exposition of its main themes. It would appear that many of the critical appraisals of Tillich's thought have overlooked the centrality of this conception.\(^4\)

**A Definition of Terms**

An understanding of Tillich's principal definition of life ("the actualization of potential being,"\(^5\)) depends upon terms which are not explicitly defined in Part IV, but whose definition must be found in some of his other works. Such terms as being, non-being, potential, actual must be defined before Tillich's definitions of life can be interpreted in the context of Part IV.

Tillich defines philosophy as the cognitive endeavor concerned with being as being.\(^6\) It is being, or the mystery of

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4 Hammond, p. 107.
being, which is the object of his philosophical investigations and analyses. It is important to attend to the fact that Tillich makes a fundamental distinction within being itself. His use of terms often reflects this fundamental distinction, and this will be demonstrated in regard to the distinction between ambiguous and unambiguous life.

There are two concepts of being. One is the result of the most radical abstraction and means not being this, not being that, not being anything in particular, simply being. This indeed is an empty absolute.

The other concept of being is the result of two profound experiences, one of them negative, the other positive.

The negative experience is the shock of non-being that can be experienced in theoretical imagination by those who are philosophers by nature. If one is not a philosopher, one can have it as a simple human being, in the practical experience of having to die.

But there is not only the shock of non-being. There is also a positive experience. It is the experience of eros,—relation to being itself.?

These two experiences of being, the negative and positive, are fundamental and basic to his thought.

According to Paul Tillich, the beginning of philosophical thought is the shock of non-being. It is man's threatened state that causes him to wonder, to think, to organize, to figure things out, to try to piece things together, to discover some unity and order amid the chaos which faces him. Non-being is at the beginning.

Kenneth Hamilton in his book, The System and the Gospel, severely criticizes Tillich's thought especially in regards to what he thinks is Tillich's central problem: "an attempt to

Hamilton often, yet not happily, notes the importance of such philosophical categories as being and non-being for Tillich's philosophical theology.

Because it is solely through the anxiety born of non-being that we encounter ontological shock and become aware of the power of being within us, non-being is less fatal than friendly. And we do not meet non-being on its own but always as 'digested' within being.

It is man's threatened state which causes him to be anxious, in need of the "courage to be," prone to despair, and always ready to find some security against what threatens him. Tillich provides a very detailed analysis of the despair and the anxiety resulting from this threat in his rather psychologically-oriented book, The Courage to Be. It is this relation of non-being to being, the necessity of being to resist non-being that causes Tillich to speak of the "power of being," a phrase fundamental to understanding the dialectical definition of many of his concepts. This is true especially for his definition of life.

Paul Tillich focuses upon man's attempts to deal with non-being. His interpretations of past philosophers and philosophies, his own original contributions to philosophy and especially to the philosophy of religion, are critiques of human responses and reactions to this primary experience—the experience of being in despair, the experience of non-being.


9Ibid., pp. 195-6.
It cannot be otherwise, for the first step of the creative philosopher is radical doubt. He questions not only the traditions and symbols of the community to which he belongs but also what is called the "natural world view," the common-sense presuppositions of "everybody." He who seriously asks the question: Why is there something not nothing? has experienced the shock of non-being and has in thought transcended everything given in nature and mankind.10

Tillich's emphasis upon the negative experience of being accounts for his particular understanding of human life with its emphasis upon the tragic dimensions of that life. This will be demonstrated especially in his critiques of morality, culture, and religion.

The Threat of Non-being

A failure to recognize the distinctions Tillich makes in his use of the concept of non-being leads to unnecessary confusion.

The mystery of non-being demands a dialectical approach. The genius of the Greek language has provided a possibility of distinguishing the dialectical concept of non-being from the non-dialectical by calling the first me on and the second ouk on. Ouk on is the 'nothing' which has no relation at all to being; me on is the 'nothing' which has a dialectical relation to being.11

Absolute non-being, ouk-on, is the opposite of being, its contradiction. It has no being, no reality. Relative non-being, the dialectical concept of me on is a reality. It is "within being."


According to Tillich, it is in Plato's philosophical thought that the concept of non-being is for the first time dealt with thoroughly. Yet in Platonism non-being is an ultimate principle; it resists being, resists form. In Greek philosophy it becomes an independent principle.

The me-ontic matter of Platonism represents the dualistic element which underlies all paganism and which is the ultimate ground of the tragic interpretation of life.\(^\text{12}\)

Tillich states that it is Christian theology which refuses to accept that non-being is an independent principle. It is Christian faith which struggles against all forms of dualism. The Christian doctrine of creation from nothing philosophically stated, is \textit{esse qua esse est bonum}. The mythic structure of Genesis is a struggle with the dualistic myths of Israel's near eastern neighbors.

In Greek philosophy non-being, or matter, was an ultimate principle, the principle of resistance against form. Christian theology, however, has had to try to deprive it of its independence and to seek a place for it in the depths of the divine life.\(^\text{13}\)

Yet, for all Tillich's disclaiming of dualism in the name of Christian theology, he is still accused of surrendering to the Greek dualism he attacks. Hamilton quotes one of these attacks, that of J. H. Thomas: "What Tillich has done is to make the 'nothing' out of which we come a something with fatal power. Hence, as I suggested, we are once more faced with

\(^\text{12}\)Ibid., p. 188.
\(^\text{13}\)Ibid., pp. 179-80.
Dualism." Yet Hamilton responds to Thomas' criticism of Tillich:

The dualism which Thomas thinks he sees is a limited dualism only, incapable of disrupting the system's basic monism. There can be no 'fatal power' in non-being because, whether we know it or not, the objective situation is that being-itself is eternally vanquishing non-being. Indeed being itself needs the non-being it conquers, just as animals need food to kill and eat. Without non-being being itself could not be what it is. Man's anxiety, therefore, may tend in the direction of despair but total despair is not possible for man without total loss of his humanity. The one effective power in the Universe is the power manifested in eros-faith and this is the power which (though hidden) remains always in spite of the existential predicament. After all, existence is a predicament merely. Its chief feature is its self-contradictori ness. It contains tragic elements, but it is not tragic.

Tillich's ontological analysis is basically an analysis of human existence and existence in general. Existence is problematical, yet for Tillich, not insolubly so. What exists is that which stands out from non-being. Existence is a dialectical term in Tillich's thought; it is defined in terms of non-being at the start, but faith can displace despair.

Summarizing our etymological inquiry, we can say: Existing can mean standing out of absolute non-being, while remaining in it; it can mean finitude, the unity of being and non-being. And existing can mean standing out of relative non-being, while remaining in it; it can mean actuality, the unity of actual being and the resistance against it. But whether we use the one or the other meaning of non-being, existence means standing out of non-being.

Absolute non-being, ouk on, is nothing; it has no reality.

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14 Hamilton, p. 194.
15 Ibid., p. 195.
Relative non-being, *me-on*, is within being; it has reality. This is a distinction which is not always clearly stated in the writings of Tillich, and this lack of clear statement can account for some of the lack of clarity in his thought and terminology.

Relative non-being, *me-on*, is an expression for potentiality in Tillich's thought. This point is most important for understanding Tillich's definition of life as the "actualization of potential being." Relative non-being is the potential which, along with the actual, are the two most fundamental categories of Being in Tillich's thought. As was just quoted: "And existing can mean standing out of relative non-being, while remaining in it; it can mean actuality, the unity of actual being and the resistence against it." For Tillich, the existent is the actual standing out of and within the potential.

In order to become actual, it must overcome relative non-being, the state of *me-on*. But again it cannot be completely out of it. It must stand out and stand in it at the same time. An actual thing stands out of mere potentiality; but it also remains in it. It never pours its power of being completely into its state of existence. It never fully exhausts its potentiality. It remains not only in absolute non-being, as its finitude shows, but also in relative non-being, as the changing character of its existence shows. The Greeks symbolize this as the resistence of *me-on* of relative non-being, against the actualization of that which is potential in a thing.

If relative non-being, *me-on*, is the potential, then the threat of non-being is the threat of the potential. Tillich's

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understanding and use of relative non-being, of potentiality, is fundamental to his particular definition of life and especially to his understanding of the religious dimensions of human existence. When Tillich speaks of the tragedy of human existence or the ambiguity of human life, or when he emphasizes the negative experience of being in his understanding of the religious dimension of man, he does so out of his particular understanding and use of the concept of relative non-being as potentiality.

Man is threatened by the shock of non-being. Not only is man threatened by absolute non-being, by the fact that he is finite, (graphically expressed in the fact of death), but man is threatened by relative-non-being, by the potential, by his own potentiality. For Tillich, man's greatness is in what he can become, but man's potential greatness is also his weakness, a constant threat.

Tillich fears man. He is afraid of what man might do and become. Human potential is often so destructive and tragic, so self-destructive. History and the behavioral sciences provide ample evidence of human destruction and self-destruction. Philosophy and religion constantly attempt to minimize the risk within man's potential greatness by their attempts at criticism and guidance whether in terms of ethical imperatives or cultural values. The tragedy of human existence appears to be a more concrete statement of the shock of non-being. And Tillich appears to be duly shocked in many of his analyses of the structures of human existence whether it be human freedom, human
knowledge, or human creativity. Paul Tillich, the Protestant philosopher,\(^{19}\) is afraid of man's "good works." To put it more philosophically, human potentiality is ambiguous: "The tragic is the inner ambiguity of human greatness."\(^{20}\) The root of Tillich's emphasis upon the negative and tragic in human life is in the ambiguity of man's non-being, his potentiality.

