

# Paul Tillich's Theological Circle Between Fear and the Courage to Be

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**Summary:** *One of the attempts of establishing the contemporary ethics is Paul Tillich's very existential analysis and evaluation of the courage to be. In man's encounter or rather existential confrontation with the threat of nonbeing, revealed in the categories of space and time, determination and freedom, and especially in experiencing guilt, absurdity, fear, doubts, and other limitations of being, there is an opportunity to ask a question about the meaning of life and searching for sources of power in order to accept and surpass all these challenges. At the same time, Tillich uses this as an opportunity to ask questions about God, or rather about Being-itself, which provides the power to accept all tensions and anxieties of being. Religion thus means to accept being accepted. Based on this relationship or rather the acceptance of the Being-itself, the courage to be is born in a man, when he, realising and accepting his own finality, surpasses the notion and opens himself up to Infinity. This infinity of Being-itself is not something abstract but it realises itself as Love, from which man gets courage to live in love, power, and justice.*

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## Introduction

Our current living conditions open many different questions, particularly the following one: why does God allow the coronavirus pandemic? In these extremely difficult circumstances, when the sick and the elderly are particularly affected and when we feel that nothing can be changed

(only alleviated), we are faced with a question and a task: to think and experience how contemporary man can accept this incomprehensibility of life. According to our expectations, this should not occur at all, but at the same time, we can see that it cannot be simply wiped away from the world. Why does God allow so much suffering, especially for the weakest, the most innocent, the children ... why coronavirus? If we are being honest, we must admit that we cannot answer this question; despite all justifiable and sensible partial answers the question cannot be answered, as it escapes into the intangible mystery of God. And finally, man is a being who, with his heart and spirit, cannot be happy with only things he can know and understand, no matter how beautiful and exquisite they are (Richard 123-125).

»A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral!« (A. de Saint-Exupery). So how do we contemplate »this rock pile – the coronavirus pandemic«, the cathedral in ruins? Are we contemplating the image of a cathedral or are we increasing the chaos? Do we accept the inspiration from the Infinite Architect, the Creator of the planet Earth Cathedral and the infinite galaxies? All these questions, particularly the hardest ones, arising from the world around us – and in the time of the coronavirus pandemic, they are very close – are always questions about ourselves. With this article, I would like to demonstrate that in every man's essence, there is a hidden existential wish to »build a cathedral«, no matter how chaotic are the ruins of his life, be it in his personal life or world history (Schweiker 138-152). We will search for these answers with the help of Paul Tillich, who in his philosophical and theological writings talks about the vulnerability and fragility of man, and with his insight into the whole truth of man's existence, creates original foundation for the ethics of love, justice and power, or how to maintain the courage to be, despite the threats and the finality of being (Stegner 91-105). Tillich analyses the finality of man's existence, reflected in various limitations, from time to space, meaning, guilt, fear, and in the infinity of Being-itself searches for the foundations of the courage to be, which is demonstrated by love and justice. This makes Tillich extremely up-to-date with the current situation, as with his main emphasis on the courage to be, he lays the existential foundations for the ethics of resilience (Bayer 18-20).

### **1. Dialectic of being and nonbeing in the categories of finite being**

When Tillich argues the inevitability of man's encounter with the threat or nonbeing, he first points out the first form of this threat, which is nonbeing, appearing in man's finitude (Bayer 26-29). From the human point of view, nonbeing is experienced as a constant threat to being. Every threat of nonbeing anticipates the end. Tillich tries to argue the relationship between the finite and infinite. The infinite is in various ways related to the finite. The infinite points the way: »It points the

consciousness into the experience of its own infinitude which is hidden in it but it does not set the existence of the infinite being.« (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 190). Tillich stresses that infinitude is a demand, not a thing. This is the essence of Kant's solution of the antinomy between the finite and infinite character of time and space (Danz 173-189). As neither space nor time is considered a thing, and both are viewed only as a form of things, it is possible to surpass any finite time and any finite space. But man remains in the finitude and is himself the ordinary finite being, constantly threatened by nonbeing. For Tillich, the power of man's self-surpassing, which means the call for the infinite, is the expression of man's belonging to that which is beyond nonbeing, the being itself. The potential presence of the infinite (in the form of unlimited self-surpassing) is the negation of the negative element in the finitude. This is the negation of nonbeing. The fact that man is never satisfied with any level of the finite development and the truth that no finite thing can satisfy him points to the indestructible and lasting relation of everything finite, to the being-itself (Richard 123-133).

