Paul Tillich
Systematic Theology, vol.1 parts I and II
Reason & Revelation, Being & God

Method:

- The method of correlation – the whole work is organized according to this rule. The structure of reason and our existential questions concerning experience of reason find answer in revelation. Existential questions concerning our being and its finity find answer in the being of God.

- Deeper analysis of the method of correlation. On the one side we have got existentialism. In case of Tillich it was grounded in late Schelling and Kierkegaard. (All theological statements are existential; they imply the man who makes the statement or who asks a question 269). Tillich accepts also the method of phenomenology – observing phenomena without presuppositions (for example page 106: methodological remark: theology must apply the phenomenological approach, or in the chapter entitled A phenomenological description [of God]. Tillich says there about ‘gods’ not about ‘God’).

  On the other side of correlation we have revelation (given in nature, history and word). It gives the beginning to theology. From the introduction we know that for Tillich the sources of theology are: Bible in the history of the church, denominational tradition and culture.

  Question: Is there a proper balance of all those sources in Tillich’s system? Are they all properly represented within his system?

- For Tillich philosophy plays an important role (see Introduction). His existentialism is a philosophical existentialism (e.g. the section on Being and the Question of God). Tillich’s correlation of reason and revelation is also a proof of this attitude.

- Tillich is critical towards positivism and empiricism (predominant in philosophy and philosophy of science in the first part of XX century). He seems to be also skeptical about the process thought.¹

- Tillich puts a strong emphasis on transcendence, the role of symbol and analogy (analogia entis) in theology. But at the same time he reinterprets understanding of some basic terms referring to God and revelation (e.g. God as being cannot be explain in terms of substance or causality – but only as a ground of the structure of being).

Questions:

- Historical events, groups, or individuals as such are not mediums of revelation. It is the revelatory constellation into which they enter under special conditions that makes them revelatory, not their historical significance. (120)

  The message of God is expressed in revelation. The media of revelation are carriers of the message which is transcendent itself (symbol, analogia entis). But both symbols and analogia entis mean real participation in the reality they refer to. (239)

  Revelation belongs to the a dimension of reality for which scientific and historical analysis are inadequate. Revelation is the manifestation of the depth of reason and the ground of being. It points to the mystery of existence and to our ultimate concern (117).

  Revealed truth lies in a dimension where it can neither be confirmed nor negated by historiography (science and other realms of knowledge) (190).

  Ok – but how is that these realms of knowledge challenge my faith!!!

  Once an event gets into revelatory constellation, it becomes a medium of revelation (a symbol), but at the same time it can be the object of historiography and science. Thus it is not insignificant what they say.

  In his cross Jesus sacrificed that medium of revelation which impressed itself on his followers as messianic in power and significance. For us this means that in following him we are liberated from the authority of everything finite in him, from his special traditions, from his individual piety, from his rather conditioned world view, from any legalistic understanding of his ethics. (…) Only as he who has sacrificed his flesh, that is, his historical existence, is he Spirit or New Creature. (134) What about Eucharist (special tradition), the prayer Our Father (his individual piety), Jesus’ teaching about the contingency and temporality of this

¹ Eg. Tillich criticizes process philosophy for sacrificing the persisting identity of that which is in process. He says that it sacrifices the process itself, its continuity, the relation of what is conditioned to its conditions, the inner aim (telos) which makes a process whole. (88) On the other place he says that: replacement of static notions by dynamic ones in philosophy of process does not remove the question of that which makes change possible by not (relatively) changing itself. Substance as a category is effective in any encounter of mind and reality; it is present whenever one speaks of something.
world (his conditioned world view), and ethics (Mt 5-7 cannot be understand legalistically). Is Jesus' body a medium of revelation – besides of crucifixion? What is revelatory in Jesus?

- **Page 151 Absolutism and relativism** – The words of Jesus and apostles – expressions of experience of the final revelation – are neither final nor absolute in themselves (stories, legends, symbols, paradoxical descriptions, theological interpretations). They are all conditioned, relative, open to change and additions. What are the constraints and rules of such changes?