At the moment when man becomes conscious of his freedom the awareness of his dangerous situation gets hold of him. He experiences a double threat, which is rooted in his finite freedom and expressed in anxiety. Man experiences the anxiety of losing himself by not actualizing himself and his potentialities and the anxiety of losing himself by actualizing himself and his potentialities. He stands between the preservation of his dreaming innocence without experiencing the actuality of being and the loss of his innocence through knowledge, power, and guilt. The anxiety of this situation is the state of temptation. Man decides for self-actualization, thus producing the end of dreaming innocence.\(^{21}\)

**A Search for Limits: A Fundamental Concern**

Man has within his being non-being. He is in the state of temptation; he has everything to gain, everything to lose. His situation is ambiguous and distorted. The question facing Tillich is: What can resolve this ambiguity? What will determine whether human life becomes creative and self-affirming or tragic

\(^{19}\)G. McLean, "Paul Tillich's Existential Philosophy of Protestantism," Thomist, Vol. 28 (Jan., 1964), pp. 1-50. McLean mentions how much Tillich's Lutheran Protestant heritage has influenced many of the emphases in his thought, especially his emphasis upon the negative aspects of being, life, and religion. This relationship accounts for the rather strange combination of words: Protestant Philosopher.


and self-destructive? For Tillich, man is faced with the neces-
sity of finding limits, creative limitations for his own poten-
tiality. Much of Tillich's thought and especially his treatment
of ambiguous and unambiguous life is an attempt to face this
fundamental problem, to delineate the correct limits, to define
how man's potential should be actualized. It is in terms of
these limitations and definitions that Tillich attempts to
understand the structures of human existence (as will be seen
in chapter two), and it is in these terms that Tillich attempts
to understand the religious dimension of human existence (as
will be seen in chapter three).

According to Paul Tillich, with the proper and correct
limits, man's non-being can be creative, freeing, loving, self-
affirmative; without limits, or with improper and incorrect
limits, human potentiality is self-destructive, hateful, licen-
tious, and tragic. What are these creative limits for man's
potentiality? What are the protective curbs for man's drives?
What makes potential self-destruction an actual fulfillment?
In this paper Tillich's attempt to answer these questions in
terms of ambiguous and unambiguous life, the fundamental con-
cepts of Part IV of his Systematic Theology, will be analyzed.

An attempt to answer this question of limits is central and
fundamental to Tillich's thought. It expresses his basic method,
the method of correlation and it is found ultimately in his
analysis of the religious dimension of man. According to Til-
lich, religion and theology are primarily concerned with the
setting of limits. How well any religion or theology or quasi-
religious answer succeeds in this task is a question to be con­
tinually asked as the attempted answers are subjected to criti­cism and evaluation.

What are the proper and correct limits for man's potential­ity? What are the forms that can creatively shape human life,
that can resist non-being? Or to put it in another way, what
are the structures, whether they be mythic, symbolic, or con­ceptual, which can resist and order the chaos? Tillich summarizes
his answer in his treatment of justice, the seeking for propor­
tion, form, and balance. In his book Love, Power and Justice it
is justice which delimits and defines the love and power of man.
It is difficult to read the book without hearing in the back­
ground Saint Paul's and, later, Luther's cries to rid man of his
injustice and to find for him some justification, some new order
of things. "To be just towards oneself means to actualize as
many potentialities as possible without losing oneself in dis­ruption and chaos." 22

Tillich's attempt to answer the question of creative limits
for human potentiality and to evaluate the answers of others, be
they philosophical, theological, or quasi-religious, is rooted
in his conviction, prejudiced as it may be by his Christian
faith, that the criterion of any creative limit for man is the
definite demanding - other which stands "over against" man.
It is the definite other which sets the bounds, provides the
limits, makes possible creative action, and indeed demands

22 Paul Tillich, Love, Power and Justice (New York: Oxford
self-creative action. It is the definite other which keeps man from destroying himself, by not allowing him to forget his limitations and insufficiencies, by not allowing him to be more than a man, and therefore, less than a man.

According to Tillich, it is the definite other as object which makes knowledge and truth possible and illusion and subjectivism impossible. Tillich clearly states this need for the definite other when he speaks of human freedom:

When man makes himself the center of the universe, freedom loses its definiteness. Indefinitely and arbitrarily, freedom turns to objects, persons, and things which are completely contingent upon the choosing subject and which therefore can be replaced by others of equal contingency and ultimate unrelatedness. Existentialism, supported by depth psychology, describes the dialectics of this situation in terms of the restlessness, emptiness, and meaninglessness connected with it. If no essential relation between a free agent and his objects exist, no choice is objectively preferable to any other; no commitment to a cause or a person is meaningful; no dominant purpose can be established. The indications coming from one's destiny remain unnoticed or are disregarded. This certainly is the description of an extreme situation; but in its radicalism it can reveal a basic trend in the state of universal estrangement.23

According to Tillich it is this definite otherness which makes love and morality possible and selfishness and cynicism impossible.

For in man's essential nature the desire to be united with the object of one's love for its own sake is effective. And this desire is not infinite but definite. It is not concupiscence but love ....24

It is this definite otherness which stands "over against" man that keeps him humble, that gives form to his unlimited


24Ibid., p. 54.
potentialities, that makes his potentiality non-threatening. It is this definite otherness which makes man aware of his finitude. It is this definite otherness which is the antidote to man's tendency to deify his thoughts, his ideas, his choices, his actions. In this context Tillich's constant fashioning of the enemy in terms of the demonic, the idolatrous, the blasphemous appears to be an appropriate way of accusing man of the fanaticism and arbitrariness that rests within him.

Tillich often attempts to make his case by pointing to the subject of Greek tragedy:

Man is tempted to make himself existentially the center of himself and his world. When looking at himself and his world, he realizes his freedom and, with it, his potential infinity. He realizes that he is not bound to any special situation or element in it. But at the same time, he knows that he is finite. It was this situation which induced the Greeks to call men "the mortals" and to attribute man's potential infinity to the gods, calling them "the immortals." Man could create the images of the immortal gods only because he was aware of his own potential infinity. Standing between actual finitude and potential infinity enables him to call men and only men "mortals" (although all beings have to die) and to call the divine images of men the "immortals." If man does not acknowledge this situation - the fact that he is excluded from the infinity of the gods - he falls into hubris. He elevates himself beyond the limits of his finite being and provokes the divine wrath which destroys him. This is the main subject of Greek tragedy.25

To summarize, man is shocked by non-being. He has non-being within himself. Man's situation is ambiguous because his great potential can either create him or destroy him. The difference lies in the correct and proper limit. Man finds his creative limit in the other, the basis of truth and love, the basis of

every attempt of man to formulate and use religious speech and symbolism. It is the other which keeps man honest and humble. It is the other which can save him from himself. Theologically stated, no man can save himself. Man is saved by God alone.

The distinction of being and non-being is fundamental to Tillich's thought. The shock of non-being is the beginning of human questioning and the possibility of attempting some answers. The threat of non-being is the threat of man's own unlimited potentiality. The threat becomes a promise given the right remedy. Man's greatness is in the fact that he has so much non-being.

Life: A More Inclusive Definition

Tillich's definition of life and his use of this concept in Part IV of his *Systematic Theology* is fundamentally rooted in his understanding of the distinction between being and non-being especially as this distinction underlies his meaning when he states that life is "the actualization of potential being."

Tillich begins Part IV of his *Systematic Theology* by defining his use of the concept of life. He states that many philosophers have tended to avoid the word because of its various meanings while others have tended to restrict it to the organic world. Tillich intends to give the concept a specific meaning, but he refuses to restrict it to the organic world of living things. For Tillich, it will be defined in a specific but broad sense.

In rejecting the term "process" in favor of "life" as the
fundamental concept for his thought in Part IV Tillich graphically states his basic feeling for this concept to which he will later give more precise definition.

The term "process" is much less equivocal than the term "life" but also much less expressive. The living and dead body are equally subject to "Process," but in the fact of death, "life" includes its own negation. The emphatic use of the word "life" serves to indicate the conquest of this negation - as in "life reborn" or in "eternal life."26

In his attempt to define the concept of life, which hints at the way he will use it in the development of the thought, Tillich first mentions the polar concept of life. It is polar because it implies its opposite, and is in dialectical tension with its opposite. "Perhaps it is not too bold to assume that the words for life first arose through the experience of death. In any case, the polarity of life and death has always colored the word 'life.'"27

From the polar concept of life Tillich moves to the generic concept, "a special group of existing beings under the predominance of the organic dimension."28

But it is Tillich's intention to further define and broaden the concept of life. The ontological concept of life is formed after the pattern of the generic concept of life.

The observation of a particular potentiality of being, whether it is that of a species or of individuals actualizing themselves in time and space, has led to the ontological concept of life - life as the

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
"actuality of Being." 29

It is the ontological concept of life, as defined by Tillich in the very beginning of Part IV, which focuses his attention upon what is to be investigated in Part IV.

The ontological concept of life liberates the word "life" from its bondage to the organic realm and elevates it to the level of a basic term that can be used within the theological system only if interpreted in Existential terms. The term "process" is not open to such interpretation, although in many instances it is helpful to speak of life processes. 30

Life, like potency and act, focuses Tillich's attention upon the basic structures of being. For Tillich the structures of being shape all reality and these structures reveal being to be in a state of tension. This state of tension can be objectively analyzed by the philosopher in many different ways, but, as Tillich states it, this tension only has significance for the theologian when it is interpreted in existential terms, that is, in terms of the felt needs arising from an encounter with the negative dimensions of being and life. For Tillich, existence bespeaks predicament, estrangement, and tragedy. Man feels the threat of non-being, the ambiguity of his life. Philosophical and theological language cannot abstract from the concrete existential situation. The shock of non-being, often cast in terms of dread, despair, and anxiety, and the experience of being, in terms of promise, faith, and mystery, that is, "interpreted in Existential terms," meet Tillich's needs as a philosopher and Christian theologian.

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
The Spiritual Dimension: A Question of Metaphors

Since the ontological concept of life is broader and more inclusive than the ordinary meaning of life, Tillich is cautious in how he will express the unifying aspect of a concept which includes such a diversity of beings. In his essential consideration of life, Tillich speaks of a "multidimensional unity of life." Tillich is faced with a decision concerning which terms he will use to seek and describe this unity of diversity. Confronted with this problem of the one and the many, Tillich's solution is in terms of the proper metaphors to be used when describing the multidimensional unity of life.