In the analysis of the finitude Tillich includes the psychological aspect and thus clearly shows how the various areas need to be interconnected. The finite in man's consciousness is fear. Similar to finitude, fear is an ontological quality, so not only something that is derived from something else. The situation in which fear appears needs to be separated from the fear itself. As an ontological quality, fear is omnipresent (as is finitude). Ontological fear is independent of any other special object by which this fear may be caused. It is only dependent on the threat of nonbeing which is identical to finitude. Therefore it is right to say that the object of fear is non-entity, the dialectical naught, which as such is not an ordinary object. Danger, pain, enemy, all these can be feared, but this fear can be conquered by action. Ontological fear cannot be disposed of by action, as no finite being can deny and conquer its finitude. Fear is always present albeit very often disguised. Therefore it can appear at any moment, even in those situations when there is nothing particular to fear (ontological fear cannot be overcome by psychotherapy as psychotherapy cannot dispose of the structures of finitude) (Schweiker 139-144).

Ontological fear is the source of anxiety in man. Tillich tries to penetrate the roots of this anxiety as any denial or running away from these fundamental facts leads to even greater anxiety and despair. Today we clearly distinguish between fear as relation to a certain object and fear as the consciousness of finitude. The first case includes a purely psychological happening and the second a fundamental existential happening. We need to be aware of the fact that ontological fear can never be denied (Bayer 31-35). We need to find its power, we need to enable it, as accepting this fundamental threat, the possibility of nonbeing, the consciousness of the tragedy of human existence, always on the edge, is the fundamental condition of meet-

ing Him who provides us with the power to accept all this. The main condition of meeting Him who is the source of our courage to be (Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* 191).

In the analysis of four main categories: time, place, causality, and substance, Tillich points out the negative and the positive elements not only from the outside; according to him these problems also need to be observed from the inside, particularly in the relationship with oneself (Danz 178-182). Every category expresses not only the relationship between being and nonbeing but also the relationship between fear and courage (Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* 192).

#### DIALECTIC OF BEING AND NONBEING IN THE CATEGORY OF TIME AND SPACE

For Tillich, time is the central category of finite beings. It has always represented one of the main problems in philosophy and it is an ever open question for every man (Taylor 193-202). Some philosophers have stressed the positive element in the category of time, others the negative one. Some have claimed that there is no such thing as the immediate present, that there is only a bridge between the past and the future. »But if someone claims that the present is only an illusion, it is claimed at the same time that being has been defeated by nonbeing.« (Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* 193). It is impossible to name the present as something illusory, as we can only discuss the past and the future in the light of the experience of this moment, the present moment (Richard 134-136). The purpose of Tillich's ontological analysis of this problem is to set the balance between the positive and the negative character of time. »Time is given. The receiver of the gift is given time as his (self)timing in the modalities of the past, the present and the future« (Klun 514).

As an experience of the momentary self-consciousness, time combines the fear of transitoriness and the courage of the self-confirming present. It is the continual threat of nonbeing, which is particularly clearly disclosed in the category of time, and definitely in the anticipation of one's own death. The fear that man is mortal is the experience of nonbeing from the »inside«. Fear is potentially present in every moment, it is part of the entire human being. It forms the body and soul and determines our spiritual life, it is part of the created human nature. It was present in Adam (therefore it is part of the very core of human nature) as well as in Christ (man's New Entity) (Bayer 20-29).

Biblical writings demonstrate deep fear caused by the fact that man is mortal. But we must always keep in mind that fear of transitoriness, fear of the fact that man is subdued to the negativity of time in which threat of nonbeing is expressed, is rooted in the structure of the being itself, that it is not an expression of a bad, deprived

structure. This fear concerns temporal existence and is only possible because it is enabled by courage which confirms its temporality (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 193). Without this courage, man would yield to this destructive character of time. Man confirms and accepts the present period through ontological courage which is as fundamental as the fear caused by the development of time. Courage is effective in all beings, but it is radically present only in man who is capable of anticipating his end, as he is the only one who is aware of his being threatened, the only one who can overcome this deepest fear (Schweiker 144-150). Man stands on the edge between past and future, the past which is no longer his own, and the future which he does not own yet. And man is capable of accepting this constant disunity, this constant existential threat of nonbeing, expressed in the category of time. Where does man get this courage? How come that man does not get lost in this destructive character of time? These questions place man before the fundamental fact that he must, if at all sincere to himself, ask himself about the final foundation of his ontological courage, as he is gifted with the power of this courage, whether he admits this or not. He is gifted with it, even when he, given the power of this courage, tries to deny the gift (Bayer 22).

The category of time is closely linked to the category of space, which is also inhabited by the special form of threat of nonbeing. The present period always includes man's presence. Presence means having something present. The present period, therefore, includes space. Time creates the present period through its connection to space. In this connection, time reaches its dead end. Similar to time, the category of space connects being to nonbeing, fear to courage. To be means to have space. Every being tries to acquire its own space, which means having space in the physical sense of the word: home, social environment, a space on the scale of values and on the scale of meaning (Thatamanil 288-303). Not having space means nonbeing (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 193). Acquiring space in all reality is an ontological necessity, which is the consequence of the spatial character of finite being, the quality of created goods.