- **God's being** Page 237-8 We use two categories to express relation between finite and infinite being. Tillich rejects both of them. To talk of God as a substance leads to pantheism (Spinoza). Christianity chooses causality (dependence and separation from God). But cause and effect include each other. If we use the category of first cause, causality is used not as a category but as a symbol. Thus difference between substance and cause disappears. God is the ground of the structure of being. He is this structure and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure. God must be approached cognitively through the structural elements of being-itself. Does using the category of substance in reference to God leads necessarily to pantheism? Why can't we use causality as a symbol? For Tillich emphasizes the role of symbol and analogy in theology?

- **Form and dynamics** Tillich rejects nonsymbolic, ontological doctrines of actus purus (form swallows dynamics) and God's becoming (God is subjected to the process which has the character of fate, is completely open to the future and is absolutely accidental) (247). For more than a century a decision has been made in favor of the dynamic element. The philosophy of life, existential philosophy, and process philosophy agree on this point. (...) but theology must balance the new and the old (predominantly Catholic) emphasis on the form character of the divine life. (248) Do you think Tillich managed to find this balance?

- **Theodicy** God risks giving us freedom. It is meaningful to speak of a participation of the divine life in the negativities of creaturely life. For Tillich it is the ultimate answer to the question of theodicy. (270) Is it really enough to say this?
Paul Tillich

Systematic Theology, vol.1 parts I and II

Part I – Reason & Revelation

1. Reason

A) The Structure of Reason

- The two types of reason: **ontological reason** (structure of mind which enables the mind to grasp and transform [shape] reality – German Idealism) and **technical reason** (capacity of “reasoning” – English Empiricism). Both types should be used in theology (this classifications shows the context of Tilich’s work).

- **Objective reason** (rational structure of reality) and **subjective reason** (rational structure of the mind). Different opinions on their relation: SR as an effect of OR and vice versa, mutual fulfillment, identity (monism). Theologian need not to take position – but should be aware of them – e.g. as he says about creation in terms of Logos or the presence of God in everything real (that would be the realm of OR).

- Reason in subjective and objective structures points to something which transcends it in power and meaning (substance, being-itself, ground, abyss, infinite potentiality of being and meaning). It’s the sign of the depth of reason. Therefore there is a place for myth, which is neither primitive science nor morality, but rather transcends them both and express ultimate concern.

B) Reason in Existence

- Existential experience tells us that our being is finite, self-contradictory and ambivalent. Such is the state of our reason.

- We are caught in various dichotomies, which may be overcome only by revelation: **autonomous and heteronomous reason** (overcome by theonomy – in which autonomous reason is united with its own depth), **static and dynamic elements of reason** (they appear in absolutism and relativism and can be overcome by revelation which is both absolute and concrete), **formal and emotional elements of reason** (formalism and irrationalism – overcome again in the quest for revelation).

2. Revelation

A) The Meaning of Revelation

- Theology should apply **phenomenological approach** (an existential-critical element in the choice of examples). It should also remember about “**mystery**”, which has a negative side (drives reason to ground and abyss), and a positive one (precedes subject-object relation, and becomes matter of experience through revelation). When it happens we can say about **ecstasy** – a state of mind in which reason is beyond itself. Finally there are **miracles** – astonishing events pointing to the mystery of being, without contradicting the rational structure of reality.

- Mediums of revelation are: **nature** (but not natural knowledge), **history** (Historical events, groups, or individuals as such are not mediums of revelation. It is the revelatory constellation into which they enter under special condition that makes them revelatory, not their historical significance.), **word** (word-Logos-Christ).

- Tillich distinguishes between original and dependent revelation. Knowledge of revelation can be communicated only between those who participate in the situation. It is **analogous and symbolic**!!! **Analogia entis** – without this analogy nothing could be said about God, it is the form of expression (but it’s not a way to create natural theology).
B) Actual Revelation
- Actual revelation is final revelation. Final revelation is Jesus Christ. Final means more than the last, it is decisive, fulfilling and unsurpassable, a criterion of all the others (those in the history of revelation in Old Testament and in the continuous revelation in the history of the Church). One more remark: history of revelation is the history of salvation.