Tillich shows which metaphors he will accept and which metaphors he will exclude in describing life. When speaking of life, Tillich intends to speak of the "dimensions of life," and not the "levels of life."

The term 'level' is a metaphor which emphasizes the equality of all objects belonging to a particular level. They are 'leveled,' that is, brought to a common plane and kept on it. There is no organic movement from one to the other; the higher is not implicit in the lower, and the lower is not implicit in the higher. The relation of the levels is that of interference, either by control or by revolt.\[31\]

The metaphor 'level' betrays its inadequacy when the relation of different levels is under consideration. The choice of the metaphor had far-reaching consequences for the whole cultural situation. And, conversely, the choice itself expressed a cultural situation.\[32\]

Tillich in this last quotation is especially referring to the

\[31\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 13.}\]

\[32\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 14.}\]
way of describing the relation of the inorganic to the organic in certain scientific theories, but his opposition to the use of the metaphor of "level" when speaking of the plurality of beings included in the concept of life is even more comprehensive than this particular relationship. For Tillich, the metaphor of "level" is reductionist and reifying, a matter bespeaking mutual separation and interference. Tillich exemplified his position by showing how problems arise when "level" is used in speaking of such traditional relationships as the organic to the inorganic, nature to grace, faith to reason, mind to body, religion to culture, and God to man.33

Whereas the metaphor of "level" tends to emphasize difference and conflict, the metaphor of "dimension" tends to "represent an encounter with reality in which the unity of life is seen above its conflicts." For Tillich, the metaphor of "dimension" implies a different vision of reality, that is, different from the vision implied in the metaphor of "level."

The metaphor "dimension" is also taken from the spatial sphere, but it describes the difference of the realms of being in such a way that there cannot be mutual interference. Depth does not interfere with breadth, since all dimensions meet in some point. They cross without disturbing each other; there is no conflict between dimensions.34

For Tillich, the basic dimensions of life are the inorganic, the organic, the spiritual, and the historical. All four are actual in man, although man is especially characterized by the spiritual and historical. The historical dimension is Tillich's

34Ibid., p. 15.
concern in Part V of his Systematic Theology, "History and the Kingdom of God." It is the spiritual dimension, however, which is Tillich's concern in Part IV. It is under this dimension that Tillich discusses the various ambiguities of life, offers his definition of religion and, in the second division of Part IV, analyzes the religious symbol of the Spirit as one of the three religious symbols for the unambiguous life, the one under the dimension of the spirit or under the spiritual dimension.

Tillich defines "spirit" as the "unity of power and meaning," "the unity of life-power and life in meanings."\(^{35}\) It is in terms of this power and meaning that Tillich analyzes the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal structures of human existence. Tillich presents a brief etymology of the word "spirit," and some of its semantic problems for the contemporary, especially English speaking man. Yet, Tillich thinks a new understanding of the term "spirit" is a necessity. Other words to describe this "unity of power and meaning" dimension of life, such as soul, mind, reason, and intellect, tend to differentiate man from the rest of nature, but at the expense of rationalizing, intellectualizing, or individualizing him.\(^{36}\)

Although Tillich's concern in Part IV is primarily with the spiritual dimension, what he says about it is often in terms of its relationship to the inorganic and organic dimensions. Remember that Tillich introduces Part IV of his Systematic

\(^{35}\)Ibid., p. 22.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., pp. 21-4.
Theology by stating that theology "must relate its understanding of nature, for man is a part of nature and statements about nature underlie every statement about him."

And, although Tillich's concept of life is not restricted to the organic dimensions, it is built upon it. "The organic dimension is characterized by self-related, self-preserving, self-increasing, and self-continuing Gestalten ('living wholes')." It is upon this model of the organic dimension that Tillich bases his analysis of the spiritual dimension. This will be shown in the next chapter where Tillich's concept of the self-transcendence of life, as the fundamental characteristic of life, is analyzed.

Tillich is concerned with the language he must use to speak about life, with the metaphors and imagery he will use to specify the proper object of his study. With the wrong metaphors at the beginning of his study, human life will be isolated within itself and in conflict with other dimensions of being.

A Summary of Chapter One

In Part IV of his Systematic Theology Paul Tillich is concerned with ambiguous life and the quest for the unambiguous life under the dimension of the spirit. As we have seen, the key words—how and why they are used—are of great importance for Tillich's thought. So far we have looked at the words: life, dimension, and spiritual. Before we could analyze Tillich's

37 Ibid., p. 5.
38 Ibid., p. 20.
concept of life we first had to briefly define the terms which he uses in his basic definition of life: being and non-being. We had to analyze especially Tillich's concept of non-being and, thereby, conclude that relative non-being for Tillich is potentiality. Man threatened by his own unlimited potentiality.

In reviewing some of Tillich's basic terminology in order to be able to understand his basic definition of life, we are confronted by a central question or problem which Tillich attempts to answer in his work: What are the creative limits for man's potentiality? What will keep man from tragic self-destruction? It is this question of creative limits which Tillich attempts to answer in terms of the fundamental characteristic of life, the self-transcendence of life. In chapter two of this paper the general concept of the self-transcendence of life will be analyzed.
CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF THE SELF-TRANSCENDENCE OF LIFE

Life is the "actualization of potential being." This existential actualization is ambiguous. The ambiguity is in the fact that this actualization can be positive, creative, and "great," or negative, destructive and "tragic." Tillich is faced with the problem-question: if the actualization of potential being is ambiguous, if it can be great or tragic, how can this ambiguity be resolved? How can this actualization of potential being be determined for the positive and against the negative? What limits can be set to provide for a creative actualization of potential being?

Hammond states that Tillich in Part IV places importance upon the distinction between ambiguous and unambiguous life because life in growth or change is threatened with the loss of identity and especially because human activity may lead to "chaotic indeterminancy." Life as ambiguous is an existential question; life as unambiguous is an answer. Tillich is being faithful to his method of correlation: life as we experience it

2Ibid., p. 94.
3Hammond, p. 100.
is problematic and questionable; answer and solution are theological tasks. The theological answer is in terms of Spirit, a symbol for Unambiguous life. Life without threat is the promise underlying Christian faith's response to a threatening situation.

Transcendence and the Self-transcendence of Life

Tillich's main concern in his existential consideration of life is the ambiguous nature of actualization, the threatening aspects of growth, change, self-preservation, and creativity. For Tillich, these growing, changing, self-preserving, creative aspects of life, these movements beyond, this actualization of potential being, are the transcending movements of life, the transcendence of life.

Since Tillich's specific concern in Part IV is life in the spiritual dimension, his concern with the transcendence of life in Part IV is primarily an analysis of human transcendence, or self-transcendence. For Tillich, the two principal moments of human self-transcendence are human knowledge and love. Tillich's analysis of the cognitive and moral activity of man, therefore, is his main means of considering the existential aspects of life: the ambiguity of human self-transcendence.

At the end of his essential consideration of life, Tillich discusses the spiritual dimension's relationship to the dimensions preceding it and upon which it is built. He cites two examples to show the relationship: an analysis of the cognitive act and an analysis of the moral act. In discussing these two
central and fundamental acts of the spiritual dimension, Tillich reveals his basic use of the word "transcendence."

First, Tillich gives his analysis of the cognitive act:

The transcendence of the center over the psychological material makes the cognitive act possible, and such an act is a manifestation of spirit. We said that the personal center is not identical with any one of the psychological contents, but neither is it another element added to them; if it were this, it would be psychological material itself, and not the bearer of the spirit. Nor is the personal center strange to the psychological material. It is their psychological center, but transformed into the dimension of the spirit. The psychological center, the subject of self-awareness, moves in the realm of higher animal life as a balanced whole, organically or spontaneously (but not mechanically) dependent on the total situation. If the dimension of the spirit dominates a life process, the psychological center offers its own contents to the unity of the personal center. This happens through deliberation and decision. In doing so it actualizes its own potentialities, but in actualizing its own potentialities, it transcends itself. This phenomena can be experienced in every cognitive act.4

Secondly, Tillich gives his analysis of the moral act:

Here also a large amount of material is present in the psychological center—drives, inclinations, more or less compulsory trends, moral experiences, ethical traditions and authorities, relations to other persons, social conditions. But the moral act is not the diagonal in which all these vectors limit each other and converge; it is the centered self which actualizes itself as a personal self by distinguishing, separating, rejecting, preferring, connecting, and in doing so, transcending its elements.5

In both of these brief analyses Tillich focuses upon that aspect of life which makes growth and "movement beyond" possible. This transcendence of life or, more specifically, the self-

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4Tillich, ST, Vol. III, p. 27 (The underlining, except their, is not Tillich's.)

5Ibid., pp. 27-8 (The underlining is not Tillich's).
transcendence of life in terms of human knowledge and morality, is not just one aspect among many aspects of life, but the fundamental characteristics of life. Hammond points this out and at the same time makes some distinctions which underlie Tillich's methodology in presenting his existential consideration of life.

The power of life, finally, is the power of self-transcendence! . . . Tillich at one point seeks to preserve a distinction between that going out of itself which we have identified as the self-creativity of life and the function of self-transcendence as such. According to this distinction, creativity appears on the horizontal level, while transcendence suggests that function of life whereby it rises above itself vertically in the direction of the infinite. . . . Later, however, Tillich acknowledges that self-transcendence cannot be viewed as a separate function of life, but must be understood as an aspect or quality of the other functions (in human life, self-integration or morality as well as self-creation or culture.) For our purposes, therefore, self-transcendence may be viewed as the most significant aspect of that going out of itself which constitutes life. It is to be found in all levels or "dimensions" of life but comes to its fullest realization in man. . . .