But spatiality of every being also includes subjection to nonbeing. No finite being possesses space which is only his own. Finitude, therefore, means having inaccurately defined space, it means that man must lose every space. The threat of nonbeing cannot be solved by escaping into time without space. Without space, we can discuss neither presence nor the present. And finally, the loss of space includes the loss of temporal authenticity, whereas the loss of the present means the loss of being (Tillich, *The Systematic Theology 1*, 194).

Tillich stresses that the main uncertainty is having undefined and inconclusive space. Finitude involves a threat concerning a secure space. In man, there is a hid-

den longing for creating a conclusive space. This longing was particularly predominant in various periods and certain social and psychological situations. People want to establish systems of certainty and reliability in order to protect their space. To a point, this means they would like to suppress their fear of fundamental threat and instability, which is particularly demonstrated in the anticipation of the basic »spacelessness« which is already included in finitude. Human fear, deriving from the constant threat of losing one's space, is only possible on the basis of the courage to be, accepting the present as well as space. Courage is faced with the fact that »not having a space« actually becomes a threat and this ontological threat is accepted, »and in this acceptance of his uncertainty finds his certainty« (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 195). This fact, however, urgently calls for asking the fundamental question: how is such courage possible? How can a being who cannot be without space accept both the initial and final spacelessness, which the being anticipates in the present moment? (Schweiker 144-147).

#### DIALECTIC OF BEING AND NONBEING IN THE CATEGORY OF CAUSALITY AND SUBSTANCE

In the category of causality Tillich also indicates the dialectic of being and nonbeing. This category stresses the power of being by emphasizing that which is before the being or event as its source. If something is causally explained then its reality is confirmed (Taylor 197-205). The power of its resistance to nonbeing is enabled. To search for the causes means to search for the power for their courage to be. Apart from the affirmative side, causality also has its negative contents. The question of the cause of a certain being clearly demonstrates that no final being is a cause of itself. The being is not self-sufficient (Thatamanil 298-301). The question: »Whence?« is one of the fundamental questions, asked by children and philosophers alike. Fear, caused by causality, is the awareness of man that he does not exist out of, from, or in himself, that he is not an absolute being. His existence is something accidental, it is not essential. All this clearly shows that man is the victim of nonbeing (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 196). The accidental, which »threw« man into being, can just as well »throw him out« of being. From that point of view, accidentality and causality are one and the same thing. The fact that man is determined by causality makes his existence accidental from the point of view of himself. The fear in which he becomes aware of this situation is the fear which derives from the necessity of his existence. Would it be possible that he was not there, that he did not exist? Why, therefore, does he exist? Why should he keep on existing? There is no rational answer to this question (Danz 177-181). Courage is demonstrated by man accepting this situation, not looking for its cause in something final and thus lying to himself. Without this courage, life would not be possible at all. But

this brings us back to our fundamental question: how is courage, despite the fundamental threat of nonbeing, demonstrated by the category of causality, at all possible? How can the being, dependent on causality and its accidentality, accept his dependence and at the same time ascribe to himself the necessity and self-reliance which oppose this threat of nonbeing? (Schweiker 138-152).

The fourth category, demonstrating this dialectic of being and nonbeing in the final to be, is substance. As opposed to causality, substance implies some suppositions, a founding current of all that which appears on the outside; something that is at least relatively static and in itself. We also need to stress the meaning of accidentalities which receive their existential power from the substance, to which they belong. As new views of the being appear, which stress the more dynamic side of viewing the being, Tillich also distinctly advocates dynamic ontology.

Everything that is final by nature includes fear in itself in order to lose its substance. This fear applies to constant change as well as to the final loss of substance. »Every change reveals the relative nonbeing of that which changes. The changing reality lacks substantiality, the power of being, this fundamental resistance to nonbeing.« (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 197) The more man admits his helplessness, the more he accepts this as a fact that cannot be ignored, the more open he is to search for power, the more capable of asking the fundamental ontological question about the source of the power of his existence. Dialectic of the relationship between being and nonbeing, deriving from the finitude of a certain being, is expressed by four categories. All these categories in the end bring us to the fundamental question about the source of courage of the final being who actually enables this constant threat by the dialectical nonbeing. The fact that this courage is at all possible clearly opens and demands the question about God, who is Being-itself. The existential encounter between man and the entire depth of his being, the entire tragedy and threat of his being, and the acceptance of this threat, is in itself proof of the courage to be whose source is in the fundamental power of being, which is being-itself (Richard 134-137).