C) Reason in Final Revelation
- For Tillich revelation overcomes conflicts of reason: autonomy and heteronomy (Jesus in unity with ground of being and his complete sacrifice to the content of revelation), absolutism and relativism (absolute character of revelation in Christ who does not give us absolute ethics, but examples which point to which is absolute), formalism and emotionalism.

D) The Ground of Revelation
- The term 'ground' oscillates and transcends cause (which keeps itself at a distance) and substance (which effuses itself into the effect). It is a mystery which appears in revelation and remains a mystery. Surprise surprise – it is God. The last chapter in this section offers 6 meanings of a term 'Word of God'.

Part II – Being & God

1. Being and The Question of God
   Introduction – existentialism – ontological question of being-itself arises in a “metaphysical shock” – the shock of possible nonbeing.
   A) The Basic Ontological Structure: Self and World
      - Being a part of the world enables man to encounter himself. Without its world the self would be an empty form. The world is bearer of objective reason. Self has subjective reason.
   B) The Ontological Elements
      - Individualization – when reaches the perfect form (a person) – participation also reaches the perfect form (communion). Without individualization nothing would be related, without participation there would be no relation (for Tillich this polarity solves the problem of nominalism – only individual has ontological realism [empirism and positivism] – and realism – there is an universal objective reality).
      - Dynamics and Form. Dynamics is the potentiality of being, which is nonbeing in contrast to things that have form. Tillich criticizes process philosophy for sacrificing the persisting identity of that which is in process. He says that it sacrifices the process itself, its continuity, the relation of what is conditioned to its conditions, the inner aim (telos) which makes a process whole. (81)
      - Freedom and destiny (indeterministic contingency and necessary mechanistic determinacy – spontaneity and law). Freedom is experienced as deliberation, decision and responsibility. Determination is myself as given, formed by nature, history and myself.
   C) Being and Finitude
      - Existentialism again. The question of being is produced by the ‘shock of nonbeing’. To talk of God as a ground of being one need to relate nonbeing dialectically.
      - Finite and infinite. The idea of limited being (finitude) leads to the idea of the idea of being-itself (infinity). In order to experience his finitude, man must look at himself from the point of view of a potential infinity. The power of infinite self-transcendence is an expression of man’s belonging to that which is beyond nonbeing, namely, to being-itself. Finitude in awareness is anxiety.
      - Finitude and categories (forms in which the mind grasps and shapes reality). Time Negative element tells us about transitoriness of everything, positive element points on creative character of temporal process. The anxiety concerning temporal existence is possible only because it is balanced by a courage which affirms temporality. Space Like time it unites being with nonbeing, anxiety with courage. To be spatial means to be subject to nonbeing. To have no final space means insecurity and anxiety, but it’s balanced by the courage that affirms the presence with its space. Causality It affirms the power of being by pointing on what is the source of being. But it has negative meaning too – the cause presupposes that a thing does not have power to be in itself. Courage ignores the causal dependence of finite. Substance It points to something static and self-contained (unlike cause). But substance is nothing beyond its accidents. Thus positive element is
balanced by negative. The question of God is the question of the courage that accepts anxiety.

- **Finitude is actual not only in the categories but also in ontological elements** (individualization – participation, freedom – destiny, determinism – indeterminism).
- The importance of the distinction between essence (nature of a thing) and existence (actuality of what is potential in the realm of essences). In Plato esse is more important, in Ockham existence, in Aristotle – has mediating attitude (actual is real, but the essential prevails in the power of being). Christian tradition is near to Aristotle.

### D) Human Finitude and the Question of God

- **God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore, to argue that God exists is to deny him.** (205) The destruction of the ontological argument is not dangerous. But the destruction of an approach which gives the possibility of the question of God – is dangerous. (208)
- The question of God must be asked because of the threat of nonbeing, which man experiences as anxiety. Cosmological arguments (from finite being to infinite) are forms of this question. Cosmological question of God is a question about that which ultimately makes courage possible.