The power of self-transcendence can be identified as the power of being to overcome non-being. 6

This "going out of itself which constitutes life," self-transcendence, this "power of being to overcome non-being" is man's greatness and also his weakness. In his description of man's self-transcendence, Tillich's emphasis upon the tragic and negative is constant. The root problem is, as it was shown in the first chapter, the problem of relative non-being, the ambiguous actualization of human potentiality. The concept of non-being is central to Tillich's understanding of human self-transcendence and especially to his emphasis upon the tragic and negative dimensions. As has been stated before, what

6Hammond, pp. 104-5.
Tillich described in more metaphysical terminology in the first three parts of his *Systematic Theology*, is again stated in Part IV but from a different vantage point and with different terminology. Yet the problem is the same: the threat of non-being. Hammond points out this recurring concern in Tillich's thought.

As the system develops, however, it becomes clear that Tillich's distinction is not so much between being and becoming as between "ambiguous" and "unambiguous" life. In the former, self-transcendence threatens the loss of self-identity: creativity may lead to a chaotic indeterminancy.\(^7\)

But whether in terms of being, becoming, and the overcoming of non-being or in terms of ambiguous or unambiguous life, the emphasis upon risk, upon the ambiguity of the human situation, upon the tragic and negative is central and fundamental to Tillich's thought. Tillich states:

> The process of self-transcendence carries a double meaning in each of its moments. At one and the same time it is an increase and a decrease in the power of being.\(^8\) ... in every act of human creativity the element of separation from the creative ground is effective. Human creation is ambiguous.\(^9\)

And Hammond responds:

> In these statements as elsewhere Tillich is suggesting that the basic movement of life contains both a positive and negative aspect. This means, in effect, that life is tragic. It becomes separated from its source and ground by its own greatness, its own self-transcendence and creativity.\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 100.


\(^9\) Ibid., p. 256.

\(^10\) Hammond, p. 108.
In summary, human life is threatened by its own possibilities. In transcending itself it tends to lose itself. In moving beyond and forward it tends to lose its ground and its direction. In doing something new it tends to lose itself in novelty and strangeness.

Two Corresponding Realities: A Schema

In order to better understand Tillich's consideration of the ambiguity of human self-transcendence and what is needed to resolve this ambiguity, that is, in order to better understand his analyses of culture, morality, and religion (the main focuses in his existential consideration of life), a schema will be presented which is a possible way of understanding the basic structure of Tillich's thought in these analyses.

For Tillich, the self-transcendence of life is the fundamental characteristic of life and it is in terms of this self-transcendence that Tillich analyzes life's ambiguities. Corresponding to this self-transcendence of life and providing it with possible determination or limitation, is the experience of the transcendent. It is in terms of this experience of the transcendent that Tillich proposes a possible resolution to life's ambiguities.

The self-transcendence of life means that life goes beyond itself. It states that life is "a centrally intended movement ahead, a going out from a center of action."\(^1\)\(^1\) The experience

of the transcendent states that there is a beyond, an ahead to which life moves, a goal or purpose. It states that life's movement is shaped, oriented, directed, defined, and limited by what is ahead and beyond. What can shape and orient life and ensure that its movement ahead will be creative and not destructive, can, for Tillich, be answered ultimately only in theological terms. But the possibility of an answer, a possible solution, is proposed by Tillich in his philosophical statement and analysis of the problem.

For Tillich, the human experience of the transcendent is the experience of limitation, the experience of the limitations within which the actualization of human potentiality can be creative and great. This experience is expressed in such terms as the "beyond," "the not-me," "the other," "the divine within me." For Tillich the experience of limitation, or limits, is most profoundly realized in terms of moral obligation, demands of objective truth, and the religious language and symbols which point man to deeper dimensions within and outside of himself. Without this experience of limits, man forgets his own limitedness, and in doing so is threatened with his own potentiality. Hence there is a need for creative limits.

To summarize, the self-transcendence of life is the ambiguous going out of life beyond itself and the correlate experience of the transcendent is the experience of the limitation, limits, and limitedness within which this going out can be rendered creative, positive, and "great." The self-transcendence of life is ambiguous, threatened with self-destructiveness and the
risk of tragedy when the actualization of potential being is indeterminate, when life moves beyond itself without limits, or without proper and adequate limits. In other words, and this will be seen in what follows, life is in need of limits, norms, values, criteria, absolutes. This is an abstract statement of the basic framework of Tillich's thought in Part IV of his Systematic Theology.

Tillich proceeds in his existential consideration of life by analyzing the three functions of life, the three aspects of the self-actualization of life (which in his analysis he correlates to the three functions of the spirit: morality, culture, and religion): 1) self-integration where he specifically treats morality in terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent, 2) self-creativity where he specifically treats culture and in the same terms, and 3) the self-transcendence of life where he treats religion and defines it in terms of a specific concept of self-transcendence and a specific experience of the transcendent.

The three functions of life are all aspects of the self-actualization of potential being. Self-transcendence applies to all three generally and in a specific sense to the third function of life. All three functions as seen under the spiritual dimension are "intended movements ahead," "goings out from a center." It is, however, in the third function of life that "life goes out of itself as finite life." The first two

\[12\] Ibid., p. 31.
functions remain within the limits of finite life. In the third function the limits of finite life are surpassed. In this function the experience of the transcendent is described in terms of the sublime, the infinite, the sacred, the holy—the vocabulary which Tillich uses to express the religious experience of the transcendent.

Before the specific concept of the self-transcendence of life is considered and, with it, the religious experience of the transcendent, the general concepts of each should be considered as Tillich applies them to the first two functions of life.

The First Function of Life: Self-integration

The first function of life is the self-integration of life. In this function "centeredness is actualized."¹³ Not only is each function correlated to one of the functions of the spirit, for example, the function of self-integration to the function of morality, but each function is described in terms of the three polarities in the structure of existence: individualization and participation, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny.¹⁴

The first function of life is described in terms of the polarity of individualization and participation. Given this polarity life in the first function can disintegrate in one of

¹³ Ibid., p. 31.
¹⁴ Tillich, ST, Vol. I, pp. 174-86. (Tillich treats these polarities in a section entitled, "The Ontological Elements." These elements are qualities, or tensions, in everything, providing Tillich with an ontological structure for systematic analysis of various topics.)
two directions. It can be too centered on the side of individualization, or too dispersed on the side of participation. In either case, "the center is lost." To exemplify this, Tillich offers a critique of stimulus-response theories of life which "when raised to absolute validity . . . are not models of healthy life but of life in disintegration." 15 Man as a mere reactor to outside stimuli loses his center and individuality. Impulsiveness displaces responsible activity. A moral center tends to be a useless category when man defines himself as determined, if not victimized, by a world of varied stimuli.

Tillich's analysis of the first function of life, namely, self-integration, is made primarily in terms of the spiritual dimension and in this case in terms of morality, one of the three functions of the spirit. Tillich defines morality as "the function of life in which the centered self constitutes itself as a person." "Morality is the constitutive function of the spirit." 16 In terms of self-transcendence it can be said that man transcends himself in such a way that the whole world is at his disposal or for his use. In this context there can be self-increasing and self-alteration. Man can assimilate all, he can incorporate all. Yet man experiences limitation and his limitedness. He experiences a something which tells him that the whole world is not at his disposal, or for his use. He experiences a true limit. This, for Tillich, is the beginning

16 Ibid., p. 38.
of the moral experience, and the basis for true centeredness, the foundation of morality. To put it simply, man is faced with another person, another self, something not disposable, something not usable. Although the vocabulary is different, Tillich's thought here is quite similar to the thought of Martin Buber especially in terms of the latter's basic distinction between the I-Thou and the I-it.\(^{17}\) It is in this basic experience of "person in encounter with other persons," that Tillich attempts to ground the moral imperative, the foundations of demand, command, and the "ought-to-be." Tillich confronts pragmatic and utilitarian theories in terms of their inability to provide moral limits, that is, norms and absolutes.

Therefore, the other self as the unconditional limit to the desire to assimilate one's whole world, and the experience of this limit is the experience of the ought-to-be, the moral imperative. The moral constitution of the self in the dimension of the spirit begins with this experience. Personal life emerges in the encounter of person with person and in no other way.\(^{18}\)

Tillich states very succinctly the problem-question in the first function of life in terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent: "We must choose between a consistent but self-limiting building up of our life and a breaking-through of as many limits as possible with a loss of consistency and direction."\(^{19}\)

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\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 42.
The Concept of Eros

What Tillich is attempting to state in this part of his *Systematic Theology* about morality and love, and what he will attempt to state about culture and truth as he analyzes the second function of life is dependent upon an understanding of an important aspect of his thought which he refers to in Part IV but which he does not explicitly treat: the concept of *eros*. A brief analysis of this concept, based on sources other than Part IV of his *Systematic Theology*, will help to clarify and exemplify his thought at this point. It will also help to clarify some references he makes in Part IV to the previous parts of his *Systematic Theology*.

Much of Tillich's understanding of human self-transcendence especially in regard to his understanding of human love, is in terms of his use of the concept of eros. As in many other aspects of his thought, the Greek philosophical background of his thinking is quite apparent. For Tillich, *eros* as defined by Plato, is the drive for the good and the true. Tillich's use of this concept of *eros* is fundamental not only to his understanding of love, but to his epistemology. Tillich describes his basic understanding of *eros*.

*Eros*—a word which is not used by biblical religion—intuits the universals, the eternal essences (ideas), of which the concrete is only a weak imitation. *Eros* drives beyond the individual things and persons. It uses the concrete as a starting point. But then it transcends it and dissolves it into the universal. The fulfillment of eros is the mystical union with the one, in which all concreteness has
Statements such as this cause Hamilton to call Tillich an essentialist in the Greek tradition and to deny Tillich the title of existentialist. Tillich, however, attempts to qualify such statements and, thereby, to avoid essentialism and the submergence of the individual and the person.

In describing human love, Tillich often contrasts the concept of eros with the concept of agape. It is with his use of the concept of agape, concrete love, that Tillich attempts to resist a degradation of the individual and of the particular in favor of the universal and essential. Agape puts the focus upon the particular and individual. Agape is Christianity's major contribution to the tradition of Western thought; Christian agape refuses to allow man to escape into the safety and security of any essentialism. Tillich, the Christian, the existentialist, attempts to favor the concrete, the individual, and the particular. Whether his attempt is successful or not is questionable. His claim to be an existentialist is contested.