#### DIALECTIC OF BEING AND NONBEING IN ONTOLOGICAL ELEMENTS AND THE FEAR OF GUILT AND NONSENSE

The analysis of being and nonbeing in ontological elements is just as important in order to demonstrate man's threat and anxiety of being (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 197). It includes three basic polarities between the following elements: polarity between individualization and participation; other two elements, constituting this polar pair, are dynamics and form; and the third polar pair are freedom and determinacy (destiny). For Tillich, the analysis of ontological elements represents

one of the fundamental questions of existential analysis of the final and threatened being. In these polarities, there is a tension that causes fear of loss of the ontological structure through the loss of one or the other polar element. Fear of nonbeing is what we essentially are. This is fear of nonbeing which appears in the duality of existence. The destruction of the real ontological tension means the destruction of the ontological structure.

The first element of the ontological structure in which Tillich indicates the dialectic of being and nonbeing is the polarity between individualization and participation and the constant tension between them. On the one hand, there is self-confidence in which the threat of loneliness is hidden, the loss of the world and community. On the other hand, there is participation which means existing in the world but that poses a threat of possible total collectivisation, loss of individuality and subjectivity, and loss of self-confidence, which is transformed into a part of all-embracing integrity. Man as final being is always aware of the double fear (Taylor 198-200). He is aware of bipolarity and his constant task remains to search for real harmony between the two poles, which also means the creative contradiction and overcoming the threat of nonbeing. The tension between final individualization and final participation is the main cause of many psychological and sociological problems which is why the meaning of this question needs to be dealt with over and over again. Philosophy has emphasized many times the problem of loneliness and its relation to existential loneliness. It has also indicated the question of fundamental belonging and its relation to the basic self-denial of collectiveness. The merits of existential thought in all periods, particularly from Pascal on, is that it has rediscovered the ontological foundations of the tension between loneliness and belonging (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 199).

The second element of the fundamental ontological structure in which dialectic of being and nonbeing can be seen is the polarity between dynamics and form. Dynamics leads in the direction of the form in which being actually exists and has the power to resist nonbeing. At the same time, this dynamics is threatened as it can lose itself in a rigid form, but if, on the other hand, it moves forward too far, it can get lost in the chaos, which means the loss of both: dynamics and form. Man in a way feels threatened by a certain form in which his vitality can get lost in rigid finitude, where this threat by nonbeing is particularly present, whereas, on the other hand, man feels threatened by the possibility of chaotic formlessness in which any vitality and attitude towards a certain goal is lost (Schweiker 144-149).

The polarity between freedom and determinacy (destiny) is the third element of the ontological structure in which Tillich indicates the dialectic of being and nonbeing. Man is always in danger of keeping his freedom based on resisting certain de-



terminacy and vice versa, trying to keep certain determinacy based on renouncing his freedom (Bayer 34). In the history of philosophy, there are two extremities to this problem: determinism, which does not see that every affirmation of determinism as truth assumes freedom of decision between truth and nontruth, and indeterminism on the other hand, which does not see that every capability of making a decision assumes personal structure which includes determinacy (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 200).

The fact is that man always lives in this danger of losing one pole and thus losing the other as well. The loss of determinacy means the loss of meaningful existence (Thatamanil 299). Determinacy is not something nonsensical, it means a certain necessity that is connected to sense. The threat of possible nonsense is both individual and social reality. Our present situation is molded with deep and horrible nonsense. The question: »What for?« has been cynically done away with. Freedom has been absolutely separated from any determinacy (Sartre). But absolute freedom in the final being becomes arbitrariness and a fall beyond the biological and psychological level. The loss of a sense of determinacy (a certain destiny) means the loss of freedom. Thus Tillich shows that finality means a possibility of a loss of the ontological structure, along with the self. To be finite means to be threatened. This threat is only a possibility and not a reality. The fear of finitude is not the despair of self-destruction. (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 201)

The question of human existence, alienated from its essence, and the whole tragedy of being calls for its power, the power of being. To encounter the entire reality of existence, to ask a question about one's existence, to realize one's own helplessness: this is the fundamental condition to meet the foundation of the power of our existence, to meet Him, who is Being-itself, who is the only reason why we are aware of the tragedy, and the only power that in the tragedy of this threat by nonbeing our whole existence can be formed into one single existential call, the call for New-being. In this context, Tillich uses the concept of anxiety which to him means a certain condition in which being is aware of its possibility of nonbeing. The awareness of the possibility of nonbeing is not an abstract realization, a purely epistemological question or knowledge, but a deep existential happening in which nonbeing is part of our personal existence (Richard 130-132). A hopeless situation, the awareness of threat makes man listen to the word, spoken by Another, which has the power to transform his despair into the courage to be (Mondin 133-135).