### 2. The Reality of God

#### A) The Meaning of “God”

**A Phenomenological Description**

- **God** is the answer to the question implied in man’s finitude, the name for that which concerns man ultimately. **Gods** are substances, caused and causing, active and passive, remembering and anticipating in time and space, open to error, compassion, anger, hostility, anxiety. **They** have other characteristics in which finitude is radically transcended. **Ways** to participate in divine power: magic, person-to-person relation, mystical. **Gods** are superior in power and meaning, transcend cleavage between subjectivity and objectivity. **Holiness** is an experienced phenomenon. Holly = divine. These concepts are opposed by the unclean and secular.

#### B) The Actuality of God

- **God as Being** God is being-itself, ground of being. He is not merely a Being (subject to categories of finitude). He is beyond the contrast of essential and existential being (he is ‘prior’ to the split which characterizes finite being). The question of God’s existence can neither be asked nor answered. God is beyond this category. For Tillich it solves the question of transcendence (as power of being God transcends everything) and immanence (everything finite participates in being-itself).

### A Typological Description

- The ultimate can become actual only through the concrete – that is why the idea of God has a history – the development of the meaning of God (it’s contextualized by economic, political, cultural factors).
  - **Types of polytheism:** universalistic (places, things and persons are embodiments of sacred power; mythological (divine power concentrated in individual deities); dualistic (conflict between divine and demonic holiness).
  - **Types of monotheism:** monarchic (god-monarch rules over a hierarchy of inferior gods); mystical (divine ground and abyss); exclusive (elevation of a concrete god to ultimacy and universality without the loss of his concreteness and without the assertion of a demonic claim). **Trinitarian monotheism** is a qualitative not quantitative characterization of God – an attempt to speak of the living God in whom the ultimate and the concrete are united. **Philosophical transformations:** universalistic polytheism – monistic naturalism; mythological polytheism – pluralistic naturalism; dualistic polytheism – metaphysical dualism; monarchical monotheism – gradualistic metaphysics; mystical monotheism – idealistic monism; exclusive monotheism – metaphysical realism; Trinitarian monotheism – dialectical realism.
We use two categories to express relation between finite and infinite being. Tillich rejects both of them. To talk of God as a substance leads to pantheism (Spinoza). Christianity chooses causality (dependence and separation from God). But cause and effect include each other. If we use the category of first cause, causality is used not as a category but as a symbol. Thus difference between substance and cause disappears. God is the ground of the structure of being. He is this structure and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure. God must be approached cognitively through the structural elements of being-itself. (238)

Difference between sign and symbol (the later participates in the reality of that for which it stands) (239, 241). Analogy entis once again – as the only justification of speaking at all about God (not as the property of natural theology which search for knowledge of God proceeding from finite to infinite).

**God as Living** Term living God means that there is neither identity of being as being nor definite separation of being from being in him. God is the eternal process in which separation is posited and overcome by reunion. But it is only a symbol as there is no potentiality in God (he is pure actuality). And ontological system is not enough to bring a doctrine of God proceeding from finite to infinite.

Theology explain existential knowledge of revelation in theological terms, interpreting the symbolic significance of the ontological elements and categories. Man is in the correlation of revelation.

God and ontological elements. God is the principle of participation and individualization. (Criticism of classical theology – it made God a distant and completely perfect person – without universal participation). (245) Dynamics and form – divine creativity, God’s participation in history are based on dynamic element “not yet” – it is balanced by an “already” within the divine life. But it is again symbolic language. Tillich rejects nonsymbolic, ontological doctrines of actus purus (form swallows dynamics) and God’s becoming (God is subjected to the process which has the character of fate, is completely open to the future and is absolutely accidental) (247). For more than a century a decision has been made in favor of the dynamic element. The philosophy of life, existential philosophy, and process philosophy agree on this point. (…) but theology must balance the new and the old (predominantly Catholic) emphasis on the form character of the divine life. (248)