One may ask: In making self-realization the ultimate criterion, by defining love as the power of being toward self-realization and the overcoming of self-destruction does Tillich not inadvertently elevate the eros concept over the others? Does he not incorporate the other aspects of love into the eros aspects? Is it not Plato's eros, which seeks fulfillment through the self-realization of the individual (strengthened through the romantic ideal of the individual personality), which determines the temper and structure of Tillich's thought? His commitment to eros accounts for the intuition of being in its rational form, as we find it in Tillich's writing,

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and for the characteristic inner dynamics of each of his concepts, as well as for the emphasis on the creative act, the dynamic union of the ultimate ground and the self-objectivating form, as the redeeming act of the spirit.21

Eros as the drive for the good and true parallels Tillich's basic description of self-transcendence. Also with this concept he criticizes the negative and tragic dimensions of human self-transcendence. Again, he is taking a critical stance in regards to man's potentiality, his non-being. His fear is still the fear of the risky not-yet.

He is critical of human pride and concupiscence. Both are self-destructive perversions of man's eros, of his potentiality. In attacking both, he is concerned with the creative limit or form for human potentiality. The quest is for man's possible resistance to non-being. Pride and concupiscence are both perverse in that man forsakes his creative limits, the possibilities for true human knowledge and love, and instead makes himself the only center and limit. This can be done only at the price of eventual tragedy and self-destruction.

The great risk of self-transcendence or self-affirmation is that man as proud removes himself from his divine center, his only salvation, and makes himself the center. The tragedy of human existence is that in seeking the whole and center, man is separated from the whole and center. As concupiscent, man "desires to draw the whole of reality to self."22 For


Tillich, the tragic and self-destructive dimensions of human existence are most apparent historically in terms of arbitrary choices and subjective delusions. Ultimately, the tragedy of human life is the perversion of knowledge and love. History is often a record of these destructive and self-destructive perversities.

Tillich sees in Freud’s concept of the Libido and in Nietzsche’s concept of the "will to power" profound analyses of the tragic dimensions of human self-transcendence. In both these concepts he sees analyses of what he calls "existential concupiscence" or "distorted eros." Freud's Libido wants its own pleasure, not the other, as an object of love; it is never satisfied. Nietzsche's will to power is also an infinite never-satisfied drive. As Nietzsche's "will to power" leads to self-negation so Freud's Libido leads to the death-wish. Without definite aim, or content, without limit or object, both Libido and "will to power" like non-being, are tragic and self-destructive. Potentiality without limit or without the correct limits is tragic. To be creative non-being needs form and limit, goal and aim. To be knowledge and love, there must be the definite, determining other, an object to know or love.

In both cases it is the infinite, never satisfied drive which leads to self-negation. Nietzsche tries to overcome this trend by emphatically proclaiming a courage which takes the negativities of being into itself. In this he is influenced by Stoicism and Protestantism. But, in contrast to both of them, he does not show the norms and principles by which the will to power can be

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23 Ibid., pp. 53-55.
judged. It remains unlimited and has demonic-destructive traits. It is another concept and symbol of concupiscence.24

Yet Tillich's attack is not against concupiscence, which is the structure of human striving and drive. The attack is against distorted or existential concupiscence, that striving and drive under the conditions of existence, which is separated and "fallen" from the divine center. For Tillich, Freud and Nietzsche are wrong for identifying the existential with the essential and for accepting the distortion as the only reality. Tillich's criticism of Freud and Nietzsche for accepting the existential as the only reality is a concrete expression of his basic apologetics. For Christian Tillich, sin and estrangement are not ultimate and final, but correction, redirection and redemption are possible.

But like Freud's "Libido," Nietzsche's "will to power" is also blurred if described in such a way that the distinction between man's essential self-affirmation and his existential striving for power of being without limit is not clearly established.25

Like his mentor, Plato, Tillich is in search of form. It is Tillich who states that "life meets the threat of growth by creating forms of growth."26 Human self-transcendence, if it is to overcome the threat of self-loss and self-destruction, if it is to find fulfillment in terms of knowledge and love, needs direction and limitation. The threat of non-being, the risk of

24 Ibid., p. 55.
25 Ibid.
human potentiality, can only be overcome if human self-transcendence comes to terms with the definite and objective other which is the antidote for the arbitrary and subjective. Human eros can find fulfillment with the limitations and objective concerns provided by the Christian's agape. Agape with its focus upon the concrete and individual, upon the particular here-and-now can give form to an eros in need of limits. Without such limits the drive is fatal and self-destructive. Tillich states: It is the Christian concept of agape "which makes the cultural eros responsible and the mystical eros personal." 27 This responsibility of the cultural eros is central to his analysis of the second function of life, namely, self-creativity. 28

This brief analysis of eros, of its distortions in terms of pride and concupiscence, and of a possible remedy for these distortions in terms of agape, clarifies and exemplifies the basic framework of Tillich's thought in his analysis of life: Life which is indeterminate and without proper limits is threatened with its own potentiality. This brief analysis also

27 Ibid., p. 118.

28 In his Love, Power and Justice, Tillich attempts to show the importance of the concept of person and the personal for Christian faith and theology by his analysis of agape. He compares the personal aspects of Christianity with the impersonal aspects of other religions. He does this especially in some of his later works where he shows a great interest in a comparison of Christianity with eastern religions. He thinks that Christianity's personalism (which has so shaped Western thought) and the East's impersonalism can find a synthesis in the transpersonal.

In his Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), Tillich states that contemporary man will be more comfortable in his God-talk when it is put into transpersonal terms. This is reflected in Tillich's own vocabulary for God: The Unconditional, The Absolute, The Ground and Abyss of Being.
provides a good introduction to understanding what is the central concern in Tillich's analysis of the second function of life: the responsibility of the cultural eros.

The Second Function of Life: Self-Creativity

The second function of life in Tillich's existential consideration of life is the function of self-creativity. Tillich analyzes this function in terms of the second polarity in the structure of being: Dynamics and form. In this function, self-alteration is emphasized, new centers are produced. Tillich is concerned with growth and, especially under the dimension of the spirit, culture. Again, the analysis of this function can be made in terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent. Tillich is concerned with self-transcendence as the cultural activity of man. He is concerned with the experience of the transcendent as the norms and values which can determine cultural activity as creative, and not as destructive. 29

To summarize, power or dynamics in terms of man's cultural activity is ambiguous and in need of norms and values; otherwise life is chaotic and tragic. In his consideration of the second function of life, Tillich attempts to refute cultural relativism and to confront humanism. In doing the latter he must turn to

29 Tillich is concerned with a need for absolutes. This is quite evident in his My Search for Absolutes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), where Tillich investigates the destructive tendencies of various relativistic approaches to truth, moral decision, and the experience of the holy in religious experience.
the third function of life: religion.

Culture, etymologically defined is: "Culture - is that which takes care of something, keeps it alive, makes it grow." The ambiguity of culture is that human activity can be creative or chaotically destructive. The ambiguity, in other words is that the "new," the "novel" can be either opportunity or threat. Again, for Tillich, the question is: what can determine it to be one and not the other. Again, the possible answer is in terms of defined limits, in this case, in terms of forms or cultural values and absolutes.

In attempting to analyze cultural activity Tillich focuses upon language as a primary cultural vehicle. In language, meaning is created. Through the word, "something new beyond encountered reality is created." Tillich's critique of language exemplifies his general critique of culture.

Tillich speaks eloquently of the fundamental ambiguity of language.

The inherent ambiguity of language is that in transforming reality into meaning it separates mind and reality. Countless examples could be given, but one can distinguish the following main kinds of ambiguity of the word: the poverty in the midst of richness that falsifies that which is grasped through neglect

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31 Ibid.

32 Since so much of contemporary philosophical and theological writing is concerned with the function and use of language as a primary expressive and creative tool in human experience, Tillich's emphasis upon the role of language in cultural growth and especially in theological development makes him particularly appealing to contemporary readers.
of innumerable other possibilities; the limitation on universality imposed by expressing definite encounter with reality in a particular structure that is strange to other linguistic structures and the indefiniteness within definite meaning that leads to the betrayal of the mind by words, the ultimately uncommunicative character of this main tool of communication as a result of the unintended as well as intended connotation in the self of the centered person; the unlimited character of the freedom of language when limitations by persons or objects are rejected, the empty talk and reaction against it, the flight into silence; the manipulation of language for the sake of purposes with no basis in reality such as flattery, polemics, intoxication, propaganda; and finally, the perversion of language to the exact opposite of the function intended by the self-creative power of life through hiding, distorting and contradicting that which it is supposed to present.33

As with language, so it is with culture for Tillich! Both the use of language and cultural activity can be destructive in one of two ways: a relativism which renders power formless and valueless or a formalism in which power is encumbered and restricted by forms. In either case, what could have been self-creative becomes self-destructive.

Just as the experience of the "other self" or "other person" is the beginning of the moral experience, that is, the experience of a true limit for man's basically unlimited power to assimilate all and to dispose of all; and just as this experience of the moral transcendent is the possibility and demand for love, so the experience of the cognitive other, "the definite object," is the beginning of the cognitive experience and the possibility and demand for truth. In terms of the polarity of dynamics and form, Tillich analyzes the cognitive act as he speaks of the

basic subject-object split in all knowledge.\textsuperscript{34} Tillich attempts to provide a framework out of which he can describe the cognitive act without falling into either an objectless subjectivism or a subjectless objectivism. The unlimited, or infinite power of the subject to know is limited by the form or facticite of the world to be encountered. Subjectivism or objectivism is ultimately destructive of truth.\textsuperscript{35}

The ambiguities of the cognitive act of the self-creation of life are rooted in the split between subject and object. This split is the precondition of all knowledge and, at the same time, the negative power in all knowledge. The whole history of epistemology is a cognitive attempt to bridge this split by showing the ultimate unity of subject and object, either by annihilating one side of the gap for the sake of the other or by establishing a uniting principle which contains both of them.\textsuperscript{36}

As Tillich considers the cognitive aspect of the self-creative function, in like manner he considers the aesthetic act and its ambiguity.