In all dimensions of man's threat by nonbeing, of experiencing anxiety and fear, there appears an urgent and new question of shaping the ethics of resilience, or rather, how to accept a demanding situation as a challenge and a possibility of the courage to be. Where to search for power so that man could face all challenges of

life, all fears and anxieties, where to find reasons and courage, so that any storm of life could mean a new possibility of the courage to be, no matter how the tree of our life bows down and resists all pressures, but becomes more powerful, its roots stronger and deeper? (Danz 179-181).

## **2. The courage to be, with all its fears of finitude, is born in our relationship (faith) to the Being-itself**

Courage is the self-affirmation of being despite nonbeing. Courage always includes risk, it is always under threat from nonbeing, which is demonstrated by the fear of loss of self, by becoming a thing in the entirety of things, or losing itself in a world of meaningless relationships. Courage needs the Power of being, the power which transcends nonbeing, which man experiences in the fear of finitude, guilt, and, what is worst, the fear of nonsense. The courage which seizes these types of fears in themselves needs its roots in the power of being, which is greater than the power of an individual or the power of the final world. The fact is that every courage to be is from the outside, or perhaps secretly, rooted in religion, in very different forms of philosophical and theological searches. From the religious point of view, the final being can only be understood with the help of its foundation, which is the foundation of the being-itself. Thus for its own reason, the being requires being-itself, since, consciously or unconsciously, every being is rooted in it (Stegner 95-99). The thing is that sometimes this religious rootedness is hidden whereas in other cases it is entirely obvious; in some places, it is buried deeply, and in some, it is just beneath the surface. It is essential that it is never completely absent (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 152-180). Everything that is has its foundation in being-itself and every person is at certain moments aware of this partaking, particularly when it feels threatened by nonbeing (Schweiker 145-149).

Tillich stresses that the most important thing is trust in accepting one's acceptance, despite the awareness of our sinfulness. Trust has its roots in our personal and completely straightforward certainty of God's forgiveness and mercy. From this point of view, the courage to be means to accept God's mercy which is not abstract but the experience of our fundamental relationship to God. Our own approval despite this threat by nonbeing in the fear of sinfulness presupposes a relationship to something which is beyond an individual. This is the fundamental condition of accepting oneself as no self-acceptance is possible if an individual is not accepted in interpersonal relations (Mondin 135 and Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 160). Even if someone is personally accepted, he still needs self-surpassing courage to accept this acceptance. To be accepted by God, his forgiveness, his redemptive act is the only and final source of the courage to be (Bayer 35-37). For Tillich, man's own power or someone else's limited power cannot be transformed into a radical

and unlimited threat to nonbeing which man feels in moments of helplessness and guilt. Encounter with God means surpassing safety and surpassing eternity. You are accepted by God and it is up to you to accept this acceptance (Stegner 100-102).

#### FAITH MEANS: ACCEPTING TO BE ACCEPTED

Tillich discusses faith as dignity, as a position of being, accepted by being-itself. The courage to be is an expression of faith and faith can be exercised through the courage to be. Faith is an experience of the power of accepting one's own acceptance (Schweiker 138-152). For Tillich, faith is not a theoretical affirmation of something unclear but means existential acceptance of something transcendental. Faith is not only an opinion but a way of life that can be argued and explained with the help of being which transcends everything and gives its power to everything. On the other hand, Tillich very clearly opens the fundamental question of doubt and nonsense which next to finitude and sinfulness represents the third type of threat of nonbeing (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 159-163). For Tillich, this is one of the most exciting and burning questions. Namely, the fear of nonsense and doubt undermine that which is still firm in the fear of finitude and sinfulness. In the fear of guilt, doubt has not yet undermined the certainty, the fundamental responsibility (Thatamanil, 291). Man is threatened, but not completely helpless. How to overcome this fear of nonsense and doubt, which courage is capable of that, and where are its roots? Can faith resist the power of nonbeing in its most radical form? Can we speak of faith that can exist along with doubt and nonsense? This leads to the last and fundamental question: how is the courage to be at all possible despite this threat of nonbeing, as all ways of creating are disabled by the experience of fundamental imperfection? If both life and death are meaningless, and if being has no more sense than nonbeing, what are the foundations of the courage to be? (Richard 135-137).

Accepting nonsense and relativity of everything is in itself a sensible act. This is an act of faith. This is why the person who accepts his existence despite his sinfulness and the awareness of guilt cannot remove this threat. He is still threatened by nonbeing (Taylor 199-201). But he has accepted his acceptance from being-itself from which he receives the power to overcome fear. According to Tillich, accepting one's own acceptance is called absolute faith (Stegner 91-105). This is the fundamental step a man can perform. Yet he is always in danger to act differently. To make himself the centre of the world and attract to himself everything that has been created. This is the fall of man described in the first chapter of Genesis; for Tillich, this is the fundamental nonbelief; the desire for self-salvation or rather denial of any need for salvation; an escape from the encounter with the triple threat of nonbeing. Opposite all this Tillich appoints absolute faith (Chapey 891-910) (Richard 133-137).