**God as Creating** Creation is not a story of an past event. It’s the basic description of the relation between God and the world. Creatio ex nihilo Tillich defends it as protection of Christianity against duality, and adds that it tells us that creation must take over ‘the heritage of nonbeing’. Creatio ex nihilo is the classical formula which expresses the relation between God and the world. Essence and existence In God they are one. In human not. Man is inside and outside of the process of the divine life. Fully developed creatureliness is fallen creatureliness. The creature has actualized its freedom in so far as it is outside the creative ground of the divine life. (…) Seen from one side, this is the end of creation. Seen from the other side, it is the beginning of the fall. Freedom and destiny correlates. The point at which creation and fall coincide is as much a matter of destiny as it is a matter of freedom. (255-6) Creation and categories The finite is posited within the process of divine life – so are categories. The divine life includes temporality, but it is not subjected to it (divine eternity includes and transcends time). There is no time before creation. The creature Man is imago and similitude Dei. He can be in communion with God. This power has been lost with fall (Protestantism – forgiveness in the center of one’s personality), or
weakened (Catholic position – grace is supernatural substance). Tillich mentions subhuman and superhuman beings (angels transcend the polarity of individuality and universality).

- **God sustaining creativity** Preservation is continuous creativity, in which God out of eternity creates things and time together. Modernity – world became self-sufficient. Today the foundations of this self-sufficient universe are shaken. Transcendence and immanence are spatial symbols. What does it mean in nonspatial terms? God is immanent in the world as its permanent creative ground and is transcendent to it through freedom. Both infinite divinity and finite human freedom make the world transcendent to God and God transcendent to the world. Tillich describes transcendence as freedom-to-freedom relationship. Holy is the ‘quite other’, but it is experienced as the otherness of divine ‘Thou’.

- **God’s directing creativity** The concept of ‘purpose’ should be avoided and replaced by ‘telos of creativity’. Providence is a permanent activity of God who directs everything toward its fulfillment (he is not omniscient spectator or planner). Tillich distinguishes between individual and historical providence. Theodicy God risks giving us freedom. It is meaningful to speak of a participation of the divine life in the negativities of creaturely life. For Tillich it is the ultimate answer to the question of theodicy. (270)

- **God as related** Tillich emphasizes God’s transcendence. *God is the creative ground of everything in every moment. In this sense there is no creaturely independence from which an external relation between God and the creature could be derived. (...) Every relation in which God becomes an object to a subject, in knowledge or in action, must be affirmed and denied at the same time. It must be affirmed because man is a centered self to whom every relation involves an object. It must be denied because God can never become an object for man’s knowledge or action. (...) The unapproachable character of God, or the impossibility of having a relation with him in the proper sense of the word, is expressed in the word “holiness”. (...) The holiness of God requires that in relation to him we leave behind the totality of finite relations and enter into a relation which, in the categorical sense of the word, is not a relation at all. (271-2)*

- **Tillich describes divine attributes. Omnipotence** It is more than power of the highest being – being that is able to do whatever it wants (it makes God into being alongside others). Omnipotence is the power of being that resists nonbeing in all its expressions and is manifest in the creative process in all its forms. With respect to time, omnipotence is eternity (the unity of remembered past and anticipated future in an experienced present, the creativity which leads into the future also transforms the past); with respect to space, omnipotence is omnipresence (God is not endlessly extended nor limited in space, nor space-less – his omnipresence is his creative participation in the spatial existence of his creatures); with respect to the subject-object structure of being, omnipotence is omniscience (nothing is outside the centered unity of his life, nothing is strange, dark, hidden, isolated, unapproachable).

- **God as love** We use this term as a symbol. Tillich distinguishes libido, philia, eros and agape (he says also about dilectio). Man’s love of God is the love in which God loves himself. God is a subject even if he seems to be an object. Tillich talks of God’s justice and love (judgment is an act of love which surrenders that which resists love to self-destruction, it is the work of love which rejects and leaves to self-destruction what resists it) and predestination.

- **God as Lord and Father** Unapproachable majesty of God the Lord is the sign of his power. In man’s relation to God who is holy love he calls him Father.