In artistic intuition and its images, a reunion of theoria and reality, which otherwise could not be reached, is believed possible. But the aesthetic image is no less ambiguous than the cognitive concept and the

\textsuperscript{34}This subject-object split is overcome in mystical knowledge. For Tillich, highpoints in religious experience are those ecstatic moments when the oneness of everything is glimpsed. This is one of the reasons that Tillich had a special interest in Western as well as Eastern mysticism.

\textsuperscript{35}For Tillich knowledge is rooted in the basic intentionality of man. The subject-object split is grounded in what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the primordial unity of man-world. Both objectivist and subjectivist theories of truth neglect the original unity of man-world. This approach to intentionality is well summarized in Merleau-Ponty's preface to his Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. xvii-xxi.

\textsuperscript{36}Tillich, \textit{ST}, Vol. III, p. 70.
grasping word. In the aesthetic function the gap between expression and that which is expressed represents the split between the acts of theoria and encountered reality. The ambiguities resulting from this split can be shown in the conflict of stylistic elements which characterize every work of art and indirectly, every aesthetic encounter with reality. 37

Language, the cognitive function, and the aesthetic function provide for Tillich examples of the self-creative function of life. Indeed his consideration of them demonstrates his analysis of this second function of life in terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent.

A Criticism of Humanism

Tillich concludes his consideration of the second function of life and specifically his critique of man's cultural activity by offering a criticism of humanism. This conclusion provides him with a logical point of departure for his consideration of religion, the third function of the spirit and the self-transcendence of life defined in a specific way.

For Tillich, the root idea of humanism is that "only in man does the universe reach up to an anticipatory and fragmentary fulfillment." 38 Yet Tillich has difficulties with humanism's attempt to provide norms and values either for morality or culture. "The ambiguities of humanism are based on the fact that as humanism, it disregards the self-transcending function of life and absolutizes the self-creative function." 39

37 Ibid., p. 72.
38 Ibid., p. 85.
39 Ibid.
Here Tillich is referring to the specific concept of the self-transcendence of life, that is, finite life transcending itself as finite. For humanism, man is the ultimate norm, the final criterion, his own limit. According to humanism, religion is one of the many cultural creations of man. "Humanism actually denies the self-transcendence of life and with it the innermost character of religion." 40

Man cannot be his own norm. Man's ultimate experience of the transcendent must not be man or humanity, not an experience of self-limitation. For Tillich, religion offers man the possibility of a self-transcendence beyond finite life itself and the possibility of the experience of ultimate limitations and limitedness, ultimate otherness, the ultimate source of values and norms, the absolute ground of truth and love. Religion offers man an experience of the holy. Humanism is restrictive and reductive; it "fails to consider the human predicament and its existential estrangement." 41 Religion provides a higher criticism whereas humanism allows man to become too easily a victim of his own self-delusions and illusions. Religion provides substance for culture and an unconditional character for morality. For Tillich humanism's universe is still only "fragmentary and anticipatory." Religion offers depth, something that makes the fragmentary acceptable and the anticipatory worthwhile.

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 86.
In summary, religion is necessary because man left to himself is too easily victimized by what is superficial and false, by what is, for the moment at least, attractive and seemingly true and beneficial. Religion is necessary because man, despite his estrangement, has glimpses and hints of dimensions of life which are unfathomable and mysterious. Religion is necessary for Tillich because man should never be too sure who he is and where he is going. For Tillich, life as being is mystery. Humanism is quick to make man ultimate and normative and remove the mystery. In other words and in a more concrete way, Tillich states that ordinary language is not able to open the depths of culture and ensure the unconditional character of morality. With religious language and symbolism, man's self-integration and self-creation is deepened, evaluated, directed, judged and grounded. In other words, religion offers man the possibility of the experience of the holy, the experience of God, the ultimate ground of being and meaning. Without religion as the self-transcendence of life and without the religious experience of the Transcendent, culture loses its depth and morality its unconditional character.

A Summary

In chapter one Tillich's essential consideration of life was analyzed. His definition of life used terms which, according to the way Tillich defined them, indicated a fundamental framework in Tillich's thought; potentiality, if it is to be actualized in a creative and non-destructive way, needs proper limits.
In chapter two Tillich's existential consideration of life was analyzed: Life is ambiguous because it can go either way; it can be creative and great, or it can be self-destructive and tragic. If life is to be creative and great, it needs determination, or limits. In chapter two the first two functions of life were analyzed: Self-integration and self-creativity. In analyzing the first function of life, Tillich focused especially upon morality and in analyzing the second function he was especially concerned with culture.

To better understand his analyses, a schema of two corresponding realities was pointed out to clarify the fundamental structure of his existential consideration of life: 1) the self-transcendence of life, the fundamental characteristic of life, and 2) the experience of the transcendent, the experience of limitation or limits. A brief analysis of Tillich's concepts of eros and agape was presented to clarify and exemplify these two corresponding realities as a fundamental structure in his thought.

Finally, Tillich's criticism of humanism was analyzed since in this criticism Tillich states the need for religion if morality is not to lose its unconditional character and culture its depth.

In chapter three, Tillich's consideration of the third function of life will be analyzed: the self-transcendence of life. Tillich defines religion as the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit. This definition will be analyzed and, again, the schema of two corresponding
realities will provide the basic structure for the analysis: the self-transcendence of life, Tillich's definition of religion, and the experience of the transcendent, religiously expressed as the experience of the holy.
CHAPTER III

THE SPECIFIC CONCEPT OF THE SELF-TRANSCENDENCE OF LIFE

In terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent, specifically in terms of the polarity of individualization and participation, Tillich considered the first function of life, self-integration. Morality was the primary object of this consideration. Tillich was faced with the problem-question of limits--moral norms--what could provide life's ambiguity with the possibility of some resolution, some positive determination.

In terms of the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent but specifically in terms of the polarity of dynamics and form Tillich considered the second function of life, self-creativity. Culture was the primary object of this consideration. Tillich was faced again with the problem-question of limits--cultural values--again, what could provide life's ambiguity with the possibility of some resolution, some positive determination.

In both cases, without these limits, life is indeterminate and chaotic. It is faced with the threat of self-disintegration, the risk of self-destruction. In both cases life is ambiguous. In his considerations of morality and culture Tillich discusses the possibility of limits, norms, and values, yet in neither

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case is Tillich completely satisfied with the possible answers, the possible limits.

The Third Function of Life: Self-transcendence

In his consideration of the third function of life, the self-transcendence of life, Tillich's primary object of consideration is religion. The basic structure of the self-transcendence of life and of the experience of the transcendent is expressed in the third function in terms of the third polarity in the very structure of being, the polarity of freedom and destiny. Again, Tillich is faced with the problem-question of limits—absolute norms and ultimate values. Morality and culture may pose questions and demand some attempt at answers, but it is religion which poses ultimate questions and the possibility of a final resolution to life's ambiguity, the ultimate and absolute positive determination. In his consideration of the third function of life, Tillich uses a specific concept of the self-transcendence of life, where "life moves beyond itself as finite . . . "¹ Religion is concerned with life's ambiguity looking for resolution in the infinite, the ultimate, the unconditional, the absolute, the eternal. For Tillich the religious experience of the transcendent is expressed and can be analyzed in terms of some traditional religious categories: the holy, the sacred, the mysterious, the other, the sublime.

Tillich states that the movement for the third function of

life is vertical. "Life drives beyond itself as finite life."\(^2\) Here life is "driving toward the sublime."\(^3\) "The words 'sublime,' 'sublimation,' 'sublimity,' point to a going beyond limits toward the great, the solemn, the high."\(^4\) In the third function Tillich considers the supreme self-actualization of life.

Life, in degrees is free from itself, from a total bondage to its own finitude. It is striving in the vertical direction toward ultimate and infinite being. The vertical transcends both the circular line of centeredness and the horizontal line of growth.\(^5\)

Not only is the third function different from the previous two insofar as in this function life transcends itself as finite, but it is also different insofar as the specific self-transcendence of life and the specific experience of the transcendent manifest themselves in a completely different way. Hence in the third function of life, the method of investigation is quite different.

The question as to how the self-transcendence of life manifests itself cannot be answered in empirical terms as is possible in the case of self-integration and self-creativity. One can speak about it only in terms which describe the reflection of the inner self-transcendence of things in man's consciousness. Man is the mirror in which the relation of everything finite to the infinite becomes conscious. No empirical observation of this relation is possible, because all empirical knowledge refers to finite interdependencies, not to the relation of the finite to the infinite.\(^6\)

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 56.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 87. [Obviously, Tillich is opposed to those
Because Tillich's methodology is phenomenological, that is an analysis of what appears in human consciousness, his consideration of religion and the religious dimension of man is directed at religious symbols and language, images and mythic structures. According to Tillich, by analyzing and interpreting man's religious symbols and metaphors one can approach what is reflected in the mirror of human consciousness. What is reflected in the mirror of human consciousness and necessarily expressed symbolically and metaphorically is the religious experience of the transcendent, the sublime, or, as Tillich more traditionally states it, the experience of the holy. In analyzing this experience of the holy Tillich attempts his analysis of the third function of life and provides the foundations for his philosophical understanding of religion and the religious dimension of man.

The Experience of the Holy

According to Tillich, the experience of the holy is not the experience of any particular object arising in consciousness. He is not interested in finding a god or any other concrete holy being. For Tillich a definition of what is fundamentally infinite is a contradiction in terms and the beginning of the end to any experience of the holy, the beginning of positivistic and empiricist theories of knowledge which hold that man can know only what is quantified and measurable. There are aspects of human consciousness which a strictly scientific model of investigation cannot cope with.
superstitious and false limits. Instead, the experience of the holy is a way of experiencing the objects that do arise in consciousness; it is a way of experiencing life and being. The experience of the holy is qualitative.