According to Tillich and his Systematic Theology, the basic characteristics of absolute faith which can overcome or rather accept this threat of nonbeing are as follows: the first element is the experience of the Power of being, which is present even in the most radical manifestations of nonbeing (Bayer 18-37). The second element of absolute faith is the dependence of the experience of nonbeing on the experience of being, and the dependence of the experience of nonsense on the experience of meaning. Thus in a situation of fear man can possess enough power to make despair even possible. The third element of absolute faith is the acceptance of the fact that one's existence is accepted. The experience of nonsense and unimportance includes the experience of »the Power that accepts«. To accept this power of acceptance is the religious answer of the final being (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 170). The endless foundation transcends all final support, endless support cannot be in the order of final support, as in that case, it would no longer be endless support. This Tillich's thought could be expanded and said that man's actual support is the fact that nothing can be our support, there is nothing we can stop by as that would imply idolatry. The relativity of everything final, the finitude of all earthly support, is the greatest meaning. The fact that there is nothing to hold to, that there is no support, this is the real support, as one's support is endless, hence the courage to be, to let go, to relativize any final support. This is the reason why Tillich emphasizes how this is one of the fundamental conditions for the encounter with being-itself, the previous encounter with the fundamental threat of nonbeing, the fundamental fragility of everything final, which in the present circumstances is extremely important; the fact that the coronavirus pandemic has »stopped the world« makes us experience all our helplessness. What if this is an opportunity and a challenge to find more solid foundations of the courage to be, how to co-exist in this particular world, in these particular circumstances, and search for the endless foundations of being? (Danz 180-183)

#### ACCEPTANCE OF ONE'S BEING THREATENED AND ONE'S FINITUDE AS A CHALLENGE TO SEARCH FOR THE INFINITE, AND FAITH

Nonbeing belongs to being, they cannot be separated. It is nonbeing that leads being out of its loneliness and encourages it for the dynamic affirmation of itself (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 173). Tillich wants to demonstrate how nonbeing yearns for being-itself as power and love. Nonbeing turns God into a living God. Without this »No« which man needs to overcome in himself, in his createdness, the Divine »Yes« would be anachronistic to him. The courage of final being has its roots in the power of being-itself which conquers nonbeing. According to Tillich, there is no need for man to be aware of this source of the power of being. In the act of the courage to be, the power of being-itself is effective within us whether we ex-

PLICITLY discover it or not. Every act of courage is a manifestation of the depth of being, the foundation of being and his courage to be. »Not the theoretical arguments, it is the courage to be that discovers the true nature of being-itself.« (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 175) The affirmation of our being acquires its power in being-itself. This is the deepest reason for the existence of God. If we are aware of this fact we consciously accept our own acceptance; if we are not aware of it we are, according to Tillich, still entitled to the power of being-itself. Therefore the courage to be has the revealing power, it is the key to being-itself, it means the way to him who enables this courage, it is the fundamental reason and power of our existence. Hence the courage to deny the source of this power is only possible in the power of this exact given power; even the denial of the foundations of being, any doubt or search, is an expression of the courage to be, that courage which has its roots in being-itself which is the foundation of everything that is (Schweiker 144-147).

For Tillich, faith has never been just »one of those things«, not something separated or defined, an event that could be isolated or described. It is always »moving in, and under other conditions of man. The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.« (Tillich, *The Courage To Be* 183) Forming the real relationship to the foundations of being has always been stretched between two poles: the tendency in the direction of the concrete and the tendency in the direction of the transcendental. The absolute element of man's last foundation, along with everything concrete, requires the absolute intensity of infinite tendency (Kierkegaard) in a religious relationship (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 211-230). This oscillation between the absolute and the concrete element reflects the human situation, his concrete threat by nonbeing, as man asks the question about God in concrete situations and searches for the answer to the fact of his finite existence (Stegner 103-105).

When discussing the relationship to being-itself, according to Tillich, we cannot pass the concept of sacred. The teaching about God that does not include the category of sacred is not only unsacred but also unreal. Without the category of sacredness, God can turn into a secular object and the existence of such God is rightly denied by naturalism (Richard 129-131). On the other hand, Tillich emphasizes the second, no less important fact, that every teaching about the sacred, not linked with the teaching about the Divine, transforms the sacred into something ascetically emotional (Schweiker 148). Sacredness is the quality of that which is man's last foundation: only what is sacred can provide man with the final answer and only that which is man's final answer in his existential situation can include the quality of sacredness. Tillich emphasizes that the sacred has become more something like justice, a moral quality, something ascetic. God's commission to be sacred as God is sacred has been explained from the moral point of view. Since moral perfection

is an ideal and no longer a reality, the idea of true sacredness has been disappearing from both inside and outside the religious sphere (Stegner 99-101). The true meaning of sacredness has been rediscovered in the liturgical praxis and various theological views, but in folk linguistics, sacredness is still very often identified as moral perfection (Tillich, *Systematic Theology 1* 230), which of course fundamentally limits the meaning of sacred.

### **3. Faith (accepting to be accepted) as the source of power, justice, and love**

At the end of this discussion, based on the analysis of the encounter with our existence being threatened, and the search for hope in faith, yet accepting the fact that we are accepted, we will try to find answers to the question of what all this means for today's everyday life in a certain social situation and in specific circumstances. For Tillich, it is of key importance that man is accepted by being-itself, and it is up to man to accept and acknowledge this acceptance. Relationships between humans require a solid foundation which is why Tillich tries to reach the roots of any relationship. Ontological discussion on the concepts of love, power, and justice tries to reach the depths of their initial meaning and thus re-evaluate them, place them there where they actually belong (Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* 1-18). In this way, man's faith, the fact that he accepts being accepted, is very concretely realized, and at the same time acquires distinctively communal dimensions in a specific social situation. »To be liked by people and God is the hidden essence of any religion. A religion which does not follow its inner essence is not a religion.« (Stegner 97-98). A decision for truth, made by the biblical monotheism, is a decision for the fact that biblical faith is purified and adjusted to its real purpose and goal« (Petkovšek 634) (Thatamanil 296-300).

#### **ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT OF POWER, JUSTICE, AND LOVE**

There is endless relevance in Tillich's argument in which he particularly stresses that justice, power, and love are intrinsically linked and complementary, which is why any emphasis on only one of these aspects is wrong and leads to irregular relationships (Taylor 189-208). Love is the vital power of every living being, the motor, leading from separation to renewed unification. Renewed unification presupposes the separation of that which fundamentally belongs together (Danz 187-189). But it is wrong if separation is ascribed the same ontological value as renewed unification. The foundation of every separation is previous unity. Unity includes itself and separation, similarly as we can only discuss nonbeing on the basis of being. It is impossible to unify something which is fundamentally separated. Without the final fundamental original belonging, we cannot discuss the relation between finite be-

ings and their relation to the being-itself. Thus love does not mean a unification of unfamiliarities but renewed unification of something estranged, and estrangement, despite the negativity of this concept, presupposes the original unity (Schweiker 149-150). The power of love is not something which is added to the finite reality, it is the constitutive element of all life, it means the renewed unification of that which at this moment is egocentric, individual, but originally belongs to each other and complements in co-existence. It is a personal happening, unity in every individual; the greater the unity in the individual, the more this person will be open for the relationship with the other, and the less space there will be for fear of nonbeing, appearing in the estranged being (Richard 126-127). This personal happening is closely linked to interpersonal encounters; they enable one another. Love binds individuals, it is the foundation of unity, the way towards original unity which was destroyed by man's estrangement from its own essence (Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* 18-35).

For Tillich, to be means the power of being that can resist the threat of nonbeing, and that appears in the finitude of human existence. Self-confirmation of being despite nonbeing is an expression of the power of being. Life is an encounter of various beings and thus an encounter of various powers, and various individuals. How are love and power linked in these relationships? For Tillich, the power of being is not a dead identity, it is a dynamic process in which constant separation and renewed unification are present at all times (Bayer 27-28). Love is the foundation and not the negation of power. Love and power are a unified happening, separation and renewed unification, the constant threat of nonbeing which being has to overcome incessantly. The intrinsic power of being, his final freedom, constant risk and threat of nonbeing, all these reflect the tragedy of human existence on the one hand, and on the other its greatness, for it means growth, it means live happening, the way which the estranged being, the final power of existence, takes to return to the origins of its being, to its own essence (Taylor 192-199).

But then another question arises: »When can the power of being be in conflict with love?« This happens when power prevents the purpose of love, the renewed unification of something separated, the constant renewal of communities. Love fights against the final separation, independence based on self-sufficiency, thus against everything that opposes the renewed unification in itself as well as the renewed creation of human relations of unity which are based on the fundamental relationship towards being-itself (Richard 131-133). Therefore any form of separation which wants to remain only a separation is against love as it wishes to build on its own power. This means the decay of life, it means surrendering to nonbeing. Emphasizing the power of individuals in human relationships means the absolutization of the moment of separation. If there is no love calling for renewed unification, for the

fundamental unity of these individual powers, which has its foundation in being-itself, then separation leads to absurdity which surrenders to the threat of nonbeing in its denial of the real threat of resisting it (Schweiker 144-150). The power of existence in relation to being-itself does not get lost but reaches its greatest power in the admission of one's helplessness which is the true power of helplessness of human existence. Unification with being-itself means unification in itself and this unity in itself is the foundation of the new quality of human relationships which in love leads to renewed unification and new unity (Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* 35-54).