This distinction is crucial for an understanding of Tillich's approach to religion and God and especially his analysis of religious language and symbolism. In his many attempts to interpret religious language and speech, Tillich often directs his thought against objectivist and literalist interpretations of the symbolic and metaphorical. He is a demythologizer, if myth is defined as man's attempt to objectify, reify, personify, and quantify qualitative aspects within human subjectivity.

For Tillich, to experience something in a holy way is to experience its greatness and its dignity, whether that something be some concrete object or whether that something be life itself, reality itself, or being itself. Religious speech is really concerned with attitude; its referent is not a "what" but a "how."

The experience of the holy is the experience of greatness:

The greatness of life in the sense of self-transcendence is qualitative. The great in the qualitative sense shows a power of being and meaning that makes it a representative of ultimate being and meaning and gives it a dignity of such representation.7

Such an understanding presupposes a particular metaphysical approach to reality, which on the philosophical level can be

7Ibid., p. 88.
described as a participation theory of being and on the theologi­cal level can be described as sacramental. Whatever is experi­enced as holy is experienced as pointing to deeper meaning and being.

To experience something as holy is not only to experience its greatness but also its dignity. Dignity signifies inviola­bility. From the inorganic to spiritual dimension, the dignity of whatever is experienced is set against its possible violabil­ity, its possible exploitation. Tillich's thought at this point is again quite similar to the thought of Martin Buber who expresses this distinction in terms of his famed I-Thou and I-It distinction as ways of experiencing anything. Like Buber, Tillich offers some cautious criticism of technology and, in terms of this aspect of the experience of the holy, describes how religion ideally functions to protect the inviolability of all things.

The self-transcendence of life in the specific sense is concerned with life moving beyond itself as finite. The experi­ence of the transcendent at this point is the experience of the holy, the experience of greatness and dignity. Opposed to the self-transcendence of life is the profanization of life and opposed to the holy is the profane.

8 Buber, I and Thou.

9 Tillich, ST, Vol. III, p. 90. [For example, as an histori­an of religions, Tillich comments how polytheism often did a better job in this regard than did monotheism. The one God has the tendency to deprive all things of their dignity and, therefore, rob reality of the very thing it should protect.]
The Profane, The Holy, and the Demonic

The profane resists the holy. What is experienced as profane is experienced as not representative, as "shallow," as not pointing to any deeper or ultimate being or meaning. It is experienced as disposable, usable, violable. The profane bespeaks the smallness of violability of all things, of life and reality in general.

Not only is the holy opposed by the profane from one direction, but it is also opposed from the opposite direction. Here Tillich adds a third key word to his basic vocabulary for an analysis of religion: the demonic. The demonic does not resist the holy, it distorts the holy by claiming for some particular thing the ultimacy and depth to which the particular should point. The demonic is the idolatrous, the deified.

This profane-holy-demonic model especially in terms of the greatness of life, provides Tillich with a methodological structure for a critical understanding and evaluation of religion and the religions of man. From one direction the holy is resisted by the profane and the greatness of life is reduced to smallness. From the other direction the holy is distorted by the demonic and the greatness of life is disfigured and becomes the tragedy of life.

From one direction greatness becomes smallness:

Only smallness, the fear of reaching beyond one's finitude, the readiness to accept the finite because it is given, the tendency to keep one's self within the limits of the ordinary, the average existence and
its security--only smallness radically conflicts with the greatness and dignity of life.\textsuperscript{10}

The smallness of life is the radical profanization of life. Life is not experienced as holy. As with the other experiences of the transcendent, the problem-question for Tillich is in terms of limits and limitations. The profane is a matter of false limits; it is restrictive and demeaning. It is a matter of over-limitation, a too-limited experience of life. This radical profanization of life, according to Tillich, is manifested in various empirical and positivist theories of moral value. In both cases, according to Tillich, what can be great is made small, if not petty and trivial.

From the other direction greatness becomes tragedy:

The classical example is the Greek hero, who represents the highest power and value within the group to which he belongs. Through his greatness he comes near to the divine sphere in which the fulfillment of being and meaning is seen in divine figures. But if he trespasses the limits of his finitude, he is thrown back upon it by the "anger of the gods." Greatness implies risk and the willingness of the great to take tragedy upon themselves.\textsuperscript{11}

If one asks what the guilt of the tragic hero is, the answer must be that he perverts the function of self-transcendence by identifying himself with that to which self-transcendence is directed—the great itself. He does not resist the demand to transcend his own greatness. He is caught by his own power of representing the self-transcendence of life.\textsuperscript{12}

The tragic is the elevation of something beyond its proper limits. Again, Tillich is faced with the problem-question of

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 94.
transcendence, the experience of limitation and limitedness. Whereas the smallness of life is a matter of over-limitation and restriction, the tragedy of life is a matter of non-limitation; the finite identifies itself with the infinite. It is not a matter of restriction but a matter of arrogance. The demonic distorts the holy; idolatry exemplifies this. Tillich's criticism of the tragic hero is similar to his criticism of humanism. Man becomes his own experience of transcendence. He becomes his own norm and source of value. Self-criticism is the only criticism left to him.

It can be stated at this point quite simply what is the ambiguity of life for the third function of life: To avoid the smallness of life, greatness must be attempted with the risk of tragedy. The great stands between the small and the tragic, between restriction and arrogance. In other words, the subhuman and the superhuman are both inhuman.

The religious experience of the transcendent, the experience of the holy as the experience of ultimate limitation and limitedness, is the possibility of a solution-answer to the problem-question posed by the ambiguity of life. For Tillich, man attempts to express, communicate, and even create the experience of the holy (the experience of the greatness and dignity of the mystery of life) with the things of religion: religious language and symbolism, ritual and liturgy, prophets and saints. With religion man can counteract his tendency to restrict life and make himself small. Religion and the things of religion can excite his imagination and focus his attention
upon the depth and richness of being. It can recreate a hopeless situation. Religion can offer promise in the face of despair.

With religion man can also counteract his tendency to live his life arbitrarily, i.e., without the norms and values which can protect him, his neighbor, and his world from the tragedy of unlimited power. Religion can accuse man when he tends to be presumptuous. With the things of religion man has the possibility of experiencing the holy, that is, the ultimacy, seriousness, and depth which can keep life great and dignified. With religion man can protect himself from himself; religion as ultimate promise and accusation provides man with the critical insights necessary to judge and appreciate his cultural activity and moral responsibility.

Religion, Culture, and Morality

Tillich's philosophy of religion attempts to avoid isolating religion and the religious dimension of man. Just as he refused to use the metaphor of "level" when speaking of life in order to avoid certain unnecessary discontinuities, so Tillich refuses to discuss religion as separate from culture and morality. The three interpenetrate in the spiritual dimension.

In accordance with their essential nature, morality, culture, and religion interpenetrate one another. They constitute the unity of the spirit, wherein the elements are distinguishable but not separable.13

13Ibid., p. 95.
Tillich defined morality as "the constitution of the person in the encounter with other persons." Morality is related to culture: "Culture provides the content of morality—the concrete ideals of personality and community, and the changing laws of ethical wisdom." Morality is related to religion: "Religion gives to morality the unconditional character of the moral imperative, the ultimate moral aim.

Tillich briefly states the relationship of the three functions of the spirit from the viewpoint of culture:

Culture, or the creation of a universe of meaning in theoria and praxis, is essentially related to morality and religion. The validity of cultural creativity in all its functions is based on the person-to-person encounter in which limits to arbitrariness are established. Without the force of the moral imperative, no demand coming from the logical, aesthetic, personal, and communal forms could be felt. The religious element in culture is the inexhaustible depth of a genuine creation. One may call it substance or the ground from which culture lives. It is the element of ultimacy which culture lacks in itself but to which it points.

Tillich states the relationship between the three from a viewpoint of religion:

Religion, or the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit, is essentially related to morality and culture. There is no self-transcendence under the dimension of the spirit without the constitution of the moral self by the unconditional imperative, and this self-transcendence cannot take form except within the universe of meaning created in the cultural act.

\[14\] Ibid., p. 95.
\[15\] Ibid.
\[16\] Ibid.
\[17\] Ibid.
\[18\] Ibid.
According to Tillich religion, morality, and culture have an essential unity. Religion, essentially stated, is a "quality of the two other functions of the spirit and not an independent function." Tillich's definition of religion as the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit "makes the image of the essential unity of religion with morality and culture possible . . . ." The self-transcendence of life is effective in the unconditional character of the moral act and in the exhaustible depth of meaning in all meaning created by culture. But existentially speaking, religion becomes an independent function. It is not just a quality of the other two. It has its own proper role and task, often in conflict existentially with culture and morality. "The three functions of life under the dimension of spirit separate in order to become actual."

As actual and independent, morality and culture separated from religion tend toward profanization or demonization. According to Tillich, morality as existentially separated from religion, loses its unconditional character. Religion provides the ground for moral responsibility. As Tillich rejected humanism for being incomplete, so he rejects secularism. "Morality and culture in existential separation from religion become what is usually called 'secular'." Culture, as existentially separated

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19 Ibid., p. 96.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 95.
23 Ibid., p. 97.
from religion, loses its ultimate character, its depth. Religion provides man with the experience of the holy which for Tillich, therefore, is most aptly described in terms of the ultimate and unconditional. The holy ultimately and unconditionally criticizes man's illusions, his reductionisms and his self-aggrandizements. Secular man stands ambiguously between smallness and tragedy; religion provides the possibility of an answer, a solution, a resolution, the possibility of unambiguous life.

The Ambiguity of Religion

As independent, that is, as actual and not merely as essential, religion is in a state of ambiguity. Religion responds not without ambiguity to the secular situation.

Out of this situation religion arises as a special function of the spirit . . . Religion as the self-transcendence of life needs the religions and needs to deny them. Basically they need to be denied because religion as a separate function shares a double ambiguity . . . ."24

In his analysis of religion, Tillich is faced with the relationship of religion as a function of life to the many expressions of religion in time and space: the religions. Tillich is faced with "an interpretation of the history of religion."25 The religious self-transcendence of life and the religious experience of the transcendent are existentially and, therefore, ambiguously expressed in the religions.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., pp. 94-5.
Tillich's interpretation of the history of religions is primarily made in terms of what he states is the "double ambiguity" of religion.

One can say that religion always moves between the danger points of profanization and demonization and that in every genuine act of the religious life both are present, openly or covertly.26

Religion is profaned when it is just another finite object, another cultural creation, just another institution or organization! Religion is demonic when it elevates the conditional or finite to unconditional or infinite validity. Tillich exemplified this by a criticism of dogmas, doctrines, rituals, and churches which tend to absolutize themselves.27

Tillich states that religion can profanize itself in two major ways: the institutional and the reductive.

Instead of transcending the finite in the direction of the infinite, institutional religion actually becomes a finite reality itself — a set of prescribed activities to be performed, a set of stated doctrines to be accepted, a social pressure group along with others, a political power with all the implications of power politics.28

There is another, the "reductive" way, based on the fact that culture is the form of religion and that morality is the expression of its seriousness. This fact can lead to the reduction to culture or morality . . . .29

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27 Ibid., p. 176. [Here Tillich briefly mentions his famous Protestant principle, a needed protest against this demonization tendency in all religion.]

28 Ibid., pp. 99-100.

29 Ibid., p. 100.
In reaction to the ways that religion profanizes itself, Tillich provides some definitions of religion more specific than his definition of religion as the self-transcendence of life under the dimensions of the spirit; he speaks of "the larger concept of religion as experience of the unconditional, both in the moral imperative and in the depth of culture." Also in reaction to this profanization, Tillich defines religion in a way which sets forth his understanding of religion as existentially an independent function and essentially as not independent.

Reductive profanization may succeed in abolishing religion as a special function, but it is not able to remove religion as a quality that is found in all functions of the spirit--the quality of ultimate concern.

Ultimate concern is one of the most famous phrases from Tillich's vocabulary; his definition of faith and religion! Humanism and secularism are faced with religious issues, with religious question-problems, when they must concern themselves with the foundations for morality and culture, when they must find some answer-solution to the problem-question of life's ambiguity: What are the limits, the limitations within which and towards which life's movement can be creative and not ultimately self-destructive? What are the possibilities for the unambiguous life?

Tillich ends his treatment of religion as the self-

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30 Ibid., p. 102.
31 Ibid.
transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit by stating the fundamental ambiguity of religion. Religion is not the answer-solution to the question-problem posed by the ambiguity of life. Religion is the possibility of an answer-solution: "for religion is the point at which the answer for the quest for the unambiguous life is received." Religion is the point where the quest is most clearly evident. But religion is not revelation, as philosophy is not theology. In accordance with his basic method of correlation, that is, a correlation of philosophical question and theological answer, Tillich ends the first division of Part IV of his Systematic Theology by distinguishing religion, where the ultimate questions are directly asked and where the ultimate answers are received, from revelation, the "answer for the quest for the unambiguous life."

If in religion, the great is called the holy, this indicates that religion is based on the manifestation of the holy itself, the divine ground of being. Every religion is the receptive answer to revelatory experiences. This is the greatness and dignity.

Although religion and its expressions are holy, religion is not unambiguously holy. Religion is not revelation. Tillich regards this ambiguity of religion especially in regard to religion's relationship to the other two functions of the spirit.

Religion in this respect (that is, the respect of man's possibility of receiving an answer) is unambiguous; the actual reception, however, is profoundly

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\[32\] Ibid., p. 104.

\[33\] Ibid., p. 99.
ambiguous, for it occurs in the changing forms of man's moral and cultural existence. These forms participate in the holy to which they point, but they are not the holy itself. The claim to be the holy itself makes them demonic.34

Religion is afflicted with this profound ambiguity and yet moral and cultural man cannot do without religion. "Religion is not the answer to the quest for unambiguous life, although the answer can only be received through religion."35

A Summary

In chapter three Tillich's definition of religion as the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of the spirit was analyzed. It was shown that his consideration of the third function of life and its ambiguity could be outlined in terms of two corresponding realities: 1) the self-transcendence of life specifically in the sense of life going outside of itself as finite and 2) the religious experience of the transcendent, the experience of the holy.

In analyzing the experience of the holy and its distortions, the profane and the demonic, Tillich once again indicated a central question or concern in his thought: a need for correct limits and determinations. The holiness of life without proper limits becomes the smallness of life and without limits at all becomes the tragedy of life.

For Tillich religion provides man with the possibility of

34Ibid., p. 104.
35Ibid., p. 106.
an experience of the holy. It is with religious language and symbolism that man attempts to express and communicate this profound experience. Yet religion cannot be a function separate from the other two functions of the spirit: culture and morality. Although inseparable from culture and morality, religion does have an independent function since morality tends to lose its unconditional character and culture tends to become shallow and lose its depth. Religion as the possibility of an experience of the holy provides man with the possibility of an unconditional, ultimate ground for moral and cultural norms and values.

Religion is not the holy, but provides man with the possibility of experiencing the holy and expressing it. Religion provides man with the ultimate questions, with the quest for unambiguous life. Religion like life itself is ambiguous. It often asks the wrong questions; it formulates its questions within some particular moral and cultural milieu, the received answer is never absolutely clear or infallible. Yet religion is where there is a possibility of receiving an answer.

For Tillich, the answer itself is a matter of revelation. An analysis of the answer, in this case, an analysis of unambiguous life, is a theological task. This is the task Tillich sets before himself in the second section of Part IV: the theological analysis of Spirit as the answer to the quest for the unambiguous life. Chapter three attempted to analyze Tillich's understanding of religion as the function of the spirit which forces man to face the question of ambiguous life and makes him receptive to some answer.
CONCLUSION

Anyone interested in contemporary thought about religion and the religious dimension of man cannot easily avoid the contributions made by Paul Tillich. He has been widely read and his thought has influenced many contemporary thinkers. Many have been his devoted pupils; many have evaluated and criticized his contributions to the philosophy of religion. Some of his vocabulary has become almost standard for anyone involved in speaking about religion and the things of religion.

Much of Tillich's work has been concerned with providing man with a vocabulary, often strange and untraditional, to express, understand, and communicate the hopes and experiences which underlie religious phenomena. Tillich focused much of his attention upon man's use of words, symbols, myths, and images to articulate his religious depths. But often, Tillich's own terminology and statements proved difficult to understand and somewhat confusing. This paper has attempted to analyze some of the principles, definitions, and terms of Paul Tillich's philosophy of religion. The attempt was made by focusing upon Tillich's thought in Part IV of his Systematic Theology. In this part of his monumental work Tillich considered religion and the religious dimension of man in terms of ambiguous and unambiguous life.
In the hope of presenting a systematic treatment Tillich in Part IV used the concept of life to organize and develop his thought. With the basic distinction of ambiguous and unambiguous life, Tillich hoped to find a starting point especially conducive for a dialogue between his own theological-religious perspective and the insights of modern science. By using this concept of life Tillich formulated some principles, definitions, and terms by which he hoped religion and the religious dimension of man could be more clearly evaluated, criticized, and appreciated by contemporary man.

This paper attempted to analyze this fundamental concept of life not so much to show how it functioned in Part IV as the organizing concept but so that some of the principles, definitions, and terms of Tillich's philosophy of religion could be better understood. In attempting to present its analysis this paper tried to make two important points.

First, Tillich's use of the concept of life and of the fundamental distinction of ambiguous and unambiguous life points to a fundamental and perduring concern in his thought. Man has tremendous potential especially in terms of personal growth and cultural activity, but his potential without creative limits can become tragic and self-destructive. Man needs limits, norms, values, ultimates and absolutes by which he can create, direct, organize, integrate his life. Without proper orientation human life is chaotic. Man is in need of order; he needs justification. Perhaps, Tillich's Lutheran heritage is most apparent in this concern. What was apparent
as the analysis of this paper was being made was that, in terms of life, Tillich was once again restating a fundamental and central concern in his thought.

Secondly, this paper attempted to provide a schema or structure to better understand Tillich's analyses in Part IV. By utilizing this schema of two corresponding realities (the self-transcendence of life and the experience of the transcendent), this paper attempted to clarify his analysis of the three functions of life (self-integration, self-creativity, and self-transcendence) and the three functions of the spirit (morality, culture, and religion). This schema hoped to provide a structure by which Tillich's analysis of religious transcendence and the religious experience of the transcendent could be better understood especially in relation to the transcendence and the experience of the transcendent in moral responsibility and cultural creativity.

By making these two points this paper attempted not only to make more intelligible Tillich's thought in Part IV of his Systematic Theology but also to make some contribution to a better understanding of Tillich's thought in general.

Paul Tillich was a Protestant Christian theologian and a philosophical thinker who attempted to share his faith insights and philosophical reflections with contemporary men. He wanted to speak about man's hopeful possibilities and about the deep foundations for those possibilities. Yet, Tillich was quite critical of this human potential. He saw man's needs for limits, norms, and absolutes. For Tillich, religion with
its language and symbols, with its heroes and prophets, provides man with ultimate limits. Religion can protect man from his own tendency to be victimized by his own illusions and self-delusions. It can provide what humanism and the secular world cannot, a criticism against the superficial, arbitrary, and illusory and a promise that can excite and recreate man in an otherwise threatening situation.

Paul Tillich's philosophy of religion was an attempt by a theologian and philosopher to describe some men's experience of criticism and promise in a situation mixed with opportunity and threat. This paper has attempted to analyze some of the principles, definitions, and terms of his philosophy of religion.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by William D. Carroll has been read and approved by members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

December 12, 1972
Date

Signature of Advisor