### JUSTICE AS A FORM OF POWER AND LOVE

According to Tillich, love and power are closely linked to justice. Everything that exists has its form which, at the same time, it constantly outgrows. It is self-surpassing which happens in forms that are not thoroughly defined as a thorough definition would imply determinism. Unthorough definition of laws of growth of being means risk to every being: this growth has to be in the direction of the fulfillment of being, but in its final freedom being can decide against that. Justice is the form in which the power of being is self-realized, which is why this is in accordance with the dynamics of power. Justice gives form to the encounter of two beings but justice cannot define this relationship of the encounter of two powers in advance. Every moment in itself hides several possibilities, every relationship involves risk and man's vulnerability. False, unjust relation of two powers can destroy life (Taylor 189-208). Every act of justice requires risk and audacity (Thatamanil 299-301). We cannot apply certain principles to a certain situation in advance, in a mechanistic, informalistic way, but nevertheless, there are principles of justice that express the form of being in its generality. The foundation of justice is love. If love implies a tendency toward a renewed unification of something separated, then justice is the form of this tendency, this movement. The ontology of love is Tillich's fundamental answer to the question of justice. As justice is a form of renewed unification of something separated, it needs to include both: separation (uniqueness, individuality), without which there is no love, and renewed unification, in which love is realized. Justice is a form of the power of being, a form of love. If love does not include justice it gets lost in a confused self-resignation which destroys the one who loves and the one who receives this love (Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 54-72).

Love does not do more than what is required by justice but it is always love which remains as the last principle of justice. Love unites again, justice safeguards that which should be unified. Justice in its final meaning is creative justice and creative justice is a form of love. The ontological definition of power, justice, and love is the foundation of Tillich's argument of ethics (Richard 123-127). Every personal



encounter has its roots in these fundamental facts and the awareness of these facts must provide new quality and a new argument for ethical relationships. And all this needs to be discussed again and again, as man is in great danger of surrendering to dangerous scepticism, as »the form of man which prevails in modern literature, art, film, and theatre is in most cases very negative and pessimistic. What is great and beautiful has been questioned from the very beginning. As if man would like to see himself only in the negative light. In this context it seems that discussing morality, happiness and inner joy is close to heresy and self-denial« (Jamnik 280).

### **Final thoughts**

The specific situation in which humanity has found itself in the covid pandemic presents a serious challenge for us to again ask the question about the meaning of our existence in a new way, to ask ourselves how we will survive all those fears and threats. In my opinion, it is of vital importance to take this situation seriously and not to run away from the necessary confrontation with our reality, as this would only produce greater fears and anxieties (Thatamanil 288-303). The ethics of resilience is formed by realizing one's finitude and limitations, and at the same time by the even more important fact that in every human being there are traces of the Infiniteness, the traces of the Absolute being which presents man with the courage to be with all its fears, and at the same time with the freedom to accept his acceptance from both Divine love and his fellow man (Danz 185-188). This is no longer an abstract theoretical happening but it should, if really true and sincere, reflect in the personal life story of every individual and in the actual social circumstances (Stegner 100-104). An ethical act is a way of life, resilience, in which the courage to be is realized in love and justice, thus, in a new quality of social relationships and in confrontation with a great many hard questions of human existence.

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## TEOLOŠKI KRUG PAULA TILlichA IZMEĐU STRAHA I HRABROSTI BITI

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**Sažetak:** Jedan od pokušaja utemeljenja suvremene etike jest i vrlo egzistencijalna analiza Paula Tillich-a i vrjednovanje hrabrosti biti. U čovjekovu susretu ili, bolje reći, egzistencijalnom sučeljavanju s prijetnjom nepostojanja, koja se otkriva u kategorijama prostora i vremena, određenja i slobode, a posebice u doživljaju krivnje, apsurdna, straha, dvojbi i drugih ograničenja bitka, dobivamo priliku zapitati se o smislu života i traženju izvora snage kako bi se prihvatili i nadvladali svi ti izazovi. Istodobno se Tillich time koristi kao prilikom za postavljanje pitanja o Bogu, odnosno o samom Bitku, koji daje moć prihvaćanja svih napetosti i tjeskoba bitka. Religija stoga znači prihvatiti biti prihvaćen. Na temelju toga odnosa, odnosno prihvaćanja samoga Bitka, u čovjeku se rađa hrabrost za biti, kada on, spoznavši i prihvativši vlastitu konačnost, nadilazi pojam i otvara se Beskraju. Ta beskrajnost samoga Bitka nije nešto apstraktno, već se ostvaruje kao Ljubav, iz koje čovjek dobiva hrabrost da živi u ljubavi, moći i pravdi.

**Ključne riječi:** Bog, etika, ontologija, hrabrost, strah, tjeskoba, pravda, ljubav.